

WHERE CHINA MEETS BURMA



By
BEATRIX
METFORD



THE BABY SAWBWA OF MENGMAO (*right*), HIS GRANDMOTHER
AND HALF-BROTHER

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Life and Travel in the Burma-China
Border Lands

BY
BEATRIX METFORD

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Where China meets Burma

CHAPTER I

Rangoon and Mandalay

YEARS have passed since I went to Burma for the first time, and though I have journeyed out and back several times since, I can still recall the excitement and interest of that first voyage East. For I was not only going to Burma, but to live in a remote place on the China frontier, a thousand miles from Rangoon.

Port Said, the Canal, Colombo—each place has its fascination, but none of these rivals Rangoon. Here is the real East, full of colour, mystery, and romance. Burma casts a spell over those who know her and compels them to love her, and that spell will remain on me so long as I live.

The slow voyage up the river with its flat banks is uninteresting; one might be approaching any large port. Then suddenly that wondrous golden temple, the Shwe Dagon, bursts into view. Towering above the city, its tapering dome lit by the rays of the morning sun, it rises from the trees which encircle it, a vision of matchless beauty.

When we landed, my first impression was Colour. The Burmese, both men and women, wear clothes of gaudy hues; even the priests dress in yellow. In the gardens bougainvillæa and poinsettia, hibiscus and bignonia, cannas and orchids added the brilliant reds and yellows of their

blossoms, the vivid greens of their foliage. The many pagodas contributed their shining gold, their staring white. Reds and greens, purples and blues, yellows and whites jostled each other in startling contrast; it was a very riot of colour. And how the sun shone!

I was charmed with the bungalows, each surrounded by its own large garden, and with the still beauty of the royal lakes. A drive in the evening round the outskirts of the city was sheer delight. As the sun set in a flaming sky across the emerald green of the rice fields, there stole on the senses the peculiar smell of the East, which is impossible to describe: a mixture of wood smoke, cooking, and richly scented flowers. And when darkness swiftly fell, the loud humming notes of the cicadas smote my ears with unaccustomed sounds.

Next came the eighteen-hour train journey to Mandalay. We occupied a large compartment like a small room, and as there were no corridors we were ensured absolute privacy. The windows were provided with both wooden and wire-gauze shutters. Notices everywhere warned travellers to keep the windows locked at night on account of thieves. Although policemen travel on every train, it is impossible to prevent thieves from stealing clothes and other belongings through open windows while the occupants sleep. A tale is told of one lady missionary who woke to find all her clothes gone, so that she arrived at Rangoon in her night attire!

Morning, noon, and evening the trains stop at some station for about half an hour, and passengers alight and have a meal at the restaurant. This struck me as very odd after the dining-cars one finds on English and Continental railways. In the early morning, native waiters rush about the platform with trays of early morning tea and coffee, which they push in through the carriage window.

The platforms swarm with people: Burmese and Chinese,

Bengalis, Sikhs, and other natives of India. Water-carriers and vendors of queer eatables walk up and down the platform calling their wares; coolies and passengers stand, squat, and sleep all over the place. Here and there European passengers, the men usually clad in khaki shorts and shirts, stroll up and down to exercise their dogs, while the servants guard the empty carriages. For in Burma no one travels without servants and piles of baggage, including bedding. We had two servants with us, a Burma-born Chinese cook and a Kachin "boy". I am sure they both looked on me as a bit of a nuisance, and I, ignorant of a single word of their languages, wondered how on earth I should manage the housekeeping.

On arrival at Mandalay we were surrounded by a yelling mob of women; they were the porters and carried the luggage balanced on top of their heads. Leaving the servants to deal with the women and the luggage, we pushed our way through the crowd and drove off in a ramshackle cab to the club for a meal.

My first sight of Mandalay was disappointing. The streets through which we drove were dusty and lined with native shops which gave me the impression of incredible dirt and disorder. Pariah dogs lay about everywhere, most of them thin and mangy.

Leaving the native quarter, we approached the old palace grounds, now called the "Fort". Pariah dogs, heat, and dirt were forgotten in a flash as there came into view the long rose-red walls, lapped by the water of the moat, on which gleamed the green and white of lilies. Wooden towers with carved and fretted roofs stood at each corner. Over a wooden bridge we rattled, and then through a narrow gateway into the fort.

Anything more unlike a fort it is impossible to imagine. We were in an immense wooded park. Here and there through the trees I caught glimpses of the officers' bunga-

lows and of the barrack buildings, but, set as they were in the midst of trees and lawns, they lost their severe military aspect. There was even room in the fort for a nine-hole golf course, to say nothing of grounds for polo, football, hockey, and other games.

At last we drove up to the club, a large, rambling, one-storey building with a veranda running round it. I shall always remember my first breakfast in the ladies' dining-room, with its red distempered walls, on which hung one solitary picture, an immense print of a huntsman in pink crashing through a hedge. It was stained brown by the climate. I used to greet that picture as an old friend whenever afterwards I visited Mandalay.

The native servants were still a novelty to me, while the food was quite different from any I had had before. The first course was mulligatawny soup, which seemed odd to me at 9 o'clock on a broiling hot morning! I was told I should soon get to like it, it was the universal dish for Sunday morning breakfast in Burma; after a "late" Saturday night it was almost the only thing one could taste!

The heat was intense, even under a punkah, and after breakfast we went to the rest-house, or dak bungalow, to spend the hottest hours of the day. The dak bungalow was unlike any building I had seen before. Built of teak-wood, it contained three or four bedrooms, very dark inside and furnished with massive dressing tables, chairs, and beds, on which were the filthiest mattresses imaginable. No soap, towels, or bedding were available. Out of each bedroom opened a bathroom, where were a washhand-stand with dingy china, a zinc bath, and large earthenware pots full of water. The water-coolie had cut his foot, and blood was spattered all over the place.

My valise was opened and spread on the mattress, and I lay down to rest, realizing that carrying one's own bedding about had its advantages. Outside, everything was very

still, save for the cawing of the crows which flew round in flocks and occasionally perched on the veranda with a thud.

In those days there were few motors in Mandalay, and the local cab, or gharry as it is called, was used by those Europeans who did not keep their own horses and dog-carts. A gharry is little more than a wooden box on wheels, and rattles so much as the skinny pony drags it along that it is very difficult to make the Jehu on the box hear anything. There is an old story told of an officer who was being driven in a gharry to a party at Government House when the bottom fell out. Hearing shouts, the gharry-wallah whipped his pony into a gallop and the unfortunate officer had to leg it inside the vehicle to avoid being run over.

After tea we hired a gharry to visit the Salin Kyaung, which is reputed to be the most beautiful monastery in Burma. It stands in a grassy space surrounded by palm trees, a mass of exquisite carving in teak; its fretted, tapering roofs make a delicate tracery against the sky. A yellow-robed monk was drawing water from a well nearby.

We then paid a hurried visit to the old palace in the fort, the home of the last Burmese king. It consisted of several pavilions, the heavy roofs supported by massive pillars of teak. All was lacquered dull red and gold, while the throne and audience chamber were decorated with coloured bits of mirror glass. It seemed tawdry—not a bit my idea of a palace. But later, when I got to know more about the country, I could picture it peopled by King Thibaw and his entourage in their fantastic court dress. As someone once remarked to me, it was in just such a palace as this that King Solomon lived, in just such an audience chamber that he received the Queen of Sheba.

After dinner with friends we jolted down the dusty road to the river, three miles away. As we passed along I caught fleeting glimpses of interiors dimly lit by oil lamps,

and wondered what went on in that native quarter, so dark and mysterious, so withdrawn from us Westerners, so secret and brooding. The warm air fanned our faces, and the Eastern smell was strong in our nostrils again.

Behind the fort the sacred Mandalay hill stood out clearly against the deep blue sky, its countless pagodas and its roofed stairway outlined with thousands of lights. An old name for Mandalay was the "Cluster of Gems", and now that electricity has been made available for illuminating the city, this name seems even more apt.

The gharry stopped abruptly and we got out on to the sandy river bank; a few minutes' walk brought us to the steamer which was to take us up the Irrawaddy to the little frontier town of Bhamo. Threading our way among the sleeping native passengers, we ascended a short flight of stairs and entered the saloon. Our servants were waiting outside our cabins. How thankful I was to see the white paint and clean little beds!

CHAPTER II

Up the Irrawaddy¹

I WAS wakened next morning by a knock on the cabin door, and Sao Tung, the Kachin boy, appeared with the tea. It gave me a bit of a shock, as I had not got used to men servants doing the work of housemaids. He looked very clean and tidy in his white shirt and coat and wide black satin trousers. His broad brown face with twinkling black eyes was crowned with a neatly tied white turban, and his large mouth opened in a cheerful smile as he put down the tray and muttered a few unintelligible words.

I was soon dressed and out on the tiny deck in the bows. We had not long left Mandalay, and the pagoda hill was still in sight, a dim blue cone standing by itself in the plain. White pagodas dotted every hill on the horizon, emphasizing the deep green foliage of the jungle.

Breakfast was laid on the long saloon table. It is the custom in Burma to have a large late breakfast, no lunch, a substantial afternoon tea, and a heavy late dinner. Here on the steamer a very long and elaborate menu was offered: soup, porridge, fish, meat, curry, bacon, eggs, marmalade, and fruit! You can have lunch as well if you want it and are willing to pay extra, but it is only breakfast over again with the porridge, eggs, marmalade, and such typically breakfast dishes omitted. I have, however, seen passengers tackle both!

It took me a long time to get used to these queer meal hours, and I always thought it odd that the Government

¹ See folder map at end of volume

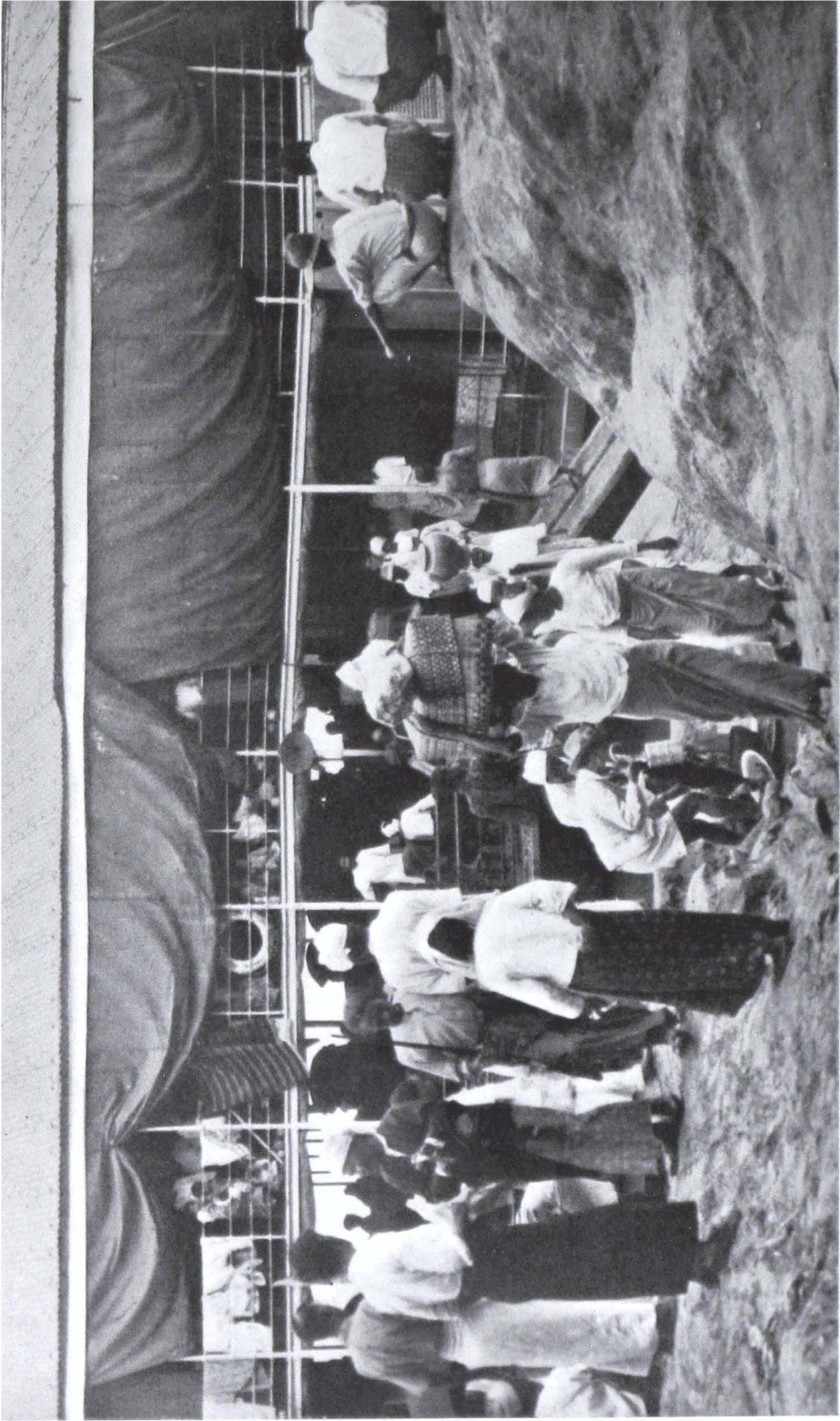
officials had to work in their offices all through the hottest hours of the day. Government "office hours" are from 11 to 4, without a break. This, I was told, was to suit the convenience of the Burmese, who eat only two meals a day, one in the morning about 9 or 10 and the other at sundown.

The cabins opened straight into the saloon. This convenient arrangement has its drawbacks, as I found out on later voyages. Some passengers would sit in the saloon talking in loud voices until a late hour, making it impossible to sleep. They never seemed to realize that inmates of the cabins could hear every word they said!

This trip up the Irrawaddy is a favourite one with tourists, and one meets people from all over the world on the steamers. Generally there is also an official or two travelling on duty, complete with servants, dogs, and piles of kit.

The whole of the upper deck is occupied by passengers. The saloon accommodation is in the fore part, while the after part is given up to the deck passengers. Small parties or families appropriate a portion of the bare deck, on which they spread their bedding, barricading themselves in with their boxes. There they cook, eat, and sleep. The Europeans' servants generally get the best spots, using their masters' many big boxes to peg out their claim.

This large deck is always interesting, with its swarming crowd of Burmese and Shans, Chinese and Indians of every caste and race. It is difficult to tell the Shan and Burmese women apart, for both wear similar clothes, and both have the olive skin and slanting eyes of the Mongolian. The Shan men, however, wear very baggy trousers, while the Burman prefers a loose skirt, or *lungyi*, which he twists into a knot at the waist to keep it up. I always wonder how it does stay up; even the wearers seem a bit doubtful on this point, for many of them have adopted a leather belt as well!



PASSENGERS DISEMBARKING FROM AN IRRAWADDY STEAMER

There is an express boat every week which makes the journey from Mandalay to Bhamo in less than three days, but the "bazaar" boats are much more interesting; they stop at practically every town and village on the banks of the river and take about a week for the voyage. It was on a bazaar boat that I made my first journey.

Many of the passengers had brought goods to sell to the villagers. The wares were spread out on the deck, and the stall-keepers, who were always women, squatted behind them puffing away at huge white cheroots. The Burman is incorrigibly lazy and leaves all the work he can to his wife and daughters.

Every hour or so the steamer stopped at a village. Long blasts from the siren heralded our approach, our bows were steered towards the bank, and when within forty or fifty yards three swarthy Indian sailors, clad only in thin cotton trousers, jumped into the water with a rope and swam to the shore. Then they pulled in the ship's cable and tied it to some convenient post or tree. The force of the current soon brought the ship alongside the bank, a couple of planks were hurriedly laid as gangways, and the people swarmed aboard. There were fresh passengers with their luggage, but most were villagers who wanted to purchase goods from the stalls on board. The advent of the bazaar boat is the great event of the week, and the whole village turns out to see it and to greet any passengers who may have arrived by it. Gaily painted little boats come alongside. They have brought passengers and visitors from the other bank of the river, and tout for return fares.

It is a regular pandemonium: everyone is yelling and shouting. But ten minutes later the hooter goes again; the visitors hurriedly leave the ship, the gangplanks are removed, the ropes are untied, and we are off for our next port of call.

The bridge is on the lower deck just above the water-line, and there the captain sits all day long scanning the river. At the wheel is a Chittagonian quartermaster, while on either side a sailor sounds the depth with a long bamboo pole. They look as if they are punting the ship along!

The channel is marked by bamboo buoys. It is ever changing, and the Flotilla Company keeps men at work sounding the river and rebuoing the channel throughout the year. The Burma Government delegates this duty to the company, which alone runs steamers on the river.

During the dry winter season when the river is low navigation is very difficult, for sandbanks abound and the ships often get stuck. A few years ago one ship went aground at the beginning of the low-water season, and there she remained for five or six months until the water rose again. The captain and crew had to stay on board all the time, but they managed, I heard, to make quite a nice garden on the bank and grow a good supply of vegetables!

I was surprised when I heard that as a rule the steamers did not travel at night, though occasionally the express boat does run on as late as midnight, and it is then fascinating to watch the white beams of the searchlight sweeping the water and lighting up the distant jungle-clad banks, while moths and insects fly at the bright light and drop in heaps on the deck below. The beams are so intense that I have often seen them when sitting on a rest-house veranda in the hills several miles away from the river and 4000 feet above it.

Usually the captain arranges to stop shortly before dusk at some village where he can replenish his supply of wood, which is the only fuel burnt in the furnaces. The logs are kept neatly stacked on the river bank, and directly they hear the steamer's whistle, women and girls run from their homes to carry them on board. They help one another to balance the logs, three at a time, on their heads, and

then walk with them on board. Near the engines they drop the logs with a bang on the iron decks and hurry back for another load. It takes about a couple of hours to refuel the ship, and many a curse does the terrible noise call forth from the European passengers, especially when the ship has not tied up until midnight and their sleep is disturbed.

If the ship ties up early there is generally an opportunity for a short walk along the bank before dark. It is strange how the dogs get to know when the steamer is going to stop, and they can go for a run. They dash down the steep stairs and wait anxiously for the gangplanks to be run out. They are always first ashore.

In some places it does not do to wander too far, for leopards, tigers, and elephants, not to mention snakes, infest the jungle. The houses are all made of bamboo and thatched with grass; as a protection they are raised on piles a good dozen feet from the ground and are entered by a ladder.

It is difficult to describe the charm and peace of these villages. Surrounded by dense jungle, they are cut off from civilization save by the river. Women moving with easy grace pass with water-pots balanced on their heads, children play contentedly in the dust, the men squat under the trees smoking and chatting. At sunset nearly everyone goes down to the river to bathe. Both men and women are dressed in their long skirts, which they keep on all the time they are in the water; when they come out they pop a clean *lungyi* over their heads, letting the wet one fall to the ground. It is all done neatly and modestly.

If we are lucky, the refuelling is finished by dinner-time, and in the cold weather it gets quite chilly in the saloon, which is not heated in any way. But during the rains this is the time for the bugs to come out, so the lights are all covered with red cotton, for that colour repels them. Punkahs whirl round, churning up the air and cooling the

food. It is none too pleasant, but one is consoled by the thought that it is even hotter on shore than out on the river.

As we proceeded northwards the scenery became wilder and more beautiful, especially through the defiles where the wooded mountains rise sheer from the water. There are three defiles on the Irrawaddy. The narrowest is above Bhamo and is noted for its dangerous currents, which render it unsuitable for navigation save by small steamers.

Wild animals are said to abound on the banks of the middle defile, but I have never seen any. One captain told me that he once saw a tiger playing on a sandbank, but most travellers hang over the rails in vain hoping for a glimpse of them. I think that if one were up at dawn one might be rewarded by the sight of some animals coming down to the river to drink. An old gentleman I travelled with once got very excited over a tame water buffalo, thinking, until we disillusioned him, that it was a wild bison. It is true that the Burmese jungle is the home of herds of elephants, bison, sambur, thamin, saing, &c., but they are very hard to approach. Even the few big-game hunters who do visit this "sportsman's paradise" rarely return with many heads.

There is a magnificent cliff in this defile over which in days gone by prisoners of war are said to have been hurled to death. A little farther on, a long green gash in the jungle-covered slopes is pointed out to visitors as an "elephant slide", and, strange to relate, this piece of information is usually swallowed without question. Really it is a clearing made specially for the telegraph line, which threads its way through the jungle for hundreds of miles. An army of coolies is kept continually busy cutting away the foliage which threatens to engulf it, and repairing the bamboo poles and the wires when they are broken by wild animals or tempests.

It is wonderful how quiet the river is! Occasionally a white Government boat passes, taking an official on tour through his district, or a launch belonging to one of the timber firms. Now and then one catches a glimpse of a large Burmese houseboat with the owner and his whole family living on board; how lovely she looks with her elaborately carved prow and bright russet sail! Dugouts may be seen hugging the bank—they are just tree trunks hollowed out and roughly shaped like a canoe—and little gaily painted rowing-boats, with the rower standing up in the stern holding the oars. Occasionally they brave the strong currents and ferry their passengers across the river, but they are always careful to keep clear of the steamer and its wash.

Occasionally, too, we pass one of the immense timber rafts drifting down to Rangoon in the charge of two or three men who live on board in a little hut. All they have to do is to keep their unwieldy craft in the middle of the current, pushing it away from the banks and shoals with their long bamboo poles. They have a thousand-mile journey before them, and it will be four or five months before they reach their destination.

The teak logs are dragged by elephants from the jungle to the nearest stream, down which they are floated to the Irrawaddy, where they are made into rafts. Frequently, when travelling up or down, I have seen a dozen or more of these tame elephants browsing near the river after a day's work, or having a bathe, the mahouts perched on their necks and scrubbing them with a brush. Sometimes one even has these huge animals as fellow passengers, though in that case they are always accommodated in a flat or pontoon tied alongside.

One afternoon, when we were stopping at some little town, I was very interested to see one of these animals crossing the Irrawaddy. A strong cable was run from a

chain round the elephant's body to a little steam launch. Obedient to the calls of its mahout, who was on the boat, the elephant took to the water, and, towed by the launch, slowly crossed the broad river. It was practically submerged, just a little of its broad back showing above the water, but every minute or two up went its trunk into the air to take a breath. Directly it reached shallow water on the other side, the mahout climbed from the launch on to its back again, untied the cable, and drove the huge animal, apparently quite unaffected by its long swim, up the bank into the village.

At last we reach Bhamo, the busy little frontier market town at the limit of navigation. This is the starting point for the mule caravans which for many centuries have carried the produce of Burma, of India, and of the West into Yunnan and south-western China. Its dusty streets are thronged with people of every frontier tribe and race: Burmese and Shans, Kachins and Chinese, Indians of all castes, each clad in his distinctive dress. It is a very Tower of Babel!

CHAPTER III

Life at Sinlumkaba

I SHALL never forget my first journey up to Sinlumkaba, the little frontier hill station two days' march from Bhamo, which was to be my home for over two years.

For the first nine miles from Bhamo there was a good motor road, though there were only two motor-cars in the place, both privately owned. Still, one could usually borrow one of them and hire the P.W.D. lorry for the kit and servants. But the lorry had a habit of breaking down, so frequently this method did not result in any time-saving.

Later on I lived for several years in Bhamo, but I left it that first morning with a very confused recollection of bungalows scattered about among the trees, and of clusters of small native houses on the outskirts. I got a general impression of untidiness and decay. Perhaps this was mainly due to the fact that the military had just evacuated Bhamo and that most of the barracks and offices had been moved *en bloc* to Maymyo, only a few isolated buildings being left standing. Bhamo once boasted a garrison of one British and two Indian regiments, and there must be many men alive to-day who remember the gay times they had in this station. The old-stagers used to tell me about them.

At the end of the road, at the little village of Momauk, we found our ponies and baggage mules waiting. It was June, the rains had just begun, and the atmosphere was like that of a Turkish bath. I felt more like lying in an armchair than riding.

I struggled on to my pony, and off we started across three miles of paddy fields. The sun blazed down on us, and I felt I should never get to the shady trees I could see far ahead. I got to know that ride well in the years that followed.

One could not always start early enough to avoid the worst heat. Travelling on the frontier is complicated by the fact that, like an army, you cannot move faster than your transport, and when that transport consists of obstinate muleteers, thirty or forty small mules, and several servants, there are plenty of excuses for delay. It is complicated still further by the fact that your bedding cannot be packed until you have got up.

After much tribulation we found that the only way to ensure an early start from Momauk was to spend the night at the rest-house there. Even that plan did not always work, for once, having risen about 5 a.m. and finished breakfast, we were told that the mules were all lost. The muleteers had turned them out into the fallow rice fields to graze during the night, and they had strayed far and wide. We just had to sit and wait until they were caught, and it wasn't until nearly noon, in the hottest part of the day, that we were able to make a start. That day we met a military officer at the foot of the hills, and remarked to one another how washed-out he looked with the heat of the march. But what we said was nothing, I heard later, to the account he gave of my appearance.

On another occasion we sent our servants and kit off the evening before, with orders to go straight on to the rest-house half way up the mountains and have a meal ready for us when we arrived the next afternoon. As we were staying with friends in Bhamo, the problem of bedding did not arise and we travelled light. We found our ponies at the appointed place, and set off across the rice fields and up the mountain path, buoyed up with the thought of the

baths and meal awaiting us. When we got to the rest-house we found nobody there, but soon a Kachin runner appeared to tell us that the mules were lost and our caravan hadn't even started! What really happened we never found out, but we had to wait five long hours with no food, drink, or light before we heard the welcome sound of the mule-bells.

The mule path up to Sinlum, as we always shortened the name, led by easy gradient through beautiful jungle scenery, and was flanked by feathery bamboos, magnificent trees from which hung creepers like green ropes, waving tree-ferns, and flowering shrubs of many kinds. On the branches of the trees were orchids, mauve and white, yellow and brown; every step was a joy, enhanced by the sunlight playing through the waving leaves.

Every now and then came a little clearing through which I caught a glimpse of the plain lying in a haze of heat far below, while above me towered those jungle-clad mountains of the frontier which I grew to know and to love so well.

The path passed only one village, a cluster of huge Kachin huts, but other villages could be descried, half hidden on mountain spurs, for the Kachin loves solitude. Occasionally we met some Shans carrying large baskets of chickens down to market, or a wild and dirty Kachin proudly strode by, his long sword and bright bag hanging over his shoulder. Behind him trudged his wife or sweetheart, bowed down with the weight of a huge basket of vegetables.

One night we spent on the road, at a rest-house with a magnificent view of the plain 4000 feet below, a lovely spot but labouring under the tongue-twisting name of Palaungataung. Next day we reached Sinlum, and I was thankful to settle down at last in my own home.

Housekeeping was puzzling at first owing to the total absence of shops and to the language difficulty. The hut

used as a kitchen, with its grimy tables and blackened walls and the total absence of all conveniences, horrified me. How I longed for a clean white kitchen with taps and running water!

It was a very lonely life for me, especially during the rains, when my husband was on tour and I was left behind. I even felt like braving the terrors of touring in the rains; long marches in drenching rain, long days and nights in a damp, draughty hut, the risk of malaria and kindred ills could not be worse than these days all alone in the house with not a European to talk to—no one, indeed, nearer than two days' journey. Occasionally the military police bungalow was occupied by the assistant commandant, though he was away such a lot of the time at Bhamo. When he brought his wife with him, then I felt that my cup was really running over with joy.

At Sinlum there were, besides our two bungalows, military police barracks with fifty sepoy in charge of an Indian officer, a tiny hospital, two rest-houses and a school. All were perched on different mountain spurs, and quite a long way from one another.

I have vivid recollections of the rains there. Sinlum is 6000 feet above sea level and gets the full force of the monsoon from May right through until October. During these five months 160 inches of rain fall, and when it isn't raining the whole place is enveloped in a thick mist. With no one to speak to save the servants and the dogs, it was hard to ward off depression.

I remember how once, when my husband was out on a long tour and I had spoken to no one for a fortnight, some friends arrived unexpectedly. The sight of them was too much for me, and I burst into tears.

Some of my time I used to spend in trying to teach the cook new dishes, but our materials were limited, for we could only buy chickens and eggs, rice and potatoes in

the bazaar; fish and meat were not to be had, and tinned food was very expensive after the long transit. So our ingenuity was taxed to the utmost. Sitting on a box in the dark kitchen with a cookery book by my side, the cook and I laboriously measured out spoonfuls of this and that ingredient. The Chinese cook always went on tour with my husband, so I had a raw Kachin lad to train. Then one day a recruiting officer turned up seeking men for the Burma Rifles, and among those who joined the army was my newly trained cook, who had by that time reached a certain state of proficiency. Sorrowfully I watched him march off down the hill with a mob of wild-looking fellow-tribesmen. I knew it was no good trying to persuade him to stop with me, so I had to engage another raw countryman and start all over again.

Every evening after tea I set off for a walk, the Kachin water-carrier acting as my escort. He strode along behind me with a huge sword in its wooden scabbard hanging over his shoulder. His body was very inadequately covered by ragged trousers and shirt of blue cotton, while his tousled hair was bound round with a dirty rag. We used to explore all the jungle paths, and always returned wet through. Sometimes I would dispense with his services, but it was not really advisable to wander far alone; I might meet some buffaloes—which seem to hate the very smell of Europeans and charge and gore them—or tigers, or leopards driven by the heavy rains to seek refuge in the thick jungle of the hills. If even a slight accident befell me, such as a sprained ankle, it might be hours before I was discovered and rescued. The jungle was intersected by countless paths used by the villagers, and it was along these that I used to stroll. There was complete silence save for the tinkling streams and the dripping trees. Begonias flourished everywhere, and ferns of every size and description.

Whenever I went out to dinner at the military police

bungalow, I had to wear gum-boots and a mackintosh. Where the grass had worn away, there was nothing but greasy, slimy mud; it was all I could do to keep my feet. A servant always walked in front with a lantern, on account of the snakes that infested the jungle. Very few of them were poisonous, but it was not safe to take any risks. The Kachin boys used to catch them and bring them in to us wriggling at the end of a cleft stick. Many were rare or even new species and we sometimes pickled them and sent them off to the museum.

Occasionally the weather would break and the sun shine for two or three days. The views were magnificent then. As far as the eye could see stretched range upon range of jungle-covered mountains, melting into blue in the distance, their lofty peaks wreathed with billowy white clouds. To the west the course of the Irrawaddy could be clearly traced, a ribbon of silver crossing the misty green plain.

April and May were delightful, just like an English springtime. Foxgloves grew wild everywhere, and the cuckoo could be heard calling all day long. But it was the cold weather that I loved best, for we spent it touring the two thousand square miles of our district, visiting its four hundred villages. It took about four "open" seasons to cover them all. But I will describe our touring in the next chapter.

One spring there was a great scare—hundreds of tribesmen across the frontier had risen in revolt and were going to attack us. My husband and the military police set off in haste to the border twenty miles away, and I was left in Sinlum in the care of three sepoy, who had strict orders not to let me out of their sight. For three weeks the scare lasted, but no attack came, and reports from the Chinese side stated that all was quiet there and had been all the time. So the police returned to their barracks, and I was

again permitted to wander about without an armed guard.

Normally one was quite safe on the frontier, for the tribesfolk were very friendly and would not harm a white man, though they thought nothing of wounding or killing one of their own people. Yet on looking back I marvel that I wasn't nervous sleeping absolutely alone in the bungalow, for the servants' quarters were some distance away, right out of earshot.

I gradually got to know the village folk, and found them very like people in the country at home. The schoolmaster's wife, the vet.'s wife, and other Kachin women often came to see me, dressed in their picturesque costumes. The skirt was a length of stiff cotton cloth with intricate designs in red, blue, and yellow woven on a background of black, and the coloured patterns were always geometric, the swastika predominating. The skirt was just wrapped round the body, with the loose end hanging down on the right, and was kept up by a scarf and by numerous black cane hoops which were worn round the waist. The bodice was of black velvet profusely adorned with buttons and knobs of silver. They wore gaiters to match the skirts, but no shoes or stockings. On their heads they had high black turbans if they were married; unmarried women and girls wear no head covering at all but have the hair cut in a long, rough bob. Jewellery they loved—bracelets, earrings, and necklets of silver, in addition to many strings of coral beads round their necks.

They would often bring me little gifts—a lovely bag woven like their skirts, or a large cabbage from their garden, or a few eggs. They loved to come in to the house and, squatting on the floor, try to teach me to speak Kachin.

It was really quite amusing to watch them sit down. They wore no knickers, and their skirts were stiff and only just reached below the knee, if indeed they even reached as far. To sit "modestly" in a chair was not very easy,

and they were all mission educated. So they preferred to squat on the floor like their "uncivilized" kinswomen of the villages. They would tuck the loose end of their skirt between the knees and quietly lower themselves on to the floor, where they sat with legs stretched straight out in front. It must have been an uncomfortable position, but then they had been used to it from childhood.

Every Christmas, even after I had left Sinlum and gone to live in Bhamo, little presents, wrapped in home-made paper and tied with bamboo fibre, arrived from my old Kachin friends, and whenever I visited Sinlum they always came to see me.

There was a native doctor in charge of the hospital; whenever we went on tour he used to accompany us to attend the sick in the villages. During my stay the doctor was frequently shifted and we had in turn a Burman, a Chinese, and an Indian. The Indian very successfully extracted two teeth for me, and the following day his wife told me that he had spent nearly all the night before the operation in prayer to the Holy Virgin that he would not make any mistake.

On a level patch of ground near the school a badminton court was roughly marked out, and sometimes I used to join in the games. The racquets were old and warped and many of their strings were missing. The women were very keen and avoided the numerous puddles with great agility as they dashed forward to hit the shuttlecock. They were quite at ease and enjoyed it all immensely, laughing heartily over missed shots, especially mine.

One day we were invited to a house-warming by the Kachin vet., who had built himself a fine wooden house. There are many queer customs followed by Kachins when a new hut is built, but these I will describe later. Tang Nao, the vet., was a Christian, so the proceedings were a queer mixture of Eastern and Western ideas.

The host, clad in a spotless white jacket, baggy black silk trousers, and a white turban, made a short speech of welcome, following which the National Anthem was sung in Kachin. The visitors squatted on the floor, married women, young girls, and men being in separate rooms, while the boys were outside in the compound. Tea was brought round in a large oil tin, and drunk out of tiny earthenware cups of local make. Each guest was handed a small parcel done up neatly in a banana leaf, and containing cooked rice, a few pieces of pork, and some vegetables. The Kachins, like the Burmans and other Asiatic races, eat very neatly with their fingers.

My servants rather spoiled the effect of the feast by bringing down my afternoon tea, and telling Tang Nao that I couldn't possibly eat rice with my fingers, and that his cups weren't big enough.

Tang Nao's wife was the prettiest Kachin woman I have ever seen; her cheeks were round and rosy, and her slanting black eyes always had a soft and sad expression. Perhaps it was because she had no son. Her family consisted of five little girls, and when the last two arrived I hardly dared ask their sex.

The great event of the week to me was the arrival of the English mail, which was brought by a post runner from Bhamo. He had twenty-six miles to walk, with a climb of 6000 feet thrown in, and yet, in spite of torrential rain, earthquakes, and landslides, he was never late.

Attached to my husband's staff there were several Kachin runners, whose duty it was to carry letters. There is no postal service to the villages, and everything has to be sent by runner. Their wages were only about £1 a month. They never lost anything, and if one of them had to spend a night on the way, he slept with his head on the mail bag. They carried no kit and relied on their friends for meals as they journeyed along.

To preserve peace on the border, the Burma Government maintains a large body of military police. The rank and file are very mixed in race: Sikhs and Punjabis from North-West India, Gurkhas, Dogras, and Garhwalis from the Himalayas, Chins and Kachins from the hills of Burma. The officers come from the Indian Army, seconded from their regiments for a term of years. Battalion headquarters are at the district towns such as Bhamo, Myitkyina, and Lashio, while nearer the frontier are many forts or outposts, each with a garrison of fifty to a hundred sepoy. In Bhamo district alone there were about a dozen of these outposts, though some of them were occupied only during the dry season. It is not war that has to be guarded against on this frontier, it is the danger of raids by armed bodies of Kachins or other tribesmen out for murder and pillage. Forty years or more ago, before the country had been pacified and when blood-feuds and raids were the order of the day, life on the frontier was very exciting, but the Kachins of the present day have been brought up under the Pax Britannica and are gradually learning to settle their differences peaceably in the law courts instead of seeking to avenge every fancied wrong with the sword.

The sports were the great event of the year in Sinlum. They were really intended for the benefit of the pupils of the school (most schools on the frontier are run by the American Baptist Mission with the aid of a grant from the Government of Burma), but there were thirty different events, races for boys and for girls, for men and for women, for officers and for infants. For the mothers' race the entrants lined up with their babies tied on their backs with a piece of cloth in the usual Kachin fashion. The poor babies could hardly have enjoyed it, their little heads jolting from side to side as their mother strove to be the first to reach the tape.

There was a bun-eating competition, or "bread-bite"



KACHIN WOMEN AT MARKET

race, as it was styled on the programme, and I remember one year how the winner was disqualified for swallowing the piece of string by which hung the doughy lump of bread.

The officers' race was marked "For Europeans only", and all four of us, men and women, were expected to compete. The crowd, I am sure, was very anxious to see us racing round the track, but none of us felt equal to that, so we managed each year to turn it into a sewing race or some equally restful competition.

It is the custom of all the larger villages and towns in Upper Burma, as in the Shan states and Yunnan, to hold a market or bazaar every fifth day. The market day is arranged so that no neighbouring villages hold it on the same day. This is most convenient for pedlars and stallholders, for they can move on each day to some other village market only five or ten miles' journey away. Farmers and peasants, too, are able to attend a near-by market most days.

The people have a really good time on bazaar days, for they meet all their friends and relatives from the villages for miles around who have come in to sell their produce and to buy provisions or clothes. In some villages the market is held in the broad main street, the stalls being erected on either side and the onlookers thronging the road, so that travellers have great difficulty in pushing their way through. In others, like Sinlum, there is a real market-place, a little patch of common land where pigs and chickens roam about in search of food on the other four days. But no matter where the market is held, there are sure to be some permanent stalls—just rough benches of split bamboo thatched with straw or grass.

These stalls are built or rented by permanent traders; butchers' stalls have joints of pork hanging from the roof or lying on the bench, those of jewellers have cases of

silver earrings and necklaces and bracelets, and there are stalls laden with cotton cloth, silk, and velvet, with pots and pans, cups and bowls, everything indeed for the tribesman's home.

The farmers and peasants, however, have no stalls. They—or rather their women folk, for the tribesman does not believe in working if he has wife, or sister, or daughter to work for him—just squat down on the ground and spread their wares—vegetables and jungle produce, or bundles of firewood—in front of them. They want to sell their goods as quickly as possible so as to get some money to spend, and they are only too willing to barter, for money means little to them in their jungle homes. All they receive is spent at once.

The eating stalls, where a helping of rice and vegetables served on a piece of banana leaf cost less than a penny, were thronged throughout the day. The sale of spirits is strictly regulated by law in Burma, but the enforcement of the law is another matter. The Kachins distil from rice a very potent spirit which they call *cheroo*, and the women always manage to bring plentiful supplies to the market for sale in huge tubes of bamboo. It is possible to get gloriously drunk for twopence. Then the trouble begins, for the Kachin can't hold his liquor but gets mad drunk, only too anxious to pick a quarrel with anybody. Then out comes his sword, or *dah*, and it is lucky if someone isn't killed.

I dreaded bazaar days, for our Indian washerman, or *dhobie*, who hated Sinlum, always made it an excuse to get drunk, and had barely recovered enough from one carousal to do the washing before the next bazaar day arrived. The following morning I generally found him snoring in the wash-house, lying on a heap of dirty clothes, though once or twice he was unable to get home at all and spent the night lying in the rain by the pathside.

Breakfast was always punctually served on bazaar day,

for all the servants wanted to be off. An hour later I would see them striding out of the compound dressed in their best, their feet encased in heavy black boots, and each one carrying an umbrella as well as the sword and bag without which no Kachin considers himself dressed. All day long the house was deserted, but one or other of them always managed to be home in time to prepare tea.

When one comes to write about it, life at Sinlum seems monotonous, lacking incident. One was apt to lose one's sense of proportion and worry over trifles, but there were many compensations, such as glorious scenery, and a simple, natural people free from all artificiality. I loved it all, and now in the distance I love it perhaps even more than when I was there.

CHAPTER IV

On Tour in the Kachin Hills

FROM November till April, during the whole of the dry season, we were on tour through the district. We returned only two or three times to Sinlum, for a day or two at a time, just to settle the accounts and renew our stores. It was hard work for a woman, but I loved it, and even now I often look back with longing to those days spent in the jungle. It was a queer sort of life, so different from the "station" life usually led by the Englishwoman in Burma and India.

I was amazed when I saw the preparations being made for our first tour. There were a large double tent, camp-beds and bath, chairs and tables, basins and lamps. Sauce-pans and other kitchen utensils were all necessary too, as well as crockery and glass, cutlery and silverware.

Sao Tang came with me to the store cupboard to point out what was necessary. I was aghast at the enormous heap of tins and bottles he piled up ready to pack. Should we ever require such huge quantities of groceries? Would the mules ever be able to carry it all over the steep hill paths? Kerosene oil, and flour and sugar, butter and milk, jams and pickles, soups and meats, coffee and tea, whisky and gin—a veritable grocer's shop.

Then came the packing, for everything had to be made up into half-loads weighing not more than seventy pounds each. We had lots of wooden boxes ready, and into them stores and crockery and utensils were carefully packed.

Not one of the Kachins could read or write, but they always knew where everything was packed, and not once, during all the years I toured with them, was a single thing lost or stolen.

Our clean linen was pushed into waterproof canvas bags, and our clothes were packed into wicker baskets covered with waterproof canvas, for nothing will stand the constant wear and tear, the rough usage of touring, like it.

The following morning we were up at daybreak, and I watched the loading of the small mules with our strange assortment of packages. The muleteers were all Chinese from Yunnan; they have the monopoly of this business throughout Upper Burma.

The packages were tied with raw hide thongs on to wooden trestles, care being taken that the two sides should be of equal weight. The muleteers would shift the position of some package, or add some little article or even a stone, until it did balance. An unevenly balanced load meant at least a sore back for the mule, and it might also result in the whole load falling off, which perhaps concerned us more than it did the muleteers!

When all the packages had been tied to the trestles, the mules were saddled. Then one understood the reason for well-balanced loads: the wooden saddles just rested on the mules' backs, with no girth at all. There was only a leather strap round the neck to keep the saddle from sliding backwards when going uphill, and a wooden crupper to keep it back going downhill.

Directly the mules were saddled, two muleteers lifted up a loaded trestle, the leading mule at the word of command walked under it, the trestle was lowered on to the saddle, on which it fitted, and the mule started on its day's journey. The other mules were similarly loaded and the caravan was off.

We needed thirty mules for our baggage and office boxes, servants' kit, &c., for we had to take some of the office staff with us in addition to our own servants. We had, too, an escort of fifteen armed sepoy, whose principal duty was to safeguard the tax money received by my husband.

In the Kachin Hills a tax of three rupees (4s. 6d.) is payable annually for each house. The headman of the village collects the tax from each householder and pays it over to the district officer. It is all received in silver rupees, which are packed into wooden boxes and carried on the escort's mules; an armed guard is in charge of it night and day.

What a weird sight our caravan looked! Though I soon got too used to it to notice. First the baggage mules with the sturdy Chinese muleteers walking along beside them, urging them on with blood-curdling shrieks, and guiding them by word of mouth only. Behind them came the servants, with sword and bag dangling over their shoulders and carrying a few odd articles, such as cameras and lanterns, which they feared to trust to the mules. Then the interpreter and the doctor on their shaggy ponies, and the Indian clerk on foot, looking so miserable and dressed in a long Burmese skirt; he hated touring and refused to ride, preferring to pocket the pony allowance. They were followed by the escort, very smart in their khaki uniforms, and their thirty mules laden with rations, kit, and bullion boxes.

My husband and I brought up the rear, riding our little country-bred ponies, while our dogs, who loved touring, rushed up and down the line. Yes, it must have been a fantastic sight, but no doubt it impressed the villagers.

As we neared the camping ground we were met by the village headman and elders and by the village band. The latter consisted of half a dozen or more youths with large

brass gongs and long wooden drums, which they beat unceasingly with their hands.

We continued our way to the village, the headman walking by our side, while the band went ahead, thumping the gongs and drums with renewed vigour. In the village the rest of the inhabitants were drawn up to welcome us, the men on one side of the road and the women on the other.

Among the men we would often see one or two sepoy on leave from the Kachin companies of the Burma Rifles, or retired soldiers in old and torn khaki with medals on their chests. Occasionally the headman or some elder would be decked out in a tail-coat green with age, and once I saw one wearing the coat of a Glasgow tram conductor, while another headman proudly sported the full-dress uniform of the Westminster Rifles! How do these old garments get out there?

The men wear blue cotton coats and knickers in various stages of filth and raggedness. The women wear the Kachin costume which I have already described, but their coats are usually of cotton instead of velvet, and most of them are too poor to own any silver jewellery. Their skins are caked with dirt, their clothes old and filthy and torn, and most of them are afflicted with terrible goitres, sometimes nearly as big as footballs.

I was always an object of great interest in the remote villages, and as I was clad in riding breeches, there was always at first much discussion as to whether I was a man or a woman. Gradually they got to know me better, and the interpreter told me that the village women said they looked forward to seeing the *bum dujan* (hill lady), as they called me, for she always had such a nice smile for them.

The whole village would turn out to help to pitch the tent. It was a large roomy affair divided into two by curtains. One half served as a bedroom, the other as sitting-room, while behind there was a tiny bathroom.

I always found bathing in camp a nerve-racking affair. In the evenings it was too cold to have a bath in what was practically the open air, so I used to bathe in the daytime while the sun was out. The camp was always surrounded by a crowd of interested spectators. Sometimes the boy who brought in the hot water would forget to close the tent flaps properly, or the tent-pegs round the bathroom might not be firmly driven in; a sudden gust of wind and my bathroom walls would open!

The canvas bath needed some getting used to. The frame was old and warped, and if I did not sit exactly in the middle, it would tip up, all the water would be spilled, and I would be left in an empty bath. The roof of the bathroom was not sunproof, and in the hot weather I sometimes had to wear a topee while sitting in the tub!

I soon got used to living in a tent for weeks at a time. It was far preferable to using the rest-houses which are scattered about the hills, and which, in any case, are built only along the main mule tracks, or "Government roads", as they are called.

The villagers generally built us a little grass hut near the tent, and we had our meals in it. During the rest of the day my husband used it as office and court-room. There were gun licences to inspect, which their owners kept for safety in tiny bamboo tubes, village rolls to be checked, headmen to be interviewed, complaints to be investigated.

When the weather was hot we started our march very early and reached our new camp by 10 a.m. The cook, who had been sent on ahead, had breakfast ready for us, and from that time onwards there was absolutely nothing for me to do until tea-time, when my husband closed the court and we could go for an evening stroll. Sometimes the days seemed very long; although I had my needlework and plenty of books and papers to read, I missed having a house to superintend. After several months on tour I got

so tired of the sight of native huts that I just longed for a real house built of brick or stone. I missed having pretty clothes to wear, and I craved for the companionship of women.

We often did as many as twenty-seven marches in a month, and in the end that proved most tiring and wearisome. So long as I was fit and well I did not mind the discomfort of having to be on the march each morning by 7 o'clock, but when I was tired it was a real effort. I was lucky, for I was never really ill. Once or twice I had to be carried from camp to camp during a bout of fever. The servants tied bamboo poles to my deck-chair and got men from the village, wild-looking Kachins, to carry me. They had no experience of carrying anybody, and never worried to keep the chair level. Several times I was nearly tipped out.

Some of the jungle paths were so steep that we had to walk, as it was not safe to ride. Kachins make their paths "as the crow flies". They never dream of grading them or going round a hill; their idea of a road is straight up a mountain and straight down the other side. I often wondered how the mules managed with their heavy loads, but the Yunnan mule is the surest-footed animal in the world. He will walk unconcernedly over the most appalling surfaces, up and down slippery mountain paths, over streams with beds of loose stones, and yet he hardly ever makes a false step.

The villagers used to bring us "presents" of eggs and fowls, for which they later extracted payment from the cook! The wretched fowls were confined in tiny funnel-shaped baskets of bamboo. There were handles to the baskets, and as the owner walked along he swung the basket to and fro till the poor fowl was quite dizzy. I used to release any chickens we received from these awful contraptions, for our cook liked to leave them lying about outside his kitchen hut with no water or food. He was

quite reluctant to let them out and tether them by the leg instead. Sometimes the poor things could not stand up at all for hours afterwards.

Notwithstanding the lack of a decent kitchen stove, our cook managed to provide excellent meals every day. His "oven" was just a large oil tin cut in half, but in it he baked very good bread. The fire was made in a hole in the ground, across which he laid two iron bars on which to stand saucepans. He had no proper table, just a bench of split bamboo. He used a small square piece of wood to chop meat on, and when I bought him a fine pastry board and rolling-pin, he wouldn't bring them with him, but preferred to use an empty whisky bottle instead.

Once a visitor who came to see us was greatly astonished to find that we always had a three-course breakfast and dinner, and good bread and cakes for tea; she imagined that in the jungle we lived on sandwiches and tinned foods.

The Kachin servants were always splendid on tour; they were absolutely tireless, and up at dawn each day. There was all the crockery and glass to be unpacked and repacked, and yet it was rare indeed to have any breakages. They had friends or relatives in every village, and used to sit up late at night gossiping round the camp-fires. They can't have had much sleep.

What made the marches seem so long was the fact that we could never go fast, and to ride a horse at the walk for hours at a time is very tiring. Once when we did a double journey we got ahead of the kit. At the grass hut we were met by an Indian officer from a police post nearby, and he had thoughtfully brought along a pot of hot tea and some hard-boiled eggs. Tea has never tasted so good, and I ate an egg with great relish too. I had to sit on the straw in the hut till the mules arrived with the kit. Soon the villagers came in to watch me, the headman bringing as a present two live cocks. As luck would have it, that time



KACHIN BRINGING PRESENTS OF CHICKEN AND EGGS

they were not done up in baskets, but I did not like to offend the donor by refusing to accept his gift. There I sat, with the fowls clutched in my arms, until the servants arrived and took them from me.

Eggs sent as presents were usually neatly packed, six of them end to end, in long grass parcels tied round with strips of bamboo. They could be poked quite safely into a corner of the store boxes.

I had only one accident during the thousands of miles I rode on tour. We had just started, and were riding down a very steep path, at the bottom of which was a little stream. Without warning the pony stopped to drink, the saddle slipped forward, and I shot over his head, landing face downward in the muddy water. The *syce* (groom) had forgotten to tighten the girths, and I had not examined them before mounting. Luckily I wasn't hurt, and the stream was shallow, but there I was, covered with mud and soaked through, with no hope of a change until the end of the march. I felt so ashamed later on as we entered the village to the strains of the band. What a sight I must have presented to the interested inhabitants!

Riding along the narrow, slippery paths was frequently a most nerve-racking affair; they were cut out of the mountains, and there was a precipice on one side, and the hard, rocky wall on the other. The ponies and mules always walked along the edge, keeping as far as they could from the rocks. I simply daren't look down. There have been cases of rider and pony falling over together, sometimes being saved from death by being caught in the trees which grow in the cliff. Thoughts of those terrible accidents would always rise up in my mind when riding along some extra dangerous piece of path.

I used to dread, too, meeting the long caravans, for the mules with their loads would take up nearly all the room. I always tried to keep to the inside of the path, from fear

of being pushed over the edge, but even then it was not pleasant; the pony might get restive and I receive a nasty knock on the knee from the rock or the mule-load, or both.

I remember spending one night in a Kachin school. The headmaster was so eager to show us hospitality that we couldn't refuse his invitation. It was quite a fine wooden building, and had as many pupils as there was accommodation for. The Kachins are very keen to be educated—the women and girls love to attend school, and it is extraordinary to see the difference it makes in their appearance and in the way they keep their homes. As education becomes more general, the tribe will lose its characteristics, and forget its old customs and manners. Even now the Kachin women who attend the mission schools in the plains have adopted the Burmese dress. The boys, too, forsake the life of their fathers, and all want to become clerks or teachers.

It was terribly cold in that school, so in the evening a bucket of fire was brought. The masters and mistresses all came in to see us, and, squatting on the floor round the fire, sang hymns to us in Kachin. I had had a long day's march, and the loud, harsh voices and the smoky atmosphere brought on a bad headache. I was thankful when they left and I could retire to my little camp-bed.

On short tours we often used the rest-houses, which are built about ten or fifteen miles apart along the main paths. The framework of such a house was four huge tree trunks, the walls were of interlaced bamboo strips roughly covered with plaster, and the roof was thatched with grass. They were all built to a stock pattern. The front door opened straight on to the living-room, which was furnished with a solid wooden table and chairs. The back half of the house was divided into two bedrooms by a passageway leading to the kitchen. Beds were provided—just bare wooden frames with interlaced webbing on which our mattresses could be laid—and there were also a small table or two and

a mirror. Opening out of each bedroom was a dark little cupboard called a bathroom, which was equipped with a table, enamel basin and jug, and a zinc bath-tub, usually still containing dirty water and with its sides thick with black stains. Neither door nor window fitted, and an icy blast blew through the room.

The kitchen was a hut with grimy walls, a few yards away from the house, into which I hardly ever ventured. The table was thick with the accumulation of months or even years, and needed scraping before it was fit for use. Saucepans could be hired, but one look was enough. I gave the cook strict instructions he must use only our own.

Oh, how cold some of those rest-houses were! I couldn't get warm except in bed with my blankets and eiderdown piled on me. Even in the tropics at 5000 or 6000 feet up on the Burma-China frontier it can be really cold.

These rest-houses were used by officials travelling on duty, but in the out-of-the-way places there were perhaps only two or three visitors a year. A *durwan*, or caretaker, was in charge, but he made little or no attempt to keep them clean. Dirt lay thick everywhere, and I never put anything down until the tables had been hastily dusted. I soon learnt not to leave clothing about at night, as odd "things" fell out of the thatched roof. For the same reason we always slept under mosquito curtains.

To arrive at one of these rest-houses tired after a long march, and to have to put up with the discomfort and sordidness, needed all one's fortitude.

We used to send the cook ahead to have breakfast ready for us on arrival, and I often woke about 4 a.m. and heard the mules being loaded, and then the sound of their hoofs dying away in the distance. What cold, dark marches that cook must have had! But he never complained, and there was always a good breakfast laid ready for us on a

clean cloth, my "touring" china from Woolworth's brightening up the table.

After breakfast there was a three-hour wait before the caravan arrived, but I brought books and papers with me and settled myself in one of those big cane-seated chairs with long arms which men seem to love in the tropics. Even lying back with a leg on each arm, I could never get comfortable.

Once I was ill in a rest-house. Paddy straw was thickly spread over the floor to mitigate the draughts, and I can still remember lying there watching the bats flying round at night, the sparrows by day. I could see nothing out of the windows, for the glass was smeared with splashes of white-wash. There was no heat in the bedroom, and whenever the little stove in the living-room was lighted volumes of smoke filled the whole house. Nearly all the rest-house stoves were like that.

We would stay as long as ten days at a time in these huts, and I used to get homesick. To avoid one particularly chilly spot where the rest-house boasted only two small rooms, we used to do a long and tiring double march. Twenty-three miles does not sound very much in these days of motor-cars, but riding a pony at two and a half miles an hour, up hill, down dale all the way, meant a long, tiring day. How eagerly I looked out for the little white milestones which showed we were getting near the end of the journey!

One march I remember particularly. It came on to pour with rain just as we started on our twelve-mile journey. When, however, after our long climb we arrived at the rest-house, we found that it was being repaired, so we had a hasty breakfast and started off to do the next stage. I had a raging toothache, and we had to walk, as the path was all downhill and very slippery. Eventually, several hours late, we reached the next bungalow, and I went to

bed with a temperature directly the kit arrived. Next morning I called in the Chinese doctor who was with us on tour, and told him to take out my tooth. He looked a bit horrified and said that he would do his best, but that he had not much experience of dentistry. He did the deed, however, and I was soon all right again.

I was once talking of these rest-houses to a friend of mine in the P.W.D. (Public Works Department), but he just called me a "miserable touring woman" and advised me to stay in my own bungalow if I didn't approve of them!

Sometimes on tour we were lucky enough to meet another traveller. It was a bit of a squash in the rest-house then, and the servants got in each other's way and the dogs fought, but it was all such a picnic and great fun. Often now I smile at that strange mode of life which all of us on the frontier took as a matter of course.

Later, when we were transferred to Bhamo, we did not go out on tour for such long periods, and I enjoyed it all the more in consequence. I loved the start each morning just as the sun topped the mountains, I loved the cold crisp air, and the sunlight filtering through the trees. I got more and more interested in the country and the people, and in the strange sights we saw. There is a feeling of freedom which the jungle life always brings. Often now I long to be back in the Kachin Hills, to hear once more the shouts of the muleteers and the tinkling of the mule-bells.

CHAPTER V

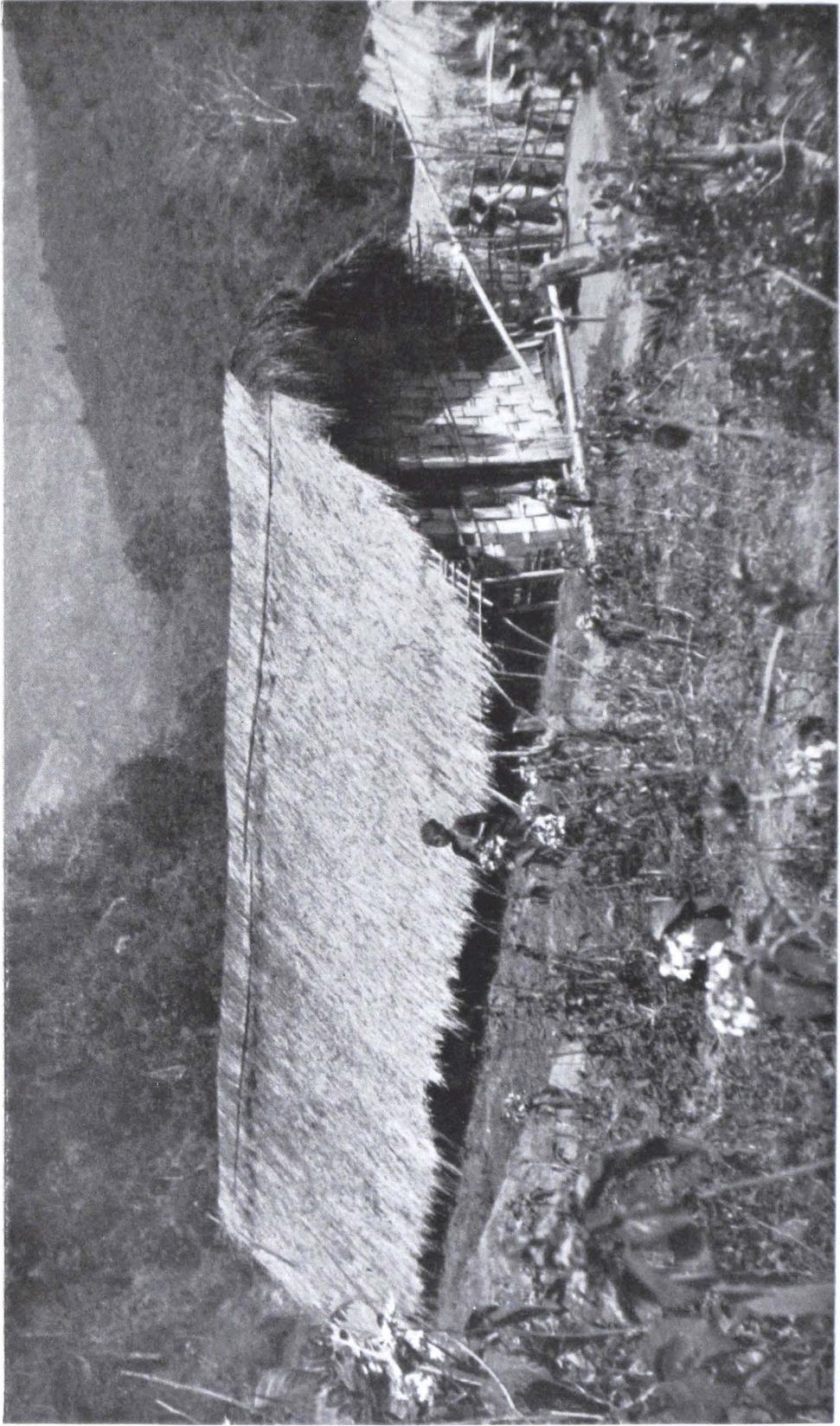
Social Life of the Kachins

THE Kachins play such an important part in the life of the frontier that I must say something about their manners and customs.

They are not a numerous race, and probably do not exceed 200,000 persons all told. Their main home is the Triangle, or country lying between the rivers Mali-hka and 'Nmai-hka, which unite just above Myitkyina to form the Irrawaddy. A further district inhabited solely by Kachins is the Hukawng valley, still farther west. But they may be found all over the hills of Upper Burma and western Yunnan, while scattered communities exist in Assam and Tibet.

Until quite recently the Kachins of the Triangle and of the Hukawng valley were left by the British undisturbed under the rule of their own chiefs. But slavery was rife among them, so about ten years ago Sir Harcourt Butler, the Governor of Burma, decided that this reproach against the British flag and name must cease. Expeditions were dispatched to secure the release of all slaves and the abolition of the practice of slavery. Each year since then expeditions have visited these districts in order to maintain British authority and to ensure that no return to that abhorrent practice has occurred.

The Kachins have no written language, so there are no native books to which we can turn for information concerning their early history. (About forty years ago the late Dr. O. Hanson of the American Baptist Mission pub-



A KACHIN HOUSE

lished a Kachin book in a romanized alphabet. This system was later adopted by the Burma Government and has ever since been taught in the schools.) But at big weddings and funerals and similar celebrations the priests recite the history of the race from earliest times to the present day—a marvellous feat of memory, for the recitation lasts several days and nights. Much of this history is legendary, dealing with mythological persons and deities, but there is wheat among the chaff. I asked one of our interpreters at Sinlunkaba about his family history, and he reeled it off for the past forty generations, tracing his ancestors' migration from the north of the Triangle down slowly and by easy stages to their present home, where they had already resided for seven generations. Allowing as little as fifteen years for a generation, this amounts to 600 years. How many English, even with the aid of books and documents, can trace their ancestry for such a period?

Kachin villages are perched on the hilltops and mountain spurs, and are almost hidden in the jungle. There is no main street; the houses are just scattered about, though not too near one another, from fear of fire. The houses are long, varying from thirty feet to 150 feet in length, according to the wealth of the owner. But one house suffices for several families, for the married sons bring their wives to the paternal home, and do not set up housekeeping on their own.

The framework of the house is made of massive tree trunks, and the walls are of split bamboo, as is the floor, which is raised two or three feet from the ground, leaving a place underneath for the chickens and pigs. The thatched roof projects many feet in front to form a large porch; here are kept the farm implements and baskets, here the women prepare the rice for cooking and the men do odd jobs, here the oxen and buffaloes are stabled at night.

A rough stairway leads up to the house itself, easy to

walk up for the barefooted Kachin but not for the booted European. The house is divided into "fireplaces"—Kachins do not speak of rooms—and sometimes the fireplaces are not partitioned off. There is a fireplace for the parents, another for each married son, another for the young people. These are all on one side of the house. On the other side are the kitchen and the visitors' room and the room sacred to the household deities, or *nats*, into which no stranger is allowed to enter.

Save for low stools and sleeping mats, there is no furniture at all in the house. A few odd cooking pots and some bamboo tubes of water may be seen in a corner, and perhaps a jar of rice whisky. The fireplaces are only hollows in the floor, filled with clay to prevent the house catching fire. All is dark and gloomy, for there are no windows, no light save through the doorways and the cracks in the walls. Still, the occupants are outdoors most of the day, and at night the blaze of the firewood on the hearths gives a fitful light. There are no chimneys, so the walls are stained black with smoke, which fills the whole atmosphere before finding its escape.

A Kachin house only lasts a few years—seven or eight at the very most. When it becomes too dirty or dilapidated for even a Kachin to inhabit, it is burnt down and a new one built. The owner prepares all the timber and bamboo, and then invites the men of the village to come and help him with the work. The new house is speedily built; one day may see its completion, or two at the most. The helpers receive no payment, but the owner has to entertain them to a big feast, with plenty of rice beer and whisky.

Whether the house is finished or not, the family occupy it the first night. First the priest, who is always present, invites the family *nats* to take possession of their new home and to bring good luck and prosperity with them. "New fire" is obtained by rubbing together two pieces of dry

bamboo, and with it the fire is lighted at the principal hearth. From this the priest ignites a torch and carries the fire to the other hearths. This is the signal for the women to start cooking the rice for the feast.

At the feast there is much screaming and shouting, quarrelling and yelling, especially as the beer and whisky begin to take effect. The first time I heard the completion of a new house being celebrated, I thought murder was being committed, or a raid was taking place, but was told not to be frightened, nothing was really the matter.

Kachins are by nature dirty, and the condition of the remote villages and of their inhabitants must be seen to be believed. Of course, there are excuses for them. The climate is very cold for months at a time, and water has frequently to be carried for long distances up steep mountain paths. The only time they ever have a wash all over is in the rains, when they have to be outdoors planting out the paddy. Their clothes are too horrible to think of; they wear them night and day until they drop off. And even when they do buy or make new clothes they put them on over the old ones! Education and the advance of civilization are, however, changing their habits in this respect, and I never had any reason to complain of dirtiness among my servants.

The main characteristic of the Kachin is his bold independence; he allows nobody, nothing, to interfere with his personal liberty; and he never cringes, as many other Orientals do. I have had many years' experience of Kachins as servants, and I found that it was quite useless to refuse them leave when they asked for it, however inconvenient it might be to me. They would come and announce that they would be away for five or six weeks for a funeral or a wedding in their village, and I had to do the best I could with some substitute, frequently a raw countryman who had never seen the inside of a European house before.

If I did refuse them leave, they just walked off and left me.

The Kachin is also revengeful, and considers it his bounden duty to avenge every wrong done to himself or to his family. If a murder is committed or a man even accidentally killed, then blood-money is payable, though the amount varies and is assessed by the village elders according to the circumstances of the case. If the culprit cannot or will not pay the amount of the fine, then a blood-feud is declared and carried on for generation after generation until vengeance is satisfied. If his goods or his crops or his cattle are stolen or damaged, if his daughter elopes or bears an illegitimate child, compensation must be paid him. If the offender accepts the terms and pays up the fine, the matter is ended. But if not, then there will be reprisals, and a feud will be declared. While a feud is being carried out, the Kachin is not particular about his methods so long as he is successful. All is fair in a blood-feud.

The great trouble of a blood-feud is that a whole community, a whole village, may be involved. If a Kachin is killed or murdered in a village, then his relatives will take vengeance on any person belonging to that village, even though he is perfectly innocent and may not even have heard of the incident. There is no time limit for the vengeance. One little incident may illustrate the dangers of these feuds. A British expedition on its way from Burma to China was adjudged by the Kachins to have inflicted some wrong on them; what it was was forgotten in the years that elapsed. Twenty years later a party of missionaries travelling along the same road were attacked and robbed in revenge for the old "wrong" just because they were British. No one could ever be safe in Kachinland if these feuds were permitted to continue.

The result of living for centuries in this network of feuds is that the Kachins are very reserved, very unwilling to

impart any information to strangers. Who knows but what he may be speaking to a member of a family or clan with whom his own family has a feud, and if he tells the stranger who he is, may not the stranger seize the opportunity to murder him? He is not instinctively a liar—indeed, he gets very indignant if you doubt his word—but there are occasions when a little prevarication is absolutely necessary.

According to the old tribal law thieves were either killed or sold as slaves. The result is that Kachins are remarkably honest, especially amongst themselves. I myself never lost a single thing the whole time I had them as servants. Even if I left a small article behind at a rest-house or in a grass hut while on tour, it was at once sent along after me. Nothing was ever locked up by me, and if I sent one of them to buy anything in the bazaar, he was most careful to bring back the correct change.

The Kachins are very hospitable people. Any traveller is always put up by the chief, who makes him welcome for several days. A Kachin can travel from one end of his country to the other and be sure of free food and lodging all the way. Guests rarely abuse this hospitality. While they are staying in a strange village, the chief, or *duwa*, is responsible for their behaviour.

The Kachins have many amusing superstitions about their food. If a man is slow, then it is thought that he must have eaten many pigs' tails—not cows' tails, as we might be inclined to say. If he is left-handed, then it is caused by his eating too many chickens' left wings. Crow's flesh makes a man cowardly, a tiger's heart makes him fierce and brave. Children must not eat eggs or their feet will not grow, and they must not eat moles' livers, or love for their parents will be destroyed.

Rice is their principal food, and, save when an iron or copper boiler has been obtained from the Chinese, it is always boiled in a tube of bamboo. Before the wood is

burnt through, the rice is ready for eating. Banana leaves serve as plates, and the food is eaten with the fingers. Bamboo is indeed the universal provider of the Kachin; there are few of his wants it does not supply.

Their food is very simple; it is just boiled rice seasoned with salt and chillies, with probably a few stewed vegetables or jungle leaves. They love meat, but are only able to indulge their appetites on festivals, when part of the flesh of the animals or chickens sacrificed is added to their meal.

Kachin men hate work and leave all the drudgery to their women. The lot of the latter is indeed hard. Rarely does one see a Kachin woman without a large basket on her back, hanging from a band across her forehead. This may seem a strange way to carry it, but it leaves the hands free to push aside bushes in the jungle, or to help the bearer up a particularly steep place. Frequently I have seen one twirling a spindle with her hands as she walked along bowed down with a heavily-laden basket.

How often, when camped near a Kachin village, have I been wakened before daylight by the grunts and groans of the women as they pounded the paddy in a mortar to remove the husk! I believe they were really trying to sing at their work, but their efforts were the reverse of musical. The day's rice prepared, they went off to the stream with long sections of bamboo, which they brought back up the steep mountainside filled with water. Breakfast cooked and eaten, they were off to the jungle picking wood for the fires, or, if it were summer, helping in the paddy field. If they could find a few spare minutes, then there was a new skirt to be woven.

The loom a Kachin woman uses is crude in the extreme. It consists of two bars of wood to keep the warp tight; one bar is tied to a stake in the ground, the other to a broad band round her waist. The weaver sits on the ground, her legs stretched straight out in front of her and her feet



KACHIN WOMEN WEAVING

braced against a log. She works the heddles with her hands, slowly threading the shuttle between the threads. It is a long, laborious process, but the results are very pretty, with many intricate designs.

Kachin cultivation is very primitive. At the beginning of the year all the vegetation on a patch of jungle is cut down and allowed to dry, and at the end of the spring it is set alight and nothing is left but a few blackened tree stumps. The land is roughly hoed to work in the ashes, and then sown, the sower scratching the ground as he drops the seed. Most of the work is, of course, done by the women and children, and they are solely responsible for the weeding during the summer rains. The buffaloes are used as in Old Testament days to tread out the grain, which is winnowed by being thrown up in the air with a shovel.

A second year the same land is cultivated, but a third year the crop would hardly repay the seed, so a new plot is prepared, and the old land left to return to jungle. But it never completely recovers, and the jungle is everywhere being destroyed by Kachin and Lisu cultivation.

As I have remarked in a previous chapter, a Kachin never goes out without his sword hanging from his shoulder in a wooden scabbard. Formerly he carried a spear too, but that practice has almost died out, while the Kachin crossbow is but rarely used now. I have met with them only in very remote villages. The arrows are never poisoned, like those of the Lisus, which are described in Chapter XII. Nowadays practically every Kachin has a gun, and as all guns in Burma have to be registered, there were some wonderful specimens brought in by their owners for inspection. A few of the chiefs had breech-loading shot-guns, received as rewards from the Government for good services. But most were rough "home-made" guns bought from the Chinese. The better ones were fired with percussion caps, others had flint locks, but many were just "gas-pipes"

fired with touch-paper. But in the hands of a Kachin, out for vengeance and ever lurking in ambush, they were capable of great execution, though he was too well aware of their limitations to stalk a tiger or other dangerous game unless it were strictly necessary, as in the case of a man-eater or a rogue elephant.

Like most savage peoples, the Kachins are animists, believing that spirits or demons, which they call *nats*, dwell in every mountain and cave, every wood and stream, every rock and tree. *Nats* rule the heavens and the stars, the sun and the moon. They are the arbiters of a Kachin's fortune, and may wreak disaster on his crops and his family, his house and his beasts. They will never help him unless he propitiates them. So the Kachin is perpetually striving to keep on the good side of the *nats*, to secure their goodwill.

If, notwithstanding the sacrifices he makes to the *nats*, a Kachin still finds his life dogged with ill-luck, he consults a medium to find out what the *nats* want, just as women in the West consult fortune-tellers and crystal-gazers. Or he may use some method of divination, just as some Europeans use cards or a coin. A bamboo is put on the fire, and when it bursts at the joint the position of the fibres gives the answer to the riddle.

The Kachins believe, too, in omens; for a snake or a wild cat to cross one's path denotes bad luck, a deer or a hedgehog good luck. There are endless taboos too, very similar to our superstitions regarding walking under a ladder or spilling salt; no man may crawl under a house—there might be women in the house and it would never do for a man to be lower than a woman; a man may not dress up in woman's clothes—it is very unlucky; a woman must never step over a rope or pole, she must remove it or pass under it.

One of the main reasons for the poverty prevailing in

the Kachin Hills is the expense of the many sacrifices that must be made to the *nats*. Most of these are for help in illness, and on account of their ignorance of hygiene sickness is ever present.

The priests dress and live exactly like the rest of the community, but are usually the most intelligent. They alone are acquainted with the special language and forms of address used when supplicating the *nats*, so they are naturally in great and frequent demand.

Sacrifices are made in the *nat* groves situated at the entrance to the village. There the narrow path is shaded by immense trees, through whose dense foliage the sun filters with difficulty. On either side are posts ornamented with crude drawings, representing the many things wanted by the villagers and depicted there to remind the *nats* not to forget to provide them. All around may be seen altars, little platforms roughly made of bamboo. Attached to long bamboo poles are elongated baskets which once contained the fowls sacrificed to the *nats*. There are special altars, varying in shape and design, to the various *nats*; but, having been once used, they are left uncared for till they fall to pieces. Stretched across the path is a rope from which dangle star-shaped ornaments of bamboo; this is to keep away from the village the *nats* which cause smallpox and cattle disease.

In the *nat* groves at the entrances of the villages, and also beside the houses, are crosses, formed of two heavy poles fixed in the ground in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. They are the frames to which cattle have been tied for sacrifice. I have always avoided watching one of these ceremonies, which, I am told, are gory enough to turn most stomachs. Once when walking along with my pony following behind, I came upon a crowd at a *nat* grove with the buffalo all tied up and waiting for the fatal knife. I just took to my heels and bolted from the gruesome sight.

Kachins believe that a large family is a sign of the *nats*' favour, so they are always delighted when another child is born. But childbirth, like everything else among them, is subject to many rules and ceremonies. Directly the babe is born, one of the attendant women gives it a name to prevent the *nats* naming it and claiming it as their own. For three days mother and child remain in the house, and then, on the fourth day, the priest comes and sacrifices to the household *nats*, beseeching their favour for the new arrival. The baby is also presented to the sun, after which it may be carried out of doors. On the same day the mother goes with her husband to the village spring, where she washes herself and her garments. Thereafter she resumes her place in the community.

But all births are not happy, and the most terrible calamity that can happen to a family is the death of the wife in childbirth. If this is thought to be imminent, the whole village turns out to try to frighten away the *sauns*, or evil spirits, who are trying to prevent the birth of the child. Guns are fired, stones and arrows are flying everywhere under and round the house. Torches and swords are flourished over the wretched woman, and if it is possible to obtain it, a meteorite is placed under her head. Horrible smells are made by burning rags and bark.

If, however, all these precautions are of no avail and the woman dies, her body is burnt as soon as possible. If the child cries when taken away from its mother, then it is allowed to live; but if it remains silent, it is burnt with its mother. The latter is believed to have become a *saun* herself, so the priest is required at once to purify the air and the house. He ties a small chicken to the end of a stick and brandishes it in every direction, calling to the *sauns* to accept this little victim and to go away. The room in which the death occurred is demolished, and sometimes the whole house is burnt to the ground.

In describing a Kachin house I mentioned the "fire-place of the young people". Kachin boys and girls commence love-making at an early age, and this fire-place is for their own use. There they can be together without interference from their elders, for, provided they are not of the same family or clan, practically no restriction is placed on the relations between boys and girls prior to marriage. But the young people are not promiscuous; the relationships are more in the nature of temporary marriages. The girl gives her lover a strip of brocade like her skirt which she has specially woven for him, and he proudly ties it on his bag. When they separate, the girl suffers no loss of virtue or respect, unless she be pregnant. Then her lover must pay a heavy fine, for the girl is considered degraded and will be unable to make a good marriage.

Normally a marriage is arranged by the parents without the wishes of the son being consulted. Firstly, articles belonging to several suitable girls are submitted to a diviner, who determines which of them will make the best wife.

Having decided on the girl, emissaries are sent to her parents to ask her in marriage. Then follows long, keen bargaining, for the girl's father tries to get as much for his daughter as he can. But finally the price is agreed on, all other matters satisfactorily arranged, and the wedding day fixed.

The bride's parents and near relations do not even attend the wedding, and she leaves for the bridegroom's house with some friends, one of whom carries a large basket of presents. Meanwhile all the bridegroom's friends and relations have gathered at his father's house, where a great feast is being prepared.

Arrived at her new home, the bride has to pass along a narrow avenue of elephant-grass which has been sprinkled with chickens' blood. This is to purify her and get rid of the *nats* which have accompanied her. She must walk very

carefully between the bunches of grass, for bad luck will dog the marriage if even one tiny drop of the blood stains her clothes.

The avenue of grass safely negotiated, the bride steps up a new stairway into her new home, where she is welcomed by her mother-in-law, who places a necklace over her head as a token that she has become a member of the family.

She is now introduced to her husband, whom she sees possibly for the first time. They sit down together on a mat, drink wine from the same cup, chew the same tobacco, and the wedding ceremony is over.

The bride, after washing herself in the nearest stream, starts to cook the rice and meat for the feast, which, with much drinking of rice whisky and beer, continues till day-break.

Such is the marriage ceremony, but there are occasions when it is partially dispensed with. Perhaps the price asked for the girl is too exorbitant, perhaps the young couple are in love but the parents will not consent to a marriage. In the first case the bridegroom's emissaries decoy the girl away, the religious ceremony is hurried through, and she is legally wed. Then friends persuade the bride's parents to accept a smaller price for her, and the marriage is acquiesced in; otherwise revenge, even a feud, might follow. In the second case the young couple dispense with assistance and just elope and settle down in some distant village.

But it is death and burial which entail the greatest sacrifices, the most elaborate ceremonies.

Directly breath has left the body, the death is announced to the village by the firing of guns and the beating of gongs. The corpse is washed and shrouded and then placed on a catafalque of bamboo in the main "fireplace", in the corner sacred to the family *nats*.

A tree is selected for the coffin, but before it is cut down a chicken is sacrificed to propitiate the spirit of the tree.

While the coffin is being prepared, men erect the *karoi*—a cluster of bamboos and branches of trees round which the death dance is performed—in front of the house.

That night the funeral dance is performed by two men, each armed with a decorated spear. The dance starts in the house, then continues round it outside, with circling of the *karoi* after each movement. It is more prancing and posturing than dancing, but as the performers get worked up, the steps quicken.

On the fourth or sixth day the body is buried, some little hill in the jungle being usually selected for the grave. That night the death dance is performed round the *karoi* and continues nightly until the final ceremonies are completed.

The death dance is a most intricate performance, with numerous steps, postures, and movements, representing all the usual acts of Kachin life. Led by two masters of ceremonies, and to the sound of three big gongs, it is the young folk who are the principal performers, though their elders may join in too. The clearing of the jungle, the planting of the paddy, harvesting and threshing, the spinning of cotton and weaving of cloth, all the many acts of domestic life are portrayed by the dancers, who must follow exactly the actions of the two leaders. It is a most impressive ceremony.

The body has been buried in the grave, but the soul has remained waiting in the sacred corner of the house. It must be sent on its way to rejoin the souls of its ancestors in the spirit world. Ceremonies take place at the grave to separate the soul completely from the body in which it used to dwell. The catafalque in which it had rested is broken up and the wood scattered on the roadside. Then the priest, holding a spear before him, harangues the soul and exhorts it to start on the great journey to the spirit world. He describes the road minutely, warning the soul of the many difficulties

and dangers. It is a long and impressive speech, a fitting climax to the elaborate funeral ceremonies.

Before closing this chapter, I must pay a tribute to those many Kachin soldiers of the Burma Rifles who fought for Britain in Mesopotamia. A memorial to those loyal soldiers of the King-Emperor is erected on the hills at Sinlumkaba.

CHAPTER VI

The Frontier Meeting

BY far the most important event of the year is the Frontier Meeting.

Many centuries ago a powerful Shan kingdom ruled Yunnan and Upper Burma, and its victorious armies overran Assam, Indo-China, and Siam. But gradually the Shan power waned and its dominions were conquered and annexed by its neighbours, China and Burma. Between these two countries were many petty Shan princedoms, sometimes owing allegiance to Burma, sometimes to China.

Into this virtual no-man's-land the Kachins gradually forced their way in successive migrations from their home in Tibet and the headwaters of the Irrawaddy. They dominated the hills and preyed on the Shans, whom they confined to the hot, malarious plains and valleys. They were an arrogant race, owing allegiance to no one—certainly never to the Shans, whom they considered as their milch cows. “You set fire to the grass or kill a Shan just for the pleasure of doing it” is a Kachin saying to this day. Even the Chinese address Kachins as “lords of the hills”.

When Britain annexed Upper Burma in 1885, she was forced to undertake extensive operations against the Kachins, who resented her intrusion into their preserves, and when, fifteen years later, the frontier between Burma and China was delimited, the Kachins did not alter their manner of life one tiny bit. What were international boundaries to them? Their raids continued just as if they did not exist.

But such a state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, or it would assuredly give rise to serious international complications. So in 1902 an agreement was come to by the governments of Burma and Yunnan whereby the British and Chinese frontier troops and officials would co-operate in preventing raids across the frontier by the Kachins. The Kachin's resentment of the slightest wrong, his habit of taking a life for a life, an ox (or even several oxen) for an ox, has been referred to in the preceding chapter, and such attempts by Kachins to redress their wrongs ended frequently in a blood-feud between two villages or clans—in a real little war.

The Kachins had a machinery for settling such disputes, which was sometimes used. The village elders of the two parties would meet together and assess the amount of compensation to be paid by the culprit, whether for a human life taken, for cattle stolen, or for a woman abducted. The two countries adopted a similar procedure. Their frontier officers were to keep in constant touch with one another and discuss and settle as quickly as possible all trans-frontier Kachin disputes. Any cases which they were unable to settle were to be referred to their senior officers, who would meet annually.

It is from these annual conferences that the present Frontier Meetings have gradually evolved. Originally they were quite informal, dealing with Kachin disputes only. Nowadays they exercise jurisdiction over disputes between persons of any race inhabiting the frontier districts. A scale of compensation and rules of procedure have been laid down, and two courts (or three, including the Appeal Court) sit for a fortnight each January at Nawnngma. There is also a small meeting held at Sima to settle Myitkyina District cases.

When a dispute is arbitrated by Kachin elders, the compensation awarded comprises so many buffaloes, so



KACHIN SERVANTS GETTING READY FOR THE OFFICIAL DINNER AT THE FRONTIER MEETING

many brass gongs, so many pieces of silk, and so on; but such awards are hardly suited to a court of law, so the compensation to be granted by the frontier courts was calculated in rupees. Murder, for instance, costs 300 rupees (£22, 10s. *od.*), and grievous hurt resulting in the loss of one limb, 150 rupees (£11, 5s. *od.*), and of two limbs, 200 rupees (£15). The scale falls rapidly, so that a "severe hurt" is compensated by 50 rupees (£3, 15s. *od.*), and a mere "assault" by 10 rupees (15s.) only.

The compensation for the loss of a buffalo rises from 10 rupees (15s.) in the case of a year-old calf to 60 rupees (£4, 10s. *od.*) for a full-grown bull. Animals or articles not mentioned in the scale are compensated for at their assessed value.

Another very interesting provision in the frontier code is the "track law", a Shan, rather than a Kachin, custom. When cattle or horses have been stolen, it is the duty of the owner at once to search for the animals' tracks and to follow them; the police do not accept the responsibility of finding stolen property. If the tracks lead to a village, then the owner notifies the village headman. This makes the village responsible for the stolen animals, and they must either produce them and return them to their owner, or they must pay full compensation for them, or they must show that the animals were only led through the village by strangers. In the last case the headman accompanies the owner in following the track to a second village, when his responsibility ceases. And so the search goes on until the animals are found, or some village is proved guilty of the theft and forced to pay compensation. It is a simple plan, and, being simple, usually seems to work. Of course, sometimes the tracks are lost in the fields, but that generally means that the animals have just strayed and will be found in due course.

Some of my readers may think it too much to expect an

owner to recognize the tracks of all his animals. I have not had much to do with buffaloes or cattle, but the Shan or Chinese peasant knows all his animals from birth, has tended them when out grazing on the grassy hillsides, has driven them in the plough, is familiar with every incident in their lives. It must be child's play to him to recognize their tracks. Of mules and ponies I have, however, had some experience and have marvelled at the way a muleteer will trace a strayed mule by its hoof-marks, recognizing his own animal among hundreds of others. He will point out the mark of some cut or bent nail, plainly visible to him in the dust. A true countryman is as much a tracker as the Red Indian of the story-books.

Nawngma is a little frontier village situated at the junction of Bhamo District, the Burmese Shan state of North Hsenwi, and the Chinese Shan state of Meng Mao. Near the village, on the banks of the River Shweli, is a plot of grassy waste land about fifteen or twenty acres in area. Here each year is erected the British camp.

On the river side of the camp is built a long row of *tawmaws*, or Shan huts, with the big durbar tent in the middle of the row. There are about a dozen of these *tawmaws*, the end ones being the two court-houses, and the rest the living-rooms of the civil and military officers attending the meeting. They are erected specially each year and pulled down directly the meeting is over.

A *tawmaw* is a most ingeniously constructed building, for not a single nail is used. First a very elaborate framework is made of bamboo poles tied together with thin strips of bamboo. The roof is thickly thatched with grass, while the walls are of plaited bamboo laths. Sometimes a springy floor of split bamboo is laid on bamboo rafters, while in one corner a fireplace is made. This is simply a shallow hole about three feet square and plastered with clay. Logs of wood are the fuel used, and as a precaution against the

whole building being set alight by the sparks, the walls near the fireplace are also smeared with clay. Though there is no chimney, the smoke easily escapes through the many crevices.

With curtains hung all round the walls and mats spread on the floor, the *tawmaw* makes quite a comfortable living-room, but it is too draughty to sleep in during cold January nights, so we all used our tents as bedrooms.

Behind the row of tents and *tawmaws* are numerous smaller huts which serve as kitchens and as quarters for the servants, while at either end of the camp are similar but larger buildings for the escort of military police, their ponies, and their mules.

The Chinese officials stay in the village of Manai, nearly a mile away just across the frontier. The Frontier Commissioner—his title used to be *taoyin* but was changed a year or two ago to *tupan*—makes his headquarters in a large Buddhist monastery, while other officers stay in houses in the village. They are really much better housed than the British are, for the monastery has a galvanized iron roof and solid wooden walls and floors, but the Chinese dread the valley of the Shweli because of the malaria, to which they seem particularly susceptible, and hurry back to Tengyueh directly they can get away.

It is an official holiday in Burma from Christmas Eve until New Year's Day, and Chinese hate being away from home at old Chinese New Year, which comes about the beginning of February. So the Frontier Meeting is arranged to start early in January, which suits all parties.

The opening day is given over to official calls. The Chinese always call first, because the courts are held on British territory. They all ride over in sedan chairs with three or four bearers, and are accompanied by a large escort of soldiers headed by a drum and bugle band. The Chinese soldiers are dressed in dirty grey cotton uniforms;

some wear cloth shoes, some straw sandals. As they enter the British camp, a word of command rings out and they change from a slovenly march to an exaggerated goose-step. The Consul's servant meets them there and receives the red or white visiting cards of the Chinese officials. Holding these aloft in his hand, he hurries ahead of the procession to where the British await their guests, the military and frontier officers in khaki uniforms, the deputy commissioners and the Consul resplendent in full dress with gold and silver lace.

The procession halts, the sedan chairs are put down, the Chinese alight. The guard of honour of military police gives the general salute, while the two bands burst into some inspiriting tune, the big drum and the shrill bagpipes drowning their Chinese rivals. The British and Chinese officials meet with bows and salutes, introductions are made, and all stroll off together into the durbar tent, where toasts are drunk and old acquaintanceships renewed.

How drab, how un-Oriental, the Chinese officials look, dressed as they are in ordinary Chinese robes of black or dark blue silk topped with a bowler or soft felt hat! How different it must have been twenty years ago when China was still an empire and her officials came to call dressed in gorgeous dragon robes with plumes of peacock feathers nodding in their "button" hats!

That same afternoon the British officials return the Chinese call. It is an imposing procession. In the van march the two bands, which take it in turn to play their small repertoire of tunes. The bandmaster, a stocky little Gurkha or a tall bearded Sikh, flourishes his staff, throwing it up into the air and catching it with graceful abandon. The drums roll and the bagpipes skirl. Behind them ride the British officers, all arrayed in full uniform, and escorted by detachments of mounted police with gay turbans, their lance heads flashing in the sun and pennons waving in the breeze.

I suppose that long residence in the jungle does give one a wrong sense of proportion; anyhow, there never seemed anything incongruous to me in these ceremonious processions taking place at Nawngma. But one year an army officer out recruiting Kachins for the Burma Rifles happened to pay a visit to the camp just as the procession was moving off. He hid behind a *tawmaw* until the cavalcade was out of sight.

“My goodness!” he said, as he emerged. “I never dreamed of anything like this. Here you are squatting in a paddy field and all dressed up with swords and medals and what not.”

The next day the courts commence their sittings and continue daily for a fortnight or longer until all cases have been disposed of. They sit on Sundays the same as on weekdays, but on Namkham market days, which occur every fifth day, the courts are closed. One year they did try to hurry things up and keep the courts sitting without any holidays at all, but it didn't work; the parties to the cases and their witnesses just didn't turn up, but went to market instead.

The courts open each morning at 10 o'clock and sit on until 4 p.m. without any break. At least that is what is supposed to happen, but as a matter of fact the Chinese magistrates are none too punctual, and there were days when a court didn't start until midday or even 1 o'clock. Then they tried to make up some of the lost time by sitting an hour or so later.

There are two courts which sit in *tawmaws* at either end of the camp. Indeed, the whole camp is divided, or perhaps it is more correct to say united, by the durbar tent. To the east are the *tawmaws* of the officials of the northern Shan states, the court of the Assistant Superintendent Kutkai, and their military police escort; to the west the *tawmaws* of the Bhamo District officers, the court of the

Assistant Superintendent Sinlumkaba, and the Bhamo military police escort.

Five Chinese magistrates or administrative deputies attend the meeting and take it in turn to sit in the courts and deal with the cases which concern their own districts. Some naturally have many more cases to deal with than others, and are frequently on the bench; it all depends on the adjacency of their district to the frontier and on the character of the inhabitants.

At a big table in the middle of the bamboo court-houses the British and Chinese magistrates sit side by side, with their secretaries and interpreters beside or behind them, while court ushers and police, witnesses and prisoners stand or squat on the ground in front. Interpreters are continually necessary; the magistrates even need their services to converse with one another, and all evidence has to be translated for the benefit of one magistrate if not of both. Such are some of the difficulties which beset the administration of justice on the border.

But the magistrates do have some compensations denied their colleagues in England. Cigarettes and cigars and chocolates, bottles of cherry brandy and *crème de menthe* are graciously supplied by the Burma Government for their refreshment.

The cases that come before the courts all look very simple, and one would imagine they would be settled in a few minutes. But they hang on for hours or even days. Examining and cross-examining the witnesses, translating and recording the evidence take an unconscionable time, but it is the discussion between the two magistrates on the verdict which is the main cause for delay. They never seem to believe the same witnesses. After much deliberation some agreement is reached: the case is dismissed or compensation is awarded, or it is found that agreement is impossible, and the case is sent up to the Appeal Court.

I found the outside of the courts as interesting as the inside. There were the two long bamboo flagstaffs on which, whenever the court was sitting, waved the Union Jack and the Chinese flag. There, too, stood the Chinese magistrate's sedan chair ready to carry him home. The three bearers were sitting on the ground nearby, puffing away at their long pipes. Two or three Chinese soldiers in grey cotton lounged round the entrance; they, too, awaited their master's return. What a long, weary wait they all had! But they could, and frequently did, go to the little camp bazaar for a snack or a chat.

Little groups of people interested in some future case loitered about awaiting their call. Every frontier tribe seemed to be represented: Kachins and Lisus, Shans and Chinese, Palaungs and Achangs. What tales they would have to tell their friends when they got back to their distant villages! Suddenly there is a shout and all rush towards the Bhamo police lines. The elephant has just come in to camp with a supply of firewood.

About half-way through the meeting the Appeal Court commences its sittings in the durbar tent. The judges are the Chinese Commissioner and either the Superintendent of the northern Shan states or the Deputy Commissioner Bhamo. They go through the records of the magistrates, but settlement is not easy. The Consul, who is always present, tries to help, and finally some compromise or other is reached. One or two cases, however, have been outstanding for years; each year they are brought up again, but the other side refuses to admit the claim, so there is nothing to do but to adjourn them to the next meeting.

I have often peeped into the durbar tent when the Appeal Court has been sitting. There they sat at a long table covered with a white cloth, bundles of papers before them. (I always knew when the Appeal Court was going

to sit, for my dining-table used to disappear to help form the judicial bench! How awkward it was when the sitting was prolonged, especially if I had some people coming in to dinner!) There were six of them: the *tupan* and his secretary, the Consul and his writer, the Deputy Commissioner and his clerk. Cigars and cigarettes and chocolates, of course, were on the table, but champagne instead of liqueurs. Thus did the Appeal Court mark its superiority over the lower courts!

As darkness falls, a petrol gas lamp or two are brought in from one or other of the *tawmaws* and strong shadows are thrown around the tent. On and on sit the deliberators; once it was nearly midnight before they rose.

There is one class of case which each year gives much trouble—the boundary dispute. In several places the frontier runs along a stream or river which unfortunately frequently changes its bed. A little extra piece of land appears on one bank or on the other. Some of them are so small that they hardly seem worth worrying about. But both sides claim them and settlement seems almost impossible. So they are declared no-man's-land, and neither claimant is permitted to cultivate or use them. Some day or other a boundary commission will have to settle the matter.

There is one such plot of no-man's-land adjoining the camp, and the Chinese village which claims it persists in burying its dead on it. There was one corpse buried there during the last meeting I attended, and the villagers were threatened with dire punishment if they should ever again venture to flout the orders of the court.

On another disputed plot one of our military officers got his men to construct some "jumps" for the lady riders of the camp. He didn't know about frontier disputes; it was just a piece of waste land to him. In due course the Chinese complained. But settlement was easy when it was explained to the *tupan* that we were not trying to establish

any further right to the land, and that the jumps would be removed when the camp broke up.

About half-way through the meeting the Chinese officials are invited over to dinner as the guests of the Burma Government. There is one little *tawmaw* the door of which is usually kept guarded. It is commonly known as "King George's storehouse". Its shelves are laden with tins and bottles at the beginning of the meeting, but when supplies have been issued for the dinner they look quite empty. The cooks go off laden with soup and salmon, milk and asparagus, peaches and cream. From the market arrive dozens of chickens and basketfuls of vegetables. A special hut is built behind the durbar tent, and holes are dug for fireplaces. Long benches of split bamboo serve as shelves and tables.

All the cooks in camp come to help, and somehow or other the dinner is dished up—too many cooks do not spoil the broth this time.

The great white durbar tent is hung with flags all round the walls, and a long table, formed of many a small one, runs right across the middle of the tent, for guests and hosts number more than a score. The table is tastefully laid; we women have attended to this.

The guests arrive in their sedan chairs and file into the tent. The table takes up all the room, so all occupy their seats at once. What a job that has been to arrange, and what consultations have been held! Official precedence must be respected, and yet interpreters must be at hand to enable guests and hosts to talk to one another.

Dinner is served. Burmese and Kachin, Chinese and Indian men-servants dash in and out carrying piles of plates or laden dishes, narrowly missing the guy-ropes and ducking beneath the low tent-flaps. Out again they come with piles of dirty plates and dishes, which are seized by the band of impressed helpers, who proceed to "wash up" with unaccustomed hands.

Soon the popping of champagne corks may be heard from inside the tent, and occasionally the clapping of hands betokens the end of some speech.

We women are not invited to the dinner, but our servants are commandeered to wait on the guests, and our tables taken for the banquet. But we manage a quiet dinner all together and wait for the return of the men.

The banquet is over early, for it is contrary to Chinese etiquette to linger after the meal is finished. Soon after nine the bugles ring out, the guard comes to attention, the guests climb into their chairs and are borne away.

Next day it is very late before the courts open!

The last afternoon of the meeting is given up to sports. The courts close early, as policemen and court runners, magistrates and interpreters are all wanted to help or to take part. The camp is thronged with sightseers—men and women, boys and girls from every frontier tribe. It is the greatest day of the meeting.

The Chinese officials arrive in state, and are given seats in front of the durbar tent, where we women later dispense tea. The Chinese soldiers arrive in force, with band playing, and take up a position on one side. The American missionaries from Namkham bring their schoolgirls with them to enjoy the spectacle: rosy-cheeked Kachins looking clean, but spoilt by the Burmese skirts they have adopted. What a shame it is that education tends to make these tribespeople relinquish their old customs and their native dresses!

There are tent-pegging and jumping competitions for the mounted police, flat races for the infantry, sack races, potato races, three-legged races. A well-greased pole in one corner of the ground attracts many climbers, but it is not till late at night, long after the meeting has broken up, that a Kachin youth, armed with a rag to wipe off the grease above him, manages to climb to the top and seize the five-rupee note. It is money well earned.

The Chinese soldiers will not compete against the Indians and Kachins. Special races are arranged for them. The favourite is the elephant race. Four men form the legs of the beast, two more standing on top as the head, and a seventh on top of the latter as the trunk. A race between two such "elephants" is very amusing, especially when, as often happens, one of them collapses near the winning post. It is probably all for the best that few of the onlookers understand the remarks of the "trunk" who has been let down from a height of ten feet or more.

The Chinese also give wonderful displays of ancient wrestling and sword and bayonet fighting, while one year a famous troop of strolling players which happened to be in the neighbourhood was hired by the *tupan* to amuse the crowd. The strong-man let a heavy touring-car, laden with six or eight passengers, be driven over planks laid on his body. The weight was so great that the planks broke, but the man arose unharmed after the car had passed over him.

The prizes are distributed, cheers are given, and the Chinese hurry away to prepare for the dinner they are offering to the British that night.

Formerly it was the custom to ride over on horseback to the Chinese banquet, but the last year or two a road fit for motor traffic has been constructed between the two camps. So now the guests go over in motor-cars. It is a good new custom. Chinese are ever hospitable and press their guests to so many *gan-bays*, or "no heeltaps", of wine or spirit that cases have been known in the past when British guests have returned home in sedan chairs; ponies do get so restive when kept waiting for many hours!

The banquet includes many Chinese delicacies—bird's-nest soup, shark's fins, sea-slugs, pickled eggs, and such like; but out of pity for the clumsy British, spoons and forks are provided to supplement the elusive chopsticks.

The Chinese dinner is over, farewells are said, the guests depart, it is the last night of the meeting. Next morning one little final ceremony takes place—the settlement of the accounts. A couple of Chinese magistrates come to the British camp for the last time. Accounts are compared showing how much is due by Burma to China, how much by China to Burma, on account of the cases decided at the meeting. The balance is paid over in cash, receipts signed and sealed. The meeting is over.

CHAPTER VII

Camp Life at Nawngma

LIFE in a camp on the banks of the River Shweli can be very pleasant, and we all enjoyed the two or three weeks we spent at Nawngma and looked forward with pleasure to the next Frontier Meeting. But there were drawbacks. A thick mist enveloped the plain practically every morning from dawn till 10 or 11 a.m., and a tent does not keep out the damp like a house. All our clothes had to be stowed away each night in boxes or under the pillow; were a single garment left on the chair, it would be too wet to wear next morning.

A camp-bed is none too comfortable. It is too narrow to tuck the clothes in securely, so whenever one turns over it is at the risk of uncovering one's back or, what is worse, of losing all the bedclothes and having to light a candle and remake the bed in the middle of the night. Pillows, too, have a way of falling off the head of the bed, while the stretched canvas is no substitute for a spring mattress.

I used to wake each morning to the sounds of reveille and call out for Ma Naw, who soon appeared with a pot of tea. Then, propped up with pillows and cushions, I would sip the hot tea and sleepily read a month-old copy of the *Times*, half listening the while to the multitudinous noises of the camp. The softly padding footsteps and shrill voices of the Shan women wending their way to market with heavy baskets of vegetables or firewood; the guttural gurgle of some Chinese muleteers driving their mules out to graze; the crisp accents of Hindustani as some sepoy walked past;

the liquid notes of Burmese clerks and peons; the gruff, familiar voices of my Kachin servants. Above these noises could be heard faintly the wail of the bagpipes as the band practised in some distant corner; the clink of metal and sharply rapped-out orders of "Right turn" or "Halt" as men were drilled; the thudding of ponies' hoofs, the cries of "*Shabash!*", the long-drawn-out yells of "*Allah! Allah!*" as mounted sepoy practised tent-pegging.

But suddenly my musing and reading would be interrupted by the sound of the camp clock striking eight; it was time for me to get up and dress. It was a simple instrument, our camp clock: just the blade of a *mamouti*, or heavy iron hoe, on which a sepoy struck the hours with a thick stick!

The blazing fire in the *tawmaw* was very welcome, but by the time breakfast was finished and I had ordered the day's meals and issued to the cook the necessary stores, the sun had dispersed the mist and it was quite hot. The rest of the day was free for excursions, rides, and walks, for reading, writing, or sewing, and quickly and pleasantly the days passed by.

Every fifth day was Namkham market, the largest and most important fair of the border lands. As I have already stated, the courts were closed on market days, and the native clerks and servants, police and witnesses, all thronged thither. Most of our men seized the opportunity to go out for a day's snipe shooting, but I loved to wander over to Namkham to see and study the gay, motley crowd. There were types of every tribe and race of the frontier, and though the men's garments were drab and uninteresting, the women still clung to their old tribal dresses, and, human nature being the same the wide world over, had whenever possible arrayed themselves in their best clothes and put on all their jewellery, to flaunt their finery before the eyes of their sisters, and no doubt before those of the men too.

I wanted to photograph them, and used to stalk them with my camera. Sometimes I was successful; one might be snapped unawares, too deep in conversation or bargaining to notice my approach. How her friends used to chaff her, and how she would glare at me and blush with shame! Occasionally one would be tempted by a small bribe to brave the terrors of the lens, but that was rare indeed; most fled or turned their backs or covered their faces with their hands, fearing that the evil eye of the black box would rob them of their soul.

In three long stone buildings were grouped the better class stalls. Some displayed rolls of gaudy coloured silks and satins and velvets, white and printed cottons, coloured blankets, wool and cotton and thread. Others sold clothing, coats and trousers, hats and shoes; others again pots and pans. There were shops selling nothing but swords, or *dahs*; cheap ones had handle and scabbard of wood, better ones were ornamented with brass and copper, while the expensive presentation swords were encased in elaborately worked silver.

There were jewellery stalls with buttons and pins, bracelets and earrings, displayed in glass-lidded boxes to guard against nimble-fingered thieves. Most of the articles were made of silver delicately chased or enamelled in colours, but a few of the smaller pieces were of soft yellow gold. The most peculiar were the bracelets, heavy cylinders of silver, frequently six or more inches long. Silver articles were always sold by weight—silver against silver coin, with possibly something added for the cost of the workmanship. Her jewellery is a tribeswoman's sole valuable property, and it is only in the event of direst need or poverty that she will consent to part with it. The torque—a large ring of solid silver worn round the neck—is to her what the wedding ring is to the European woman, and that is always the last piece of jewellery to be sold.

But it was outside the market halls that the greatest interest lay. There in the open were the eating stalls, there the country people had spread their goods for sale on the bare ground. The alleyways between were so narrow, the crush of people so great, that it was only with difficulty that one could get along without treading on the wares.

Huge round pancakes were being fried in pig's fat; these, with yellow junkets of bean curd, seemed the favourite dishes. Leaves and vegetables and fungi, many looking nasty and poisonous, were being cooked and made a "tasty" addition to the boiled rice. One stall displayed for sale small glasses of sickly looking drinks, bright red or green or yellow.

There were baskets for sale, and earthen pots, large round hats of plaited bamboo, straw sandals, lotus roots looking like strings of sausages, rice and maize. One stall sold nothing but cheap china rice bowls and tea cups, while another's wares were restricted to empty bottles. Here were empty whisky and gin and beer bottles, scent bottles, medicine bottles; nearly all must have been bought from the Europeans' servants and were offered for sale to the countryfolk at greatly enhanced prices. Even empty tins have a value in this primitive land.

Practically all the stallholders were women. Their menfolk squatted about, smoking or chewing, or patronized the eating stalls. It is the women who must work in the border land.

It was all extremely interesting, but the dust, the heat, the smells were almost overpowering, while everybody was chewing betel-nut and spitting the bright red juice all over the ground.

One little corner always appealed to me, for there were to be found the Maingthas, as the Burmese call the Achangs. They are the swordmakers of the border, and displayed for sale rows of shining sword-blades. The men were at



PALAUNG GIRLS IN NAWNGMA MARKET

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work in their camp hammering out the iron blades, and their women, so picturesque in their tight trousers and huge spreading turbans of dark blue cotton, looked after the stall. Such cheerful folk they were, always laughing and chattering! I shall have more to tell of them later on.

In striking contrast to the Achangs were the Palaungs, a wild-looking people who scowled when I tried to photograph them. They are descended from the aboriginal inhabitants of the country and are akin to the Khmers, who founded the once great kingdom of Cambodia and built the famous temples of Angkor. In Burma they have a little state of their own called Tawngpeng, where a Palaung chieftain rules in semi-independence. But the people of the border land are wilder and less civilized, and are usually known as Palè Palaungs.

The Palaung maidens wear a long skirt with horizontal stripes of red and blue, ornamented at the side with a fringe of coloured threads. Round the waist are a white scarf and a broad flat ring of cane and silver. The short black coatee has a scarlet collar, and round the arms are fringes of coloured threads. Blue leggings are worn, but no shoes or sandals. Their black hair hangs loose over their shoulders. The little round cap is quartered in red and blue and ornamented with silver buttons. Tubes of silver are thrust through the ear lobes, round the neck are worn heavy silver torques, on both wrists are huge silver bracelets.

When a Palaung woman is married, she pulls her skirt up over her breasts and keeps it in place with thick coils of silver; the coatee is left loose and unfastened. The hair is concealed beneath a dark turban, round which is wound the long fringe of coloured threads.

There are very few Kachins living in the mountains within a day's journey of Namkham, so practically all those to be seen were connected with the Frontier Meeting—policemen, servants, witnesses, and their womenfolk.

Shans, of course, predominated in the market, but there were also lots of Palaungs, probably the aboriginal inhabitants of the border districts who have been driven into this corner by their fellow hill-dwellers, the warlike Kachins. How picturesque their womenfolk were with their broad belts and torques and bracelets of silver, and their turbans, coatees, and skirts adorned with threads of multi-coloured silk!

There are no Lisus in this neighbourhood, but three or four villages in the mountains just behind Namkham are inhabited by a tiny tribe to be found here only. The local name for them is "Little Chinese", but we named them "Lisu-Chinese", for they must be either the descendants of Chinese who married Lisu wives or, as seems more likely, of Lisus who "turned Chinese". The aboriginal tribes of Yunnan are everywhere being gradually absorbed by the Chinese; they are losing their tribal independence, customs, and dress, and adopting in their place those of the Chinese, and the local term for such absorption is "turning Chinese". Anyhow, it seems certain that these "Little Chinese" migrated to the Namkham hills fifty or sixty years ago from the Salween valley in Yunnan, the home of the Lisus. They have marked Lisu features, while the women's dress is almost pure Lisu. Indeed, their only claim to be Chinese seems to be that they speak the language and follow Chinese marriage and other social customs.

There was another little market just over the border in Chinese territory, only about a mile from our camp, and we frequently used to go there to buy little bits of jade. Here were no elaborate stone buildings; the stalls were just rough benches of bamboo thatched with straw or grass, like the Sinlum ones. It was more homely and simple, and was attended only by the country folk.

The portable restaurants always amused me. They were just two small square tables slung from either end of

a carrying pole, which the purveyor used to balance on his shoulder as he moved about in search of custom. On the tables were dozens of little bowls of dubious delicacies in fat or gravy, a huge slab of bright yellow bean curd, and a bowl of steaming white rice kept hot by a charcoal brazier. When a customer appeared, the restaurant keeper put down his tables, cut off a slab of bean curd or ladled out some rice on to a piece of banana leaf, and added a few delicacies from the little bowls. The customer squatted on the ground and ate the food with his fingers. If he were a Chinese or similar "civilized" being, then for a cent more the food was served in a porcelain bowl and a pair of chopsticks provided to eat it with. No Chinese would deign to eat with his fingers—he regards as uncivilized barbarians those, like the Burmese and Indians, who do so.

Shans from the neighbouring villages had brought in basketfuls of vegetables for sale. The women looked much cleaner and neater than Chinese or tribeswomen from the hills. What a graceful carriage they had, too! The weight of the carrying pole seemed but to accentuate the swing of the hips as they moved along on their bare feet.

Many of the people were very poor and seemed to have little or no money to buy even the necessities of life. So barter frequently took the place of money. I saw one old dame exchange three long green pods of beans and eight mouldy-looking crab-apples for three handfuls of rice, and there was a great deal of haggling before the deal was finally completed.

No one seemed to trust his neighbour, and everything was weighed before the customer's eyes, whether it was a tiny skein of wool or a huge basketful of rice. There were heavy steelyards for the latter, but small articles were weighed on scales. These were but round trays of plaited strips of bamboo hanging by strings from the central bar of wood. The weights were of brass, shaped like ducks,

cocks, and other birds or animals. Europeans love them as paper weights, so the old sets, which are most beautifully carved, are now very difficult to come by.

Just across the frontier, midway between the British and Chinese camps, were some bamboo huts and stalls where each year during the Frontier Meeting a fair was held. It was just a collection of gambling dens, and was supposed to be out of bounds for the sepoys and servants. One night some of us set off after an early dinner to explore it.

The "fair" was thronged with men; not a woman was to be seen, though I was told that some of the houses near were really nothing but brothels and opium dens. In every hut or stall a different gambling game was in progress, and round each was a little group of men, some gambling, others just watching.

An old Chinese with long straggling beard presided over the first game I saw. In front of him was a low table covered with a cloth divided into six squares, in each of which was painted a dragon, an anchor, a buffalo, and so on, similar to the six devices on his dice. The three dice were shaken in a soup plate covered with a tin bowl and payment at evens made to all winners. If two or three of the dice turned up the same, then the lucky player won twice or three times his bet.

It seemed such a simple game; six devices on the cloth and three turned up on the dice—an even-money chance. But the bank always seemed to win in the long run (and not a very long run either), so I suppose there must have been a big profit for the bank whenever the same device turned up twice or three times in the same throw. I'm not a mathematician, so I can't say, but I feel certain that that old Chinese was not working the game for nothing!

There were many other games which I did not watch long enough to understand. One even rewarded the winners

with cups and saucers, just the same as the booths in an English fair. A group of eight men seated round a table were playing dominoes; they recognized by its feel the value of each domino drawn and played so quickly that I was unable to follow them.

It was a dark night, and the only illumination came from the lanterns and fires of the huts. Their flickering light cast deep shadows, barely illuminating the set, earnest faces of the gamblers. Ghostly figures passed to and fro between the huts. There was no noise except a faint, subdued murmur of voices.

In a large hut was the main attraction of the fair—fantan. All round a long table was a dense crowd of players and onlookers. A place was made for us opposite the croupier, who sat silent on a high stool. His almond eyes shone like black boot-buttons in his smooth, round, expressionless face. There he sat all night through, mechanically raking in the losing stakes and paying out the winnings.

At the end of the table sat the dealer, with a heap of cowries in front of him. He would divide them into two heaps with his chopsticks, and cover one with a porcelain bowl until all bets were made. Then, with sleeves pulled back from his wrists, he would count the cowries with his chopsticks in groups of four. Long before he had counted out the whole heap some of the eager-eyed players would shout out the winning number, which they had counted with their eyes—and they were always correct!

“One, two, three, four.” The dealer calls out the winning remainder. The croupier rakes in the losing bets and pays out the winnings. The deal is over and a fresh one begins.

As we made our way out of the fair, I caught sight of Ma Naw, one of my Kachin servants, with his long *dah* slung across his shoulder. He was off to gamble, though time and again we had forbidden him to go. I no longer

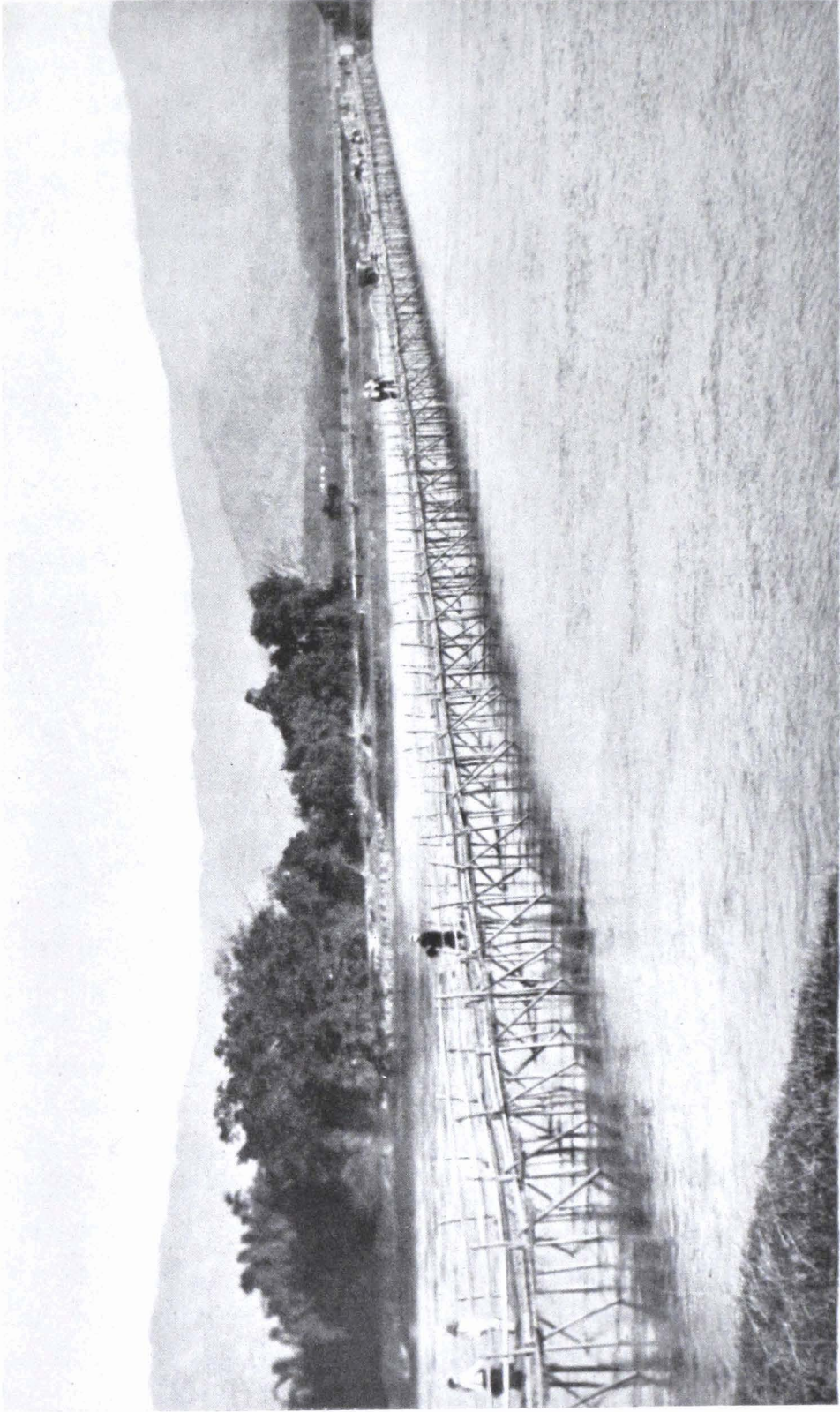
wondered why the servants were always asking for advances of pay, or why they were always so sleepy-eyed during the day and disinclined for work!

Occasionally we rode into Namkham, but it was not pleasant riding, for we had to keep to the road, which was wreathed in clouds of dust from the constant motor traffic to and from the Frontier Meeting. It also meant crossing the long bamboo bridge over the River Shweli, which was a rather nerve-racking procedure on horseback.

The bridge is about 800 yards long and rests on thin bamboo poles driven into the bed of the river. To these piles, cross-poles are tied with split bamboo fibre, and on them rests the tread of split bamboo covered with earth. No nails or rivets, iron or stone are used in the construction of the bridge; nothing but bamboo. And yet it is strong enough to carry a loaded lorry! A few years ago crossing in a motor was most exciting, as automobiles were only just beginning to make an appearance, and the bridge was not built wide enough for them. If a car overtook a countryman on the bridge, he would climb over the low parapet and hang on to the side till it had passed. I have seen them do this even when carrying two heavy baskets home from the market! Now the bridge is made wider, and every few yards there is a refuge built out at the side for the foot-passenger.

Each summer the bridge is washed away by the torrential rains, and each autumn a new bridge is built. And though the bridge always sways and creaks even with the passage of a pedestrian, motor lorries use it continually throughout the dry season, and no serious accident has yet occurred.

Namkham itself is quite a cosmopolitan little town; Indians of various races have built ugly wooden shops near the market-place, Shan huts are scattered about, while one street of mud-brick houses is monopolized by the Chinese.



BAMBOO BRIDGE OVER THE SHWELI AT NAWNGMA

How well I remember strolling along one day up this busy little street! The men seemed to be all away at work or asleep indoors. Some women were washing clothes in the stream which flowed down the middle of the road, others were stitching shoe-soles of cloth, others again were picking seeds from huge mounds of raw cotton, or sitting on stones outside their houses patching old clothes. In one dark little courtyard a whole family was engaged in making sausages, stuffing the minced meat into a pig's intestine. They invited me by smiles to come in and watch them more closely, but I hastily fled; I had seen and smelt enough in one minute!

Outside one house a mother and two children were having their dinner. An upturned basket served as table, on which a banana leaf was spread as cloth. There was a large slab of yellow bean curd, a bowl of soup, rice, and vegetables. The woman wiped the bean curd with a filthy rag and carefully cut it into portions with a rough bamboo knife, while the other eatables she helped with a spoon which was but a sector of bamboo with a stick fitted as handle. And then mother and children set to, shovelling the good things into their mouths with chopsticks.

The Chinese shops seemed to cater mainly for the mule caravans, and could supply everything the muleteer needed. Heavy wooden mule saddles, wooden bells with wooden clappers, cruppers with little wooden reels to prevent friction and sores, thongs of raw hide, bridles of plaited hide, many ornamented with red pompons and streamers, beads, and pieces of mirror glass.

One afternoon we went for a picnic up the Shweli. Except during the summer floods, the river is very shallow, so there are no boats but dug-outs—tree-trunks hollowed out and roughly shaped like canoes. They had no seats, so chairs for us were fixed in them one behind the other.

Off we set in three of these primitive craft. They were

none too safe, and not easy to steer. Though the deepest channel was marked out with bunches of leaves tied to bamboo poles, we frequently grounded on the sandbanks. When this happened the crew jumped out and pushed us off again.

It was slow work punting against the stream, and we took over an hour to reach our destination. The whole village had turned out to meet us. Shans have delightful customs and manners, and they really were welcoming us and enjoying doing so; they were not just gathering round to stare and gape like villagers of many other races.

A bevy of pretty Shan maidens came forward and, with a little curtsy, presented us women with bunches of pink roses. Those girls were all dressed in spotless white bodices and long black skirts, and wore black turbans bordered with green and yellow silk and threads of gold.

Behind them came the village headman with an unglazed earthenware jar full of drinking water and a silver goblet, which he offered to each of us.

Our servants had come on ahead, and tea was ready under a spreading wild-fig tree. The villagers had even lent their gay bed-mats for us to sit on. And as we had our tea, they squatted a little distance away to watch us. The old men brought out their long-stemmed pipes with tiny bowls. What an entertainment it was for them all: old men, women with babies tied on their backs, maidens, children of all ages. But their curiosity was never obtrusive, never ill-behaved, and their excited voices never rose much above a whisper.

The night the men were entertained by the Chinese officials we women usually dined together, but one year we were invited out by the brother of the Sawbwa, or Chief, of Kanai State. He had been on a visit to some relatives in Burma and was on his way back to his home. Tao Pei-mu, or Philip Tao, as he called himself, had been educated in

Rangoon and spoke English well. His wife was dead, so his sister-in-law acted as hostess for him, while her husband the Sawbwa was attending the Chinese official dinner. Unfortunately she could not speak a word of English, so all the interpreting had to be done by the host.

Philip Tao sent his brother's big Chrysler to fetch us, and it seemed so topsy-turvy to step from this luxurious car up the steep wooden steps into a Shan hut.

Our host, fat and round and wearing big tortoise-shell spectacles, was dressed in Western clothes, while his sister-in-law was in Burmese costume. Her shining black hair was coiled on her head, her pale oval face was devoid of wrinkles, her slanting eyes were soft and pretty. Her long pink silk *lungyi*, or skirt, was tightly wound round her body, while her little white silk jacket was fastened with buttons and brooches of jade.

On the couch at the back of the room was a little table laden with opium pipes and utensils, and we were offered a whiff instead of a cocktail—an offer which none of us accepted. So we took our seats at table on hard wooden chairs with gay silk cushions.

The courses were served in dishes placed in the centre of the table and we just fished about in them with our chopsticks as best we could. The dish of the evening was a huge earthenware bowl about a foot high. It was hollow in the middle and a charcoal fire was burning at the bottom, so that the contents were still cooking. Our host told me they had been simmering all day long. It was a lottery what one got out of that dish, for the meats were swimming in thick gravy. My bag was a strip of duck's skin, a bit of sheep's brain, a slab of beef, two chunks of pork and a chicken's leg! We were also given plates piled high with some kind of wild lettuce. These leaves we were expected to pick up with our chopsticks and dip in the communal dish, holding them there till they were nicely hot; then

take them out all dripping with gravy and stuff them into our mouths without cutting them up at all. The mess we made was dreadful; a thick trail of gravy spots led from each of us to the centre dish.

On the table were dishes of sea-slugs, old pickled eggs, and similar delicacies, but we managed to avoid them all. Our hostess certainly did deposit a nice fat slug on my plate, but I busied myself cooking my lettuce and pretended I hadn't seen it.

The roast duck was very good, and I told our host so. He gave an order to one of the servants and a duck was immediately produced, squashed absolutely flat, with its skin brown and shiny like polished mahogany. It was a present for me to take home!

The Chinese Frontier Commissioner usually invited us to dinner during the Meeting, sending over sedan chairs to fetch his women guests. A Chinese chair is very comfortable, and the swaying motion very soothing, but I always thought I was going to be dropped when the bearers stopped to change shoulders. At the sound of a doleful wail from the front man, they would all stop suddenly, supporting the chair on a stout stick while they effected the change. Our husbands rode behind, and an escort of military police brought up the rear.

It took about half an hour to reach Chinese headquarters. The Commissioner and his suite were at the entrance to meet us, and as we emerged from the chairs we were greeted by a deafening noise, for six buglers unexpectedly blew a discordant salute. Other dim figures behind them presented arms, while we mounted the steps and entered the monastery.

Dinner was served at a round table in the main hall of the temple, at one end of which was an immense gilt image of the Buddha which towered right up to the lofty ceiling. A petrol lantern roared and flared over the table, casting

a terribly strong white light over us and leaving the rest of the room in deep shadow.

The waiters were soldiers of the Commissioner's escort, all rather grubby and dressed in grey cotton uniforms. Washing up was done in a corner over a bucket, and I was sorry I caught sight of the filthy rags that were used for drying the crockery!

There were endless courses, which were placed in relays in the centre of the table so that we might help ourselves. Luckily china spoons were provided as well as chopsticks, in the use of which many of us were far from expert. I tried to fill up the little bowl we each had with soup and bits of meat before the rest had messed the dish about with their chopsticks! There were long strips of macaroni in chicken soup, so difficult to manage even with spoons! There were black, glutinous sharks' fins, roast duck, chicken and fish, and, to finish up with, hot stewed oranges.

To drink we were offered some very potent Chinese rice spirit, which was very nasty. So we women had nothing to drink till cups of tea were brought along after the meal.

One year a dispute arose about a boundary pillar ten or fifteen miles away, and as there was plenty of room in the car I went along too as far as the little town of Selan, for I had heard that the headman had some very interesting old records.

The valley of the River Shweli, or Nam Mao, has for many centuries been populated by Shans, whose kingdom was called Meng Mao, after the river. Until quite recent days it was recognized as the leader of the Shan states of the Burma-China border land, and still enjoys considerable importance.

The capital of a Shan state, the residence of the Sawbwa, is always known by the same name as the state, and Meng Mao has had several capitals. The present Meng Mao I shall describe in the following chapter, but the capital in

the days of its greatest glory was the modern Selan. Selan is now only a large straggling village, but the remains of the entrenched ditch surrounding it show that old Selan, or Meng Mao as it must then have been called, covered an area of six or seven hundred acres.

The headman occupied the largest and most imposing house in the village. It was built of wood, and was raised ten or twelve feet off the ground on massive pillars of teak, while all round the compound was a high wall of sun-dried brick.

Someone at once went off to fetch the headman, while others brought a chair and a red silk cushion for me, which were placed in the middle of the large square veranda. The headman soon arrived; he was a pleasant-looking man with a fat white face and perfectly shaped feet. He wore a coat of grey tweed and white cotton trousers cut very loose and baggy in the Shan fashion, and on his head was a white turban.

I was sorry to hear that the old records I had wanted to see had been sent away to the Sawbwa's palace for safe custody, but after much persuasion he consented to tell us the story of the Mao Shans. He sat on a chair with one leg tucked under him, and as his story continued the village elders crept one by one up the stairs on to the veranda, where they squatted on the floor to listen, smoking the while their long-stemmed pipes, the bowls of which they rested on the ground. The old man spoke no English, but I had brought with me a Burmese clerk who understood both Shan and English, and he translated the narrative to me.

“Many hundreds of years ago,” said the old headman, “there lived a king named Kun Gee Pan Kam. King Kun Gee had working in the palace a gardener whose son attended school in the monastery. One day when the boy was walking alone in the jungle he saw a beautiful maiden and fell in love with her at first sight. He married her and

then found on the wedding day that she was a dragon which had assumed human form. The dragon took her husband with her to her own country right down in the bowels of the earth.

“Three years the gardener’s son lived with his wife in the dragons’ country. Then he wanted to return to his home, but the dragon refused to go with him. He persisted in going, so the dragon-wife gave him as a parting present an egg. He took this egg up to earth with him, where the egg hatched out into a son.

“This boy grew and prospered and became a great man. He founded a town which he called Ting-long and in course of time married the daughter of the king. Two sons were born to them, one of whom later succeeded to the throne of his grandfather and reigned under the name of Kun-yi Pan Kam. During his reign there was a war with the Chinese and a great battle was fought. The Shan general was the king’s brother and he was defeated and fled to Chiengmai, in north Siam, where he founded a new kingdom.”

The headman paused and lit a cigarette which we offered him. We pressed him to continue his tale and after a few more puffs he laid down the cigarette and spoke again.

“It was two thousand years ago when King Kun-yi ruled this country, but the Chinese defeated the Shan army and he had to flee into Burma. He sought help from the Burmese, so they sent an army, and the Shan and Burmese armies beat the Chinese and drove them back to Tengyueh, where they are to this day. The descendants of the she-dragon ruled the country for many centuries until six hundred years ago, when the Shan Empire split up into many small kingdoms. And these kingdoms are the Shan states of to-day.”

The old headman finished his story. It was one of the

old legends of the birth and of the glory of the Shan race which have been handed down from father to son for many, many centuries, and which no Shan even to this day is ever tired of listening to. As I gazed from the veranda across the valley of the Shweli I could see ten miles away, at the foot of some low hills, a grey mass which is the present city of Meng Mao. I was going to visit it a few days later and I wondered how far it differed from the ancient Meng Mao, on the remains of which I then sat.

As I was bidding good-bye to the old headman, I heard the loud booming of drums and the soft notes of gongs. I asked what the noise was, and learnt that some small boys were being conducted to the monastery, there to be initiated into the Buddhist religion. I was only too eager to watch the ceremony, and, accompanied by the headman and the elders, set off towards the monastery. On the way the Burmese clerk explained to me how all Buddhist boys when they reach the age of ten or twelve years have to spend some time—perhaps only a few days, perhaps six months—in a monastery, clad in the yellow robes and performing all the duties of a priest.

I shall never forget the sight that greeted my eyes as we emerged from the village and saw the procession forming up. First came the “band” of village boys, beating with great enjoyment, but no attempt at tune, the long Shan drums and heavy brass gongs. Behind them walked several young monks clad in yellow robes, with hands crossed over their hearts and heads bowed down. Friends walked by their side, holding aloft yellow umbrellas to shield them from the sun’s rays.

A few paces behind the monks came the young neophytes, wearing silken robes of gorgeous colours. On their heads were crowns of gilt paper a foot or more high and ornamented with imitation flowers and glittering coloured glass. These crowns were shaped like the *thi*, or spire, of a pagoda.



BOY INITIATES INTO BUDDHISM

Each boy carried a golden fan edged with feathers, which he held before him to hide his face. Attendants walked beside them, holding over their heads golden ceremonial umbrellas decorated with long streamers of coloured silk. Relatives followed carrying trays of offerings for the priests.

Slowly the procession wended its way towards the monastery, which could be seen on the top of a hillock a few hundred yards away. A long, roofed stairway led up to the main building, the eaves and roof-ends all elaborately carved and decorated in red lacquer. Outside were planted many tall bamboo poles, from which hung long narrow banners ornamented with gilt and tinsel and glass, which glistened and sparkled as the streamers waved in the breeze.

As the monks and their little disciples passed along, the devout who lined the path threw clothes and pieces of silk on the ground to shield their feet from contamination with the dust.

It was a gorgeous sight, a riot of colour. The robes and umbrellas of the priests of every shade of yellow from palest lemon to deepest orange, the shining gold and gay colours of the boys' costumes, the bright hues of the women's dresses—all were intensified by the brilliance of the sunshine.

The procession disappeared into the monastery, where I might not follow. I turned back. As we walked along I asked the interpreter the meaning of the elaborate dresses of the young neophytes. He replied that they symbolized the pomps and vanities of the world. When a boy enters a monastery to be initiated into the tenets of the Buddhist faith, he discards the gaudy clothes and puts on in their place the saffron robes of the priesthood. This ceremony implies that he relinquishes the pleasures of the world to follow the teachings of the Lord Buddha.

CHAPTER VIII

Meng Mao and its Rulers

TOWARDS the close of the thirteenth century the country of the Shans, whose capital was at Tali, was conquered by the great Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan. The Shan Empire was broken up, and the main portion was incorporated in the Chinese Empire as the province of Yunnan. The outlying dependencies in Upper Burma and Indo-China, however, were left in virtual independence under their own rulers, who were simply required to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Emperor of China and send occasional missions bearing tribute to him.

On the frontier of Yunnan were many small Shan states which had previously formed part of the Shan Empire, but which now acquired virtual independence. Of these the most important was Meng Mao, the State of Mao, which derives its name from the Nam Mao, or Shweli, River. Its chief acknowledged the overlordship of the Chinese Emperor and was confirmed on his throne. The natives of the border country used in those days to cover their teeth with plates of gold, so the Mongol official who was appointed to control these frontier states was styled the "Commissioner of the Golden Teeth".

Directly the Mongol army was withdrawn, the Mao Sawbwa renounced his allegiance to China and threw in his lot with the Burmese. Repeated expeditions were sent against them from Yunnan, but the Mongol armies had lost their vigour. The Mongol, or Yuan, dynasty fell, and

was succeeded by a Chinese dynasty which adopted the name of Ming, or Brilliant. For many years, however, the Chinese were too engaged in consolidating their power to be able to spare large armies for an expedition against Burma. Hence it was not until the end of the sixteenth century that the border lands were finally subdued.

The glory of the Mao kingdom had now departed. It was divided into small states, of which that containing the capital retained the old name of Meng Mao. The old city and palace had been destroyed, but that was the normal consequence of any revolt and in no way dismayed the Shans. Indeed, after any misfortune or defeat Shan princes are in the habit of moving their capital to a new site in the hope of changing their luck. So about three hundred years ago a new *haw*, or palace, and a new walled city were built a few miles north of the Shweli, and this tiny city has remained the capital of Meng Mao to the present day.

When the ruler of a subject state had revolted against the imperial authority, it was the custom of the Chinese to appoint one of their own officers in his place. In the case of Meng Mao, the throne was bestowed upon a young Shan prince from Momeik, in Burma, as a reward for the assistance he had given to the Chinese in their campaigns, and his descendants have governed Meng Mao ever since.

The Shans of the border lands have fallen far from their olden glory. Driven by the Chinese from the healthy highlands of Yunnan, harried by the warlike Kachins from their mountain fastnesses, the Shans are now confined to the hot malarious valleys, where they alone seem able to exist. But the climate is sapping their stamina, and the ruling families are frequently given over to the pleasures of opium smoking, good living, and women.

The princely family of Meng Mao adopted the surname of Kan, and the Sawbwa at the commencement of this century was Kan Kuo-fan. His principal wife was the

daughter of a neighbour, the Sawbwa of Mang Shih, but, of course, like all other Shan princes, he had many secondary wives or concubines. But notwithstanding his large harem no son was born to succeed him. There was, however, one daughter, who was married when quite young to Tao Peimu, the second son of the Sawbwa of Kanai. He has been mentioned in the preceding chapter as giving a dinner to the British women at Nawngma.

The little bride died not long after the wedding without giving birth to a child. It was a great blow to the old man, for he had no other legitimate issue. Shans show great respect to their womenfolk and many cases have occurred in history of Shan women ruling kingdoms. It would hence have been quite natural for this daughter to have succeeded to her father's throne, and she would undoubtedly have done so had she lived.

Now Kan Kuo-fan had had a liaison outside his harem with a local girl. In course of time the friendship ceased. Some months after, however, she gave birth to a son whom the old Sawbwa claimed as his own and adopted as his heir. Whether the child was really his son is open to doubt. Shan girls are allowed full liberty prior to marriage, and, though such liberty rarely tends to promiscuity, yet a Shan girl may have two or three lovers and yet retain her good name.

After relinquishing her son to the Sawbwa, the girl married and settled with her husband in Mogok, a town across the frontier in Upper Burma famed for its ruby mines. From time to time she visited Meng Mao to see her son and her old admirer. I saw her one year when she called at the camp on her way through. She had discarded Shan dress and adopted the costume of a Burmese lady. A fine-looking woman she was, with her hair dressed in shining coils on top of her head and her pink satin skirt sweeping the ground.

The boy was given the name of Yin-feng, and as soon as he was old enough was married to a Kanai princess, sister of the present Sawbwa. The boy was accepted by the neighbouring Shan rulers as the old Sawbwa's son and heir, and when in due course a son was born to the young couple, the Meng Mao succession seemed assured.

In 1928 the old Sawbwa, Kan Kuo-fan, died. During the later years of his life he had become a recluse, shutting himself up in his palace and refusing to see anyone except his adopted heir and the "court" officials and priests. Even to neighbouring Sawbwas and to the Chinese frontier officials who happened to visit Meng Mao, he always sent the excuse that he was too sick to grant an interview.

On the death of his father, Kan Yin-feng succeeded as Sawbwa of Meng Mao. But there was a rival claimant to the little throne and the formal approval of the Yunnan Government was necessary before Yin-feng could feel that his position was assured. The pretender was named Kan Kuo-chen and he traced his descent from a former Sawbwa who had ruled Meng Mao over a hundred years ago. Yin-feng, he alleged, was not only illegitimate, he was not even the son of Kan Kuo-fan, for he had not been born until twelve months after the liaison had ceased.

Months of intrigue ensued, and much money was expended, especially by Kan Yin-feng, who had access to the coffers of the Meng Mao state. Finally, early in 1929, letters of appointment were issued by the Provincial Government of Yunnan approving Kan Yin-feng as Sawbwa of Meng Mao, but before they reached him the unfortunate man died.

His successor was his little son of two years, and in the normal course his mother would have acted as regent during his minority. But Kan Kuo-chen, his claim to the throne having been turned down, decided to try to seize Meng Mao by force. Several of the neighbouring Sawbwas supported him privately, and with the help of promises of

rich plunder he soon collected an army of several hundred men and advanced on Meng Mao city. They were a motley lot; some had rough native muzzle-loading guns, but the majority were armed solely with the long native knife, or *dah*, which they wield with great dexterity and which is a deadly weapon in hand-to-hand fighting.

When the news reached Meng Mao, the chief minister at once took steps to defend the city and drive back the invaders. There were only about a hundred in the Meng Mao army—semi-trained gendarmes armed with ancient rifles—but levies were called up from all villages in the state, and in a few days an army of over a thousand men, mainly armed with native guns and swords, was gathered in Meng Mao. They came upon the pretender's army encamped in a monastery only four miles from the city and surrounded it.

For six weeks the siege lasted. Sorties were made and battles were fought much as our forefathers fought in the Middle Ages. Time and again the besieged tried to cut their way out through the Meng Mao forces; but each time they were beaten back inside the high walls of the monastery, which the attackers failed to storm. But food was running short and desertions were becoming more and more frequent. The remnant were on the verge of surrender when a magician rose from the ranks and promised their safe escape if they would follow his advice. He was a wild Palaung, a descendant of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country; and Palaungs have a great reputation on the frontier for skill as soothsayers. Then occurred one of those strange incidents far from uncommon in the East but almost incomprehensible to us of the West. And the truth of the story was vouched for to me by the Sawbwa of Kanai himself, who had led his own army to the succour of his little nephew, the baby Sawbwa of Meng Mao, and who was present at the siege.

The Palaung War Magician, as he was styled, rose and addressed Kan Kuo-chen and his followers, saying:

“To-morrow is the ninth day of the ninth moon. To-night I will prepare a charm which will render nine men, including myself, immune from bullet or sword. And at the ninth minute of the ninth hour we nine will rush out against the enemy. And their soldiers will flee before us, leaving nine men dead upon the field.”

All approved of the War Magician's plan, so that night he prepared a decoction of wild pepper and other jungle herbs. And when the appointed hour was near he drank of the brew and gave of it to the other eight men to drink, and repeated an incantation over them. When the ninth minute of the ninth hour arrived, all fear left the nine men and they rushed headlong out of the main gate of the monastery against the enemy, uttering blood-curdling yells and slashing to right and left with their long knives. The Meng Mao army was taken by surprise. A few seized their guns and fired at the nine, but in their haste the bullets went wide, and they were only too ready to believe that the nine were endowed with supernatural powers. Panic seized the whole army, which was soon in full flight, leaving, as the War Magician had predicted, nine men dead on the field.

Much booty fell into the hands of Kan Kuo-chen, but it was his undoing, for his “soldiers” deserted him and made for their own homes with as much as they could carry. So the pretender with a handful of followers was forced to flee across the border into the neighbouring state of Che-fang, whose Sawbwa was sympathetic to his cause, and there lie hidden.

Now, the Chinese authorities desired peace in that frontier state and distrusted the ability of a woman, the baby Sawbwa's mother, to maintain it. So they appointed her brother, the Sawbwa of Kanai, and the Chinese

Administrative Deputy, or Resident as he would be termed in India, joint regents of Meng Mao. So the Sawbwa of Kanai handed over the rule of his own state to his younger brother and assumed the protection of his young nephew at Meng Mao.

Kanai is rather out of the way, and a week's journey over hill paths from Bhamo; we shall visit it in a later chapter. But Meng Mao is near the Burma frontier, and the Sawbwa soon impressed village labour to build a road possible for motor traffic from that city to connect with the Burma roads at Nawnngma. I think the Sawbwa himself enjoyed the change. Anyhow, he purchased a new car in Rangoon and used frequently to drive over during the Frontier Meeting. It was only twenty miles away, so, having been invited to lunch at the palace, we set off one morning and, after bumping about in the car for an hour and a half, finally arrived at the east gate of the city.

Meng Mao is little more than a large village. It is about half a mile square and surrounded by an earthen embankment faced with bricks of sun-dried mud. In each wall is a gate with two heavy wooden doors. The streets are very narrow and are cobbled with huge stones and boulders, so we had to leave the car outside the gate and walk to the palace.

The houses were hovels of mud brick, thatched with straw, while nearly every wall was plastered with cakes of cow-dung drying for fuel. The people, too, were drab looking, and their clothes were of cotton, black, or darkest blue, and white. There was not a touch of bright colour save in the occasional flower stuck in the high turban over the right ear.

We soon reached the *haw*, but anything more unlike my conception of a palace it is difficult to imagine. It was a rambling collection of courtyards one behind the other, each surrounded by buildings. We were met at the entrance by an old dame in Shan dress and a youth in a brown suit

with brass buttons. He had been educated in Burma and spoke a little English, so acted as interpreter for us all. We finally reached a large room with one side open to a courtyard. It was furnished with black and red lacquer tables and chairs, while the seats of honour were deep beds or benches to match, on which were laid lovely blue brocade cushions. We could see that our hosts expected that these seats would be occupied by the men of the party, but they were too polite to show surprise when we two women appropriated them.

Servants at once brought us cups of straw-coloured tea, while bowls of fruit and cakes were placed in front of us. There were lichees, that luscious Chinese fruit tasting like hothouse grapes, water chestnuts looking like peeled radishes, wild plums soaked in sugar, and brightly iced cakes. Little bamboo sticks were given us with which to spear these dainties.

As we were regaling ourselves, a Shan lady appeared from the private courts beyond. She was very tall, with an immense fat oval face and heavy jowl. Her teeth were stained dark red with betel juice, and she had a hard look in her bright black eyes, which stared so unblinkingly from her quite expressionless face.

She wore a white cotton coat and long black satin skirt with three wide black velvet bands round the bottom. Her embroidered shoes were turned up at the toe. She wore the usual high cylindrical turban of the Chinese Shans. It consists of twelve or more yards of black or dark blue cotton cloth wound round and round in knife pleats. It is beautifully neat, but, especially in the distance, gives the owner the appearance of wearing a stove pipe on her head. It increased the lady's already great height.

She was the widow of the old Sawbwa Kan Kuo-fan, and by the hand she led the little Sawbwa, the last of that line. He was only a two-year-old baby. Over his trousers

he wore a long blue silk coat, and on his head was a cap of gay brocade shaped rather like a crown and ornamented with little gilt buddhas. He gazed solemnly at us, and all the time we were there he showed no disposition to cry, laugh, or play.

It is almost impossible to sort out and keep pace with the many relations of a Sawbwa who live with him in his *haw*. Each Sawbwa has several wives, and the palace is always swarming with sisters, cousins, brothers, aunts, and uncles, together with many servants and hangers-on. That day they crowded in the courtyard, giggled behind doors and screens, peeped out of windows. The little Sawbwa had a most fascinating half-sister, with ten times more go about her than had the weakly heir. She was only four years old and wore long white silk trousers and coat, while on her head was perched a round black satin cap with a gilt spike on top. Her hair was braided into a pigtail and tied at the end with a long red cord. In her ears were gold earrings, and round her wrists were little silver bracelets. With her fat cream-coloured little face, her full red mouth and dancing black eyes, she made a perfect picture of Eastern childhood.

As a great favour I was taken to see the women's quarters. There was no attempt at furnishing or decoration, and the rooms were devoid of any comfort whatsoever. There were no mirrors, cupboards, or washing facilities. Just a wooden bedstead with boards where the spring mattress should have been and a pile of dirty blankets and embroidered quilts rolled up at the foot. A table or two and some straight-backed chairs completed the furniture of each room. Everything was dirty and dusty and I wondered how on earth the princesses managed to look so clean and tidy.

The walls of one room were entirely covered with newspaper, and that and some pieces of polished marble with

markings roughly resembling mountain scenery were the only feeble attempts at decoration I noticed. The guest room was the worst of all. It was a dark little hole, the floor-boards thick with dust, cigarette ends, matches, and bones from the last meal. The walls were grimed with smoke, and cobwebs festooned the ceiling. It made me shudder to think of eating and sleeping in such filth.

“That’s where T. and I slept when we stayed here last year for some shooting,” remarked one of my companions.

“Ugh!” I shuddered, too aghast to speak.

How I wished I could talk with these women, to find out what they did all day long, what sort of life they led, what their thoughts were. There were no books or newspapers to be seen, but I doubt if any of them could read or write. Some of their time must have been spent in sewing and embroidery, for they showed us their best skirts, which were very elaborate affairs, and I gathered that they had done some of the making themselves. The top half was of plain black satin, while the lower consisted of numerous panels of gaily coloured brocades and silks, many thickly embroidered in gold and colours. No two were alike.

They showed us the ancestral tablets, which were kept in a beautifully carved shrine lacquered in red and black and gold. It reached right up to the ceiling and, like everything else, was covered with dust and cobwebs. There were scroll paintings of Sawbwas in Chinese official robes, and photographs of the recently deceased Sawbwas, Kuo-fan and Yin-feng. It was Chinese ancestor worship which the Shan Sawbwas had borrowed from the Chinese. The latter have for many centuries been able to instil a remarkable respect for Chinese culture in the minds of other Oriental races with which they have come in contact, and as two thousand years ago it was the proud desire of all men living within the confines of the Roman Empire to be able

to say "Civis Romanus sum," so in the border lands of China the native's hope and aim is to be accepted as Chinese. To this end the tribesman will adopt Chinese customs, Chinese speech, and Chinese dress, and even his women-folk will be persuaded to forsake the old tribal costume and put on the short coat and trousers of the Chinese woman.

When we returned to the reception room our host, the Sawbwa of Kanai, and his sister appeared. She was a thin miserable-looking woman with puckered brows and full mouth. He was of medium height with a fattish face, and had the flat nose and almond eyes of his race. He wore glasses, and his black hair stuck up in a greasy confusion all over his head. He was dressed in a very badly fitting grey flannel suit.

No one ever hurries in this part of the world, so we sat about and carried on a desultory conversation while waiting for a meal which we could see being cooked over an open fire near-by. At length a manservant came along with a basket and proceeded to place chopsticks and crockery on the round black lacquer table. There were no plates or glasses, knives or forks; just a pair of chopsticks, a china bowl, a china spoon, and a tiny china wine cup for each guest.

Nine dishes of meat were placed in the middle of the table for us to help ourselves from. There were stewed duck and chicken, fat pork and venison, fish stomachs and shrimps, pork tripe and ducks' liver and vegetables in gravy. The duck and chicken were served in small chunks, bones and flesh together, so we had to suck the meat off as best we could. Our host spat the bones on to the floor, where they were immediately seized and eaten by a dog and a cat. In the end we all did the same. We made a most awful mess getting the food from the dishes into our mouths with chopsticks, and finally I gave up and used the china spoon.

The only drink we were offered was neat whisky, which was not a very suitable beverage on a hot day, but we cheered ourselves up with the thought that there were some bottles of beer in the car, which we could drink on the way home!

After luncheon the Sawbwa suggested a drive to the temple about four miles farther on, and as it had been the scene of the exploits of the nine enchanted warriors, I was only too glad of the chance to visit it. As we walked through one of the courtyards I saw under a shed a dilapidated gharry and asked how on earth it had got there. The Sawbwa told me it had been brought from Maymyo many years ago, driven or carried the whole 150 miles, and that the old Sawbwa used it to go to and from the temple. Now there is a road, rough though it may be, and the Sawbwa was at the wheel of his own new Chrysler, with the Chinese flag flying on the bonnet, while a couple of soldiers in dirty grey cotton uniforms and armed with mauser pistols sat behind.

At the side of the main gate of the palace—we had entered by a side door—was a tall cage with wooden bars, and the Sawbwa gave us a graphic description of how prisoners used to be tortured to death in it. They were put in the cage with their necks through a hole in the top and their feet standing on some bricks at the bottom. Every day or so a brick was removed until the prisoner was finally hanging by the neck and strangled to death. Sometimes the torture lasted a week before death put an end to the poor wretch's agonies.

The temple was situated on a low hill, and was surrounded by a wall of mud bricks. In the centre was the tapering white dome of the pagoda, encircled by several smaller ones. All were whitewashed, and in the distance looked like a cluster of lighthouses. On either side were rooms for pilgrims. One of these was occupied by soldiers

who had been constantly stationed there since the recent rising.

Below was the monastery, a picturesque old wooden building with a curving grey-tiled roof. The old priest smilingly invited us to mount the steps and enter. It was a large gloomy room, at one end of which were countless images of Buddha seated in gilt shrines of all shapes and sizes. From the beams hung strips of gaily embroidered silk and cotton, while peacocks' feathers and the long plumes of the silver pheasant decorated the pillars. In the dim light the effect was very strange and beautiful.

One corner was roughly partitioned off to make the priest's private apartment. His possessions were few: a roll of bedding, a gilt lacquer box, an iron cooking pot, a clock, a table, and a few low stools.

I walked back a few paces to take a photograph of the temple. It looked so peaceful that it was difficult to imagine that not many months before it had been the scene of a siege and a bloody battle.

A week later, as I was sewing one morning outside our *tawmaw*, seven Shan ladies suddenly walked up to me. Two I recognized as the widows of the late Sawbwas. They had come to return my call. As luck would have it, the Appeal Court was sitting and all my chairs had been borrowed, so I hurriedly sent the servants to find some more somewhere. Even when I had got the ladies seated it was very difficult to know how to entertain them. I offered them cherry brandy and tea, but they refused both. Then I produced chocolates and they helped themselves to handfuls. I had sent for an interpreter, but none could be spared, so in despair I showed them my tent. I thought I should never be able to get them out again. All crowded in and examined everything. They felt the bed and the pillows and the eiderdown, they picked up my brushes and combs, they opened the pots of powder and face cream.

At last an interpreter did arrive and I got them out of my bedroom. Back in the *tawmaw* a parcel was produced and opened. It was a beautifully embroidered skirt which the old Sawbwa's widow had brought for me to buy! I suppose she wanted a little extra pin-money and had noticed how I had admired the work when at Meng Mao! Of course, I had to buy it, and later I managed to complete the costume. Now I am able to appear as a Shan lady of high degree at fancy-dress dances on board ship.

CHAPTER IX

Life at Bhamo

IN 1885 King Thibaw surrendered to the British expeditionary force sent against him, and his kingdom, which comprised the whole of Upper Burma from below Mandalay to the frontier of China, became part of the British Empire.

Amid the mountains of the north-east the Kachins lived a free and independent life. Neither Burmese nor Shan had ever been able to subdue these turbulent tribesmen, who raided the inhabitants of the plains and exacted large tribute from all traders as the price of a safe conduct through their territory. The main trade route linking China with India via the River Irrawaddy and Rangoon passed through the Kachin Hills. It used to be known as the "Ambassadors' Road", for the periodic missions bearing tribute from the Burmese kings to the Chinese emperors in Peking used to follow this route. To-day it is still the same as it was centuries ago, and merchandise is carried to and fro by mule caravans in the slow old way.

Before the advent of steamships on the Irrawaddy, cargo was landed several miles below Bhamo and the mule caravans started from there. When, however, several years before the annexation, the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company started to run cargo steamers on the upper Irrawaddy, they decided to make Bhamo the terminal point. So Bhamo, from being a little riverine fishing village, rose to be the entrepôt for the China trade, while "Old Bhamo" sank back into oblivion.

In those early days Bhamo was strongly stockaded, for, situated as it was not far from the foot of the hills, it was the object of frequent raids by the Kachins. In 1886 a serious attack was made on it by a mixed force of Kachins and Chinese, who were only repulsed with great difficulty by the British garrison which had been established there the preceding December.

Although the British had annexed the whole of Upper Burma and had built several forts among the hills, it was not until 1894 that the Kachins were finally brought under control. In that year a treaty was signed delimiting the boundary between Burma and China and regulating trade and intercourse across the frontier. Each country was made responsible for the good behaviour of its wild tribes, but the Kachins continued to raid and plunder, so at the beginning of this century many new police posts were established. Eventually peace was enforced throughout the Kachin Hill tracts, the regiments were gradually withdrawn from Bhamo, and at the present time one battalion of military police and the civil police are all that is necessary to maintain peace and order throughout the whole Bhamo district.

The present population of Bhamo consists mainly of Chinese and Indians, with a few Burmese. Shans and Shan-Burmans inhabit the country round about, but, being agriculturists, have no part in the life of Bhamo, which is solely a trading centre. There are a few shops kept by Indians, where can be bought cottons and silks, lanterns and aluminium saucepans, tinned provisions and patent medicines. Most of the cheaper goods were of German or Japanese manufacture. Burmese women managed the stalls in the bazaar and sold vegetables and fish and fruit. Their menfolk sat in the sun puffing their huge cheroots, or amused themselves with a little fishing.

The Chinese, both men and women, were always busy.

They occupied the whole of one long street, which was the object of great interest to such visitors and tourists as penetrated to what they considered these outlandish parts. Here were numerous little shops where could be bought rice bowls and teacups of porcelain and earthenware, teapots in padded baskets, opium pipes and lamps, straw hats and feather fans, dried sea-slugs and sharks' fins, and other Chinese delicacies.

It was in the dark rooms and courtyards of China Street that goods were repacked for mule transport to China. A mule carries two bundles of about 75 pounds weight each, and as merchandise from India and Europe usually arrived in huge bales or cases, it had to be divided into smaller ones here. Cotton yarn, the principal commodity, arrived from India in neat bales of the right weight, but piece-goods, silks, matches, umbrellas, and all the many other articles of trade reached Bhamo in bulky, heavy cases and had to be repacked in smaller bundles. Such neat packages the Chinese made too, each wrapped in palm fibre cloth to keep the contents dry.

The European bungalows were to the north of the town, each in its own large compound, where during the greater part of the year cannas made a blaze of orange and red. In April and May, before they were crushed by the rains, "home" flowers used to flourish: phlox, sweet peas and zinnias, cosmos, larkspur, nasturtiums and verbena. The turf in the compounds was nearly always green, and formed a lovely background for the flowers, even though close inspection showed nearly as many weeds in it as grass. The roads were shaded by spreading trees, and the golden mohur and other flowering trees and shrubs flourished.

The government bungalows were in various stages of disrepair, for they had been built to last a certain number of years only and the time limit had long expired. But in these times of financial stringency there was no money



BURMESE WOMAN STALL-KEEPER

available to build new ones, so they were patched and mended as long as they would hold together. One evening, during a particularly violent thunderstorm, my neighbour's dining-room ceiling fell down on the table just as it had been laid for a dinner party. It was a strange coincidence that one of the guests remembered that same bungalow being condemned on his last visit to Bhamo ten years previously!

From the outside our old houses looked most attractive. Some were of whitewashed plaster intersected with black beams, just like Warwickshire cottages—but closer inspection showed that the plaster was nothing but a mixture of mud and cow-dung!

The space between roof and ceiling was the abode of bats and civet cats, which we were never able to dislodge for good. The doors and windows would never shut, the paint was blistered, there were holes and corners which seemed made for no other purpose than to collect dirt, the lattice windows were all smeary, and even when the P.W.D. could be persuaded to spare a coat of paint for the house, the decrepit old Indian painter could not keep a straight line with his brush. Once when, after repeated applications, the repainting of the french windows opening out of the dining- and drawing-rooms was authorized, I returned from tour to find only one side painted. On my asking the reason, the Indian overseer told me that as I never shut them there was no need to paint the other side! But in spite of its many drawbacks I grew to love the old house where I lived for several years.

Life in Bhamo was much the same as in any other little station in the East where the social centre is the club. Perhaps owing to our remoteness from any large town, and to the absence of a railway, we lived a more free and easy life than in more civilized places. But that was part of its charm. We were only a small community which varied

from fifteen to twenty in number, so we had to make our own amusements; there were no cinemas or shops or distractions of any kind.

The monotony was enlivened in the cold weather by the numerous visitors and officials on tour, who arrived by the steamers from Mandalay or from Katha, our nearest rail-head, a day's journey down river. One never-to-be-forgotten day the then Viceroy and Vicereine of India visited Bhamo. Preparations started weeks beforehand. Cattle were inoculated, drums of whitewash ordered, trees and jungle cut back from our one country road so as to leave no cover for the assassin, extra police appeared, tents were bought, no one seemed to know what for, and lists of the requirements of the viceregal party arrived. Among the foodstuffs wanted were ox-tails, legs of mutton, lamb cutlets, and such like luxuries, which few of us had tasted since our arrival in Burma, for they were unobtainable in Bhamo. One item which stumped everybody was the demand for 10,000 gallons of pure water. Even if we could have managed to raise the required amount, how could it ever have been put on board the Viceroy's launch in a fit condition to drink after being hauled down to the landing-stage in the ancient and rusty P.W.D. water-cart! In the end, the water had to be sent up river in a special launch from Mandalay, and then, after all this tamasha, one of the crew developed cholera and all the water had to be dumped overboard!

The distinguished visitors were to arrive by launch from Myitkyina at 3 o'clock one afternoon, stay the night at Bhamo, and proceed down river next morning. There is no hotel at Bhamo, nowhere for visitors to stay, save the circuit house with three bedrooms, and the dilapidated rest-house. So some of us offered to vacate our bungalows for the night and give them up to the visitors. I am afraid our action was not so altruistic as it appeared.

If our offers had been accepted, then our bungalows would have had to be done up and perhaps a few new pieces of furniture supplied, all of which would have been well worth one night's inconvenience.

But our kind offers were refused; his Excellency and party would spend the night on the launch, said the reply, but they would be graciously pleased to accept our invitation to tea in the jungle about seventeen miles away, at the end of our one and only good road. It was a lovely spot, and is now known as "The Viceroy's Camp". We found the very place for tea on a level bit of ground by the side of a small river which babbled over the rocks that bestrewed its bed. A jungle path led to the site, while from the road-head the mule track to China carried on round the hill and crossed the river by an iron bridge. The P.W.D. were sent out to widen the path and make it fit for motors, and also to thin out some of the jungle round about.

A day or two later we went out to see how they were getting on, and to our horror found that in their zeal they had laid the whole place bare. All the lovely trees and ferns were gone, and nothing but bare earth and a few tree stumps confronted us. I could have wept. However, there were still three weeks to go, so we set to work to undo all the harm that had been done. Villagers were hired to plant a new jungle, and a kind friend offered to camp there and see that the good work was carried out. As he truthfully said, he could do his own job just as well out there as in Bhamo (I won't say what the job was!), and so he was officially reported as being away "on tour". Day after day he watched the gangs of men carrying buckets of water from the river to keep alive the newly planted forest, sent others to scour the jungle for orchids, which were realistically draped on the tree trunks, and had ferns planted. His work was well done, and by the end of the three weeks all was, to the uninitiated at any rate, even better than before.

In the good old days when the Burmese king went abroad his subjects used to crouch behind bamboo lattices stuck up all along the route, for they were too mean and lowly to look upon his holy face. Even nowadays when a high official visits an up-country station the roadsides suddenly sprout *zazemuts*, as these lattices are called, and if he be a very big man indeed then they are all whitewashed. Indeed, every single thing on which whitewash can be persuaded to stick is whitewashed, for to the Burman whitewashing is the highest honour. We were just in time to preserve the natural beauty of our sylvan glade, for one day we found it surrounded by these lattices and buckets of whitewash all ready to splash over the lovely boulders and stones. We waged a continual war against *zazemuts* and whitewash, but could never get the Burmese to understand that a Viceroy could be honourably received without them.

At last the great day arrived and we set off in the morning to the Viceroy's Camp to see that all was ready. Tables, chairs, crockery, glass, linen, silver, trays—all the paraphernalia for tea for thirty people—had been sent out the night before. The servants, with all the food and drink—cakes and bread and butter, boxes of growing mustard and cress for sandwiches, bottles of filtered water and of milk, whisky and beer and soda-water—were packed into the P.W.D. lorry, while we went on ahead in a car. Cars were few in number in those days, and one of the problems was how to convey people to and fro, for if a breakdown occurred all our arrangements would be brought to naught.

We soon reached the camp and busied ourselves arranging tables and chairs while waiting for the servants and food to arrive. One hour we waited, two hours. Then we grew desperate. There was an emergency telephone we had had rigged up, but at first even that wouldn't work. At last we got through to Bhamo and ordered another car

with workmen to come out, for we feared that the lorry had broken down. It had. At last, three hours after our own arrival, the lorry turned up and all was bustle and confusion. By some superhuman effort tea was ready by 3.30 and our servants all arrayed in new clothes, which had been brought out in boxes. The Burmans were in rustling skirts of pink and yellow silk, with pink silk head-cloths. My little Kachins had new baggy black sateen trousers, white coats, and scarlet turbans. They were all agog with excitement and had spent so much time dressing up and admiring themselves in a tiny mirror that I thought they would never be ready in time.

The most interesting sight in Bhamo and one to be seen in no other accessible spot is a Yunnan mule caravan laden with merchandise, and all visitors demand to see one. On this occasion a large caravan had been compulsorily halted on the other side of the river and was not allowed to proceed on its way until after tea, when the Viceroy and his suite could see it. A temporary bridge of bamboo had been built for the mules to cross the river near the camp. The party was late in arriving, but tea had gone off without a hitch. The sun was just setting when the caravan came into sight. Large camp-fires had been lighted, and it was a typical jungle scene, but the visitors could not be persuaded that the caravan was a real one and many were the questions showered upon us. It was a lengthy line of mules that trotted past, for the original caravan had been joined by many others. Mules and muleteers were anxious to reach the journey's end and enjoy their evening meals. The strength of the bamboo bridge was taxed to the utmost, and at length one mule did put his foot through and fall. That put an end to the procession, and all the other mules had to go round by the old bridge.

After the guests had left, the police emerged from their hiding-places in the jungle and we, almost too tired to speak,

drove back to Bhamo. That night the Burmese floated down the river ten thousand coloured paper lanterns each lit by a candle. They looked like a vast bed of lovely flowers growing in the velvety blackness of the water. China Street was a mass of startling decorations, and other parts of our little town did what they could with paper-covered arches, *zazemuts*, and whitewash, some of which remains to this day.

Now and then there were other excitements, such as a visit from the Governor of the province. I remember once when the band imported for the occasion mistook an order and struck up "God Save the King" in the middle of a durbar. The Governor and his staff had to spring to attention on the dais and stand thus until the band had finished, when they were again able to carry on with the presentation of medals and swords of honour. Another time when we were all invited to dine with the Governor the invitation bore the words "medals and decorations to be worn". This created great consternation, as we of the "backward tracts", as the Kachin Hills are called, do not ordinarily need full dress clothes; they only grow too small and mouldy. Lucky were those who could wear uniform; the rest managed after much rummaging in boxes to rout out the "wedding garments", and in the end all appeared correctly clad. But not one single man wore his own coat! Owing to the recent death of some royalty, of which I was, of course, ignorant, I had been given a hint by the A.D.C. that I ought to wear black. That was bad luck, for I had sold my one and only black dress a week previously, but a neighbour came up to the scratch, and so I, too, joined the army of borrowers!

Bhamo being the headquarters of a district covering over 7000 square miles, many were the cases which came up for trial in the court-house. This was a rambling old wooden building, and facing it was a cluster of stone pagodas,

now falling into ruin and covered with creepers, round which goats, cows, and chickens wandered at will. Outside the court there was always a crowd of litigants and witnesses and their friends—Indians, Burmans, Shans, Kachins, Chinese. Especially were they gathered near the “advocates’ chamber”, a little wooden hut near the main gate where the pleaders or lower-grade lawyers waited between cases and interviewed their clients.

The court itself was upstairs, a large bare room with a faded picture of the King Emperor on one wall. Beneath this picture was the judge’s bench, a plain deal table. Opposite was the dock, where the prisoner stood between two scarlet-turbaned policemen. In front of the dock was the pleaders’ table, by the side of which witnesses stood to give their evidence.

Many were the forms of oath used. Christians would hold aloft a Bible wrapped in white paper, tied with red tape, and sealed with large blobs of red wax. Sikhs swore on the Granthi Sahib, Mohammedans on the Koran. Burmans took oath over palm-leaf spathes on which were inscribed by a style the words of Buddha. Chinese read aloud from a tattered piece of paper, or repeated after the interpreter, a promise to speak the “truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”, begging Heaven to torture them should one word they uttered be false. The Kachins and other hill tribes swore on the sword, on their own sword, than which no oath could be stronger, for was not their sword their weapon of offence and defence, their axe and their pocket-knife, without whose help life would be impossible?

A few steps farther along the veranda was the office of the *akunwan*, or revenue officer. He was a Burman who had rendered long and faithful service to the government. A middle-aged man with wrinkled brown face and greying hair, he wore a long pink skirt and white silk jacket, while

round his head was wound a strip of bright green silk. He kept the records of all revenue collected in the district. In the adjoining office was the head clerk, surrounded by heaps of papers and files all neatly tied up with the proverbial red tape. At the farther end of the building were the offices of the civil police, all handy in case the judge should have need of them.

Every few yards along the veranda and on the stairs were large boxes of earth, and I remarked on the wisdom of the government in providing spittoons.

“They are not spittoons,” replied my guide. “They are fire-buckets for use in case of fire.”

Judging by the condition of the contents of the boxes, betel-chewers and other visitors had jumped to the same conclusion as I.

The most interesting part of the building was the bailiffs' room, where was to be seen a miscellaneous collection of articles confiscated by the police. Some of them were to be exhibits in future cases. There were two lovely old leather saddlebags which I greatly coveted, and several fine silver opium pipes. There were umbrellas, large round straw hats, swords of many kinds, brass gongs, kerosene oil tins full of rice spirit, old tins, dirty clothes, flour bags, and some walnuts. The last contained smuggled opium, which was only discovered by accident. A caravan was being searched at the custom house when one of the officials happened to tread on a walnut, which stuck to his shoe. The rest of the walnuts were then cracked open, and nearly all were found to contain opium. Too big to add to this quaint collection were a Burmese racing boat and a large jagged piece of wood worth only a few shillings, the question of the ownership of which had already been before the court for several months. These were left outside the court-house.

A little apart from the main building was the treasury, which was guarded day and night by armed military police.

In this vault-like little chamber were deposited the revenue of the district and all other government monies. At that moment there were ten lakhs of rupees, about £75,000. All were kept in wooden boxes neatly stacked against the wall, 5000 rupees to the box. Taxes are always paid in silver rupees, which are sent in under escort to headquarters; they are shipped down by government launch to Mandalay, and thence by train to Rangoon.

The treasury officer, a bright young Burman, occupied a little room near-by. His duty it was to make all government payments—pensions, wages, salaries, &c.—and as there was no bank in Bhamo he was also required to remit money to Rangoon for the local merchants and so save them the risk and worry of shipping rupees.

The rains were a trying time in Bhamo. They began at the end of May and lasted until mid-October. The temperature remained practically the same day and night. It was like living in a Turkish bath. Mattresses and pillows and cushions smelt of mildew, dresses rotted and fell to pieces, books and boots grew mushrooms. Mosquitoes were always at hand to bite, and as none of the houses were netted we had to put coils of smouldering sandalwood on the floor to keep them off, so that the whole house smelt of incense. The electric current did not function until dark, so we had to have old-fashioned punkahs. Even when it was on, the electric light was none too reliable, and was apt to fail at most awkward moments. I remember how once in the middle of a large dinner party we were suddenly plunged into complete darkness; one of the guests switched on the lights of his car and so illuminated the kitchen, candles were lit on the table, and dinner proceeded with scarcely a pause.

During these months violent thunderstorms, accompanied by torrential rain and fierce wind, descended on us; curtains flapped wildly, vases crashed over, the roof leaked, doors

and windows banged. Then servants rushed to shut up the house, which became so hot and stifling that we could hardly breathe.

In the summer, too, everything seemed to come to life. The grass grew fleas which hopped everywhere, cockroaches devoured all clothing left about, flying ants and other insects made meals difficult. Bats flew in and out of the rooms, and little lizards chased each other on the walls and ceilings. Sometimes they would fall down with a sharp smack; luckily they always missed me, though sometimes by inches only. Rats and mice, driven into the house by the rain, were a constant nuisance, especially in the storeroom. Many a time have I returned from a dinner party to be met on the stairs by a rat!

But during the rains the scenery was wonderful. Everywhere there was the most vivid colouring—greens of every shade, purple and blue mountains, scarlet and orange flowers, crimson and yellow sunsets over the river. When the cold weather arrived it made up for all the discomforts of the rains; no one who has ever spent a winter in Upper Burma can easily forget its delights.

CHAPTER X

Touring on the Irrawaddy

IN an earlier chapter I have described my life on tour in the Kachin Hills, and the discomforts of the primitive rest-houses. In comparison with that kind of travel, touring on the river was quite “de luxe”, for we were spared the long daily rides and the endless packing and unpacking. The launch became our temporary home and could be made very comfortable. It was a peaceful life too, especially when we went up river, for there we were far from any post or telegraph office.

The main portion of the Bhamo district is situated in the plains of the Irrawaddy, on whose banks lie its most important towns and villages, so a launch was provided to enable the officials to visit the riverine areas. These little white government steamers are a common sight on the Irrawaddy, and all boast such high-sounding names as *The Brigand*, *The Pirate*, *The Rover*, *The Buccaneer*—hardly suitable names, one would think, for sober government craft, though one can easily imagine the villagers themselves calling the tax collector’s boat by some such opprobrious title. The ancient Bhamo launch rejoiced in the name of *The Privateer*. It had two fair-sized cabins with small iron bedsteads, a bathroom with a zinc tub, and an open deck where we sat and had our meals. Below there was another deck almost level with the water, where were a cabin for the clerks, the engine-room and the stokehold, and a noisome den called the kitchen. This last was just large enough to hold the

cook and the oven, but there was no room for even the tiniest table, so all preparation of the food had to be done outside on the deck. At night the crew and servants lay about on the deck and slept rolled up in their blankets.

In charge of the launch was the *serang*, or captain, with four or five sailors; all were Chittagonians from the coast of Bengal, who are the best natural sailors in India.

It was astounding the enormous amount of baggage and household effects we used to take on tour with us, no matter whether we travelled by mule and pony or by launch. In the latter case all would be packed into bullock carts and taken to the riverside. There the servants would unload the cart and stagger down the sandy bank on to the launch with cane chairs, carpets, rolls of bedding, suitcases full of clothes, canvas bags full of sheets and towels, boxes of stores, china, and lamps, baskets of fruit and vegetables, live chickens and ducks, kettles and saucepans, bottles of water and of milk, and lanterns. The dogs were always excited at the prospect of touring, and strained at their leads, nearly pulling the coolie over. Yet another bullock cart would arrive from the court-house and disgorge tin dispatch boxes full of papers, typewriter, bicycle, bundles of kit belonging to the clerks and peons, and a large Union Jack. At last everything was stowed on board, and off we went chug-chugging up the river to visit the villages on the banks of the Irrawaddy.

The Privateer had two paddles amidships and used wood as fuel. She was flat bottomed, and drew only about a foot of water. When she was steaming at full speed, especially against the current, she rattled and shook so much that reading and writing were impossible, and when the telegraph was pulled it sounded as if the ship would fall to pieces.

Ten miles above Bhamo the Irrawaddy flows for forty miles through a narrow gorge, with mountains, 3000 or 4000 feet high, rising on either side. This gorge, or Upper Defile,

as it is called, is famous for its wild and rugged scenery. During the rains the river at Bhamo is nearly two miles wide, and often rises as much as six feet in twenty-four hours, but in the Upper Defile its waters are confined to a narrow channel in places only fifty yards wide. Navigation through this gorge is only possible for six months of the year, and but few people get the chance to view the grandeur of its scenery, for the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's vessels do not ply beyond Bhamo. Each time I went through the defile I gazed with wonder at the high-water mark, plainly visible on the rocks far, far above. On the rocky islets now towering out of the water could be seen uprooted tree trunks which had been torn from the banks and stranded on the rocks during the last high water. Well could I believe that those inky depths had never been plumbed, and that in years gone by one out of every three boats had been wrecked in the swirling waters, and their precious cargoes of jade from the mines in the north lost for ever.

Soon after the annexation two government launches were wrecked there, and near the places where they sank their names have been painted on the rocks in huge black letters, while close by the Burmese have erected small white pagodas.

I cannot say that I ever really enjoyed steaming up the defile, and I was only too glad when we reached our day's destination and tied up at some jungle village. The ancient launch seemed at times to be making no headway at all against the strong current. Immense black jagged rocks jutted out, causing dangerous whirlpools which were concealed by the oily smoothness of the water. As I gazed over the side I would suddenly perceive the dark shadows of some submerged rock right under us, and would marvel at the way the serang judged the depth of the water, the level of which altered each day. If he made the slightest error, the launch's bottom would be ripped out, and we

would all undoubtedly perish. I called to mind tales I had heard of narrow escapes when the helm was turned just in time to avoid a hidden rock, especially of one occasion when one of the paddles did strike a rock, and the ship heeled right over. The crew all rushed to the side and the passengers seized their lifebelts, for all thought their last moments had come.

The course of the defile is a very tortuous one, and there are few places where it is continuously straight for more than a hundred yards. So we were for ever rounding blind corners. The serang would steer the boat straight at some mass of rock. It seemed as if we must crash into it. But suddenly at the last moment the force of the current would push us out and round we went, hooting loudly the while. My heart would be in my mouth as I remembered the age of the launch, and I was always afraid that the engines would fail or the steering-gear break down.

To prevent accidents, vessels were not allowed to pass in the defile, so whenever a launch wanted to travel up stream it had to send word to Sinbo, the village at the northern end, to keep the passage clear. It was not only the launches which used this part of the river; there were the huge timber rafts too, and it was always a mystery to me how they ever managed to get round the corners.

The scenery was delightful. Every now and then we would pass little sandy coves sheltered by rocks from the current, and nestling amid the palms and trees above them could be seen the brown houses of some tiny village. The jungle came right down to the water's edge, and the bright foliage was mirrored with ever-changing lights and shades in the river. The flowers of the silk-cotton tree made patches of scarlet, a creeper fell in cascades of mauve over the trees, while white roses starred the bushes.

The villages are mainly inhabited by Shan-Burmans, a mixed race, while in the defile are five or six villages of

Hpons. No one seems to know anything definite about these people, who are found nowhere else. They themselves say they came seven generations ago from Mong Ti, the native name of the Chinese Shan state of Nantien, near Tengyueh. Their language is nearly forgotten, and the younger generation speak only Burmese, and even claim to be Burmans. In one village we found an old man who said he was a Hpon and could speak a few words of the language. We questioned him about the history of his people, so he squatted down on the deck of the launch and told us the little he knew.

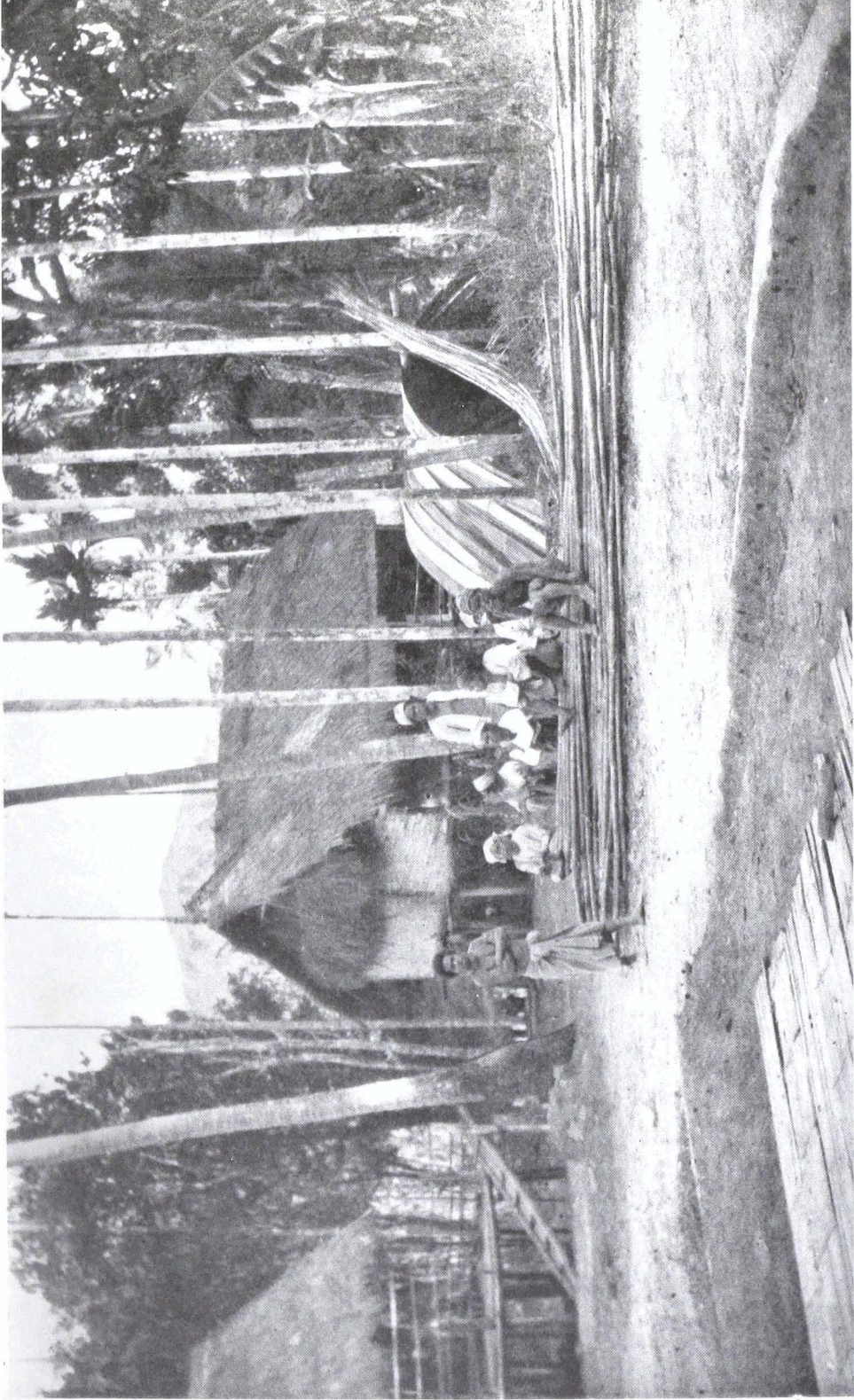
“Many generations ago,” said the old man, “our forefathers lived in Mong Ti. They were in charge of the sacred white elephant of the Sawbwa. One day they accidentally killed the elephant. They knew the Sawbwa would be very angry with them and have them all executed. So they fled to Burma and settled at a place a little higher up the river. There they built a village which is called Hton Bon. In the temple at Hton Bon is a golden Buddha, which our forefathers brought with them from Mong Ti.”

I thanked the old man and gave him some empty bottles and tins, with which he was very delighted. A few days later we came to Hton Bon and tied up there. A narrow sandy path led up to the village. The sunlight filtered through the leaves, casting a green mysterious light over everything. How remote from civilization we were! Not even the creaking of a bullock cart disturbed the peace, for there are no roads in the jungle, only narrow paths; the main road of these villages is the river. There were very few people about. A couple of women passed bearing earthen water jars on their heads. What a relief it was not to see the ubiquitous kerosene tin used as a bucket throughout the East! All signs of Western civilization were absent; there were no boots or shoes, no ugly felt hats to be seen. The Hpons are very poor and make a bare living by timber

trading and fishing. They act, too, as trackers to the country boats up the defile, clambering over the rocks tugging at the tow-ropes, while the boatmen paddle as hard as they can.

The headman met us at the entrance to the village. He was far darker than a Burman, and wore a black *lungyi*, or skirt, and a dirty white cotton coat. We asked to see the golden Buddha, and he conducted us to a bamboo and thatch hut built on piles. Its one room was bare. In a corner was the altar, on which were a dozen images of Buddha. The centre one, indistinguishable to me from the others, was the golden Buddha of Mong Ti. It was not of solid gold, as I had imagined, but was just plaster covered with gilt lacquer. The hut was used as a school as well as a temple, and on the walls hung locally made slates and bamboo pencil holders.

At another Hpon village where we stopped, the old headman, clad in a dingy old skirt grey with much washing, met us at the entrance, carrying the tax rolls of the village in a bamboo tube. They were dated 1887, just eighteen months after the annexation. While the taxes were being checked I wandered off to examine the houses. All were raised high from the ground on piles, a precaution against floods, wild beasts, and snakes. Underneath were primitive spinning-wheels and looms and other domestic implements. Outside one hut a woman was busily weaving a strip of black and white cloth. Another was hulling rice for the evening meal. The mill was just two bamboo baskets coated with dry mud, fitting one over the other. The paddy was poured between the two baskets, and as the outer one was turned the husk was rubbed off. Beneath another hut was a different kind of rice mill. The paddy was put in a hollowed-out tree trunk, and a heavy wooden pestle fell on it and broke the husk off. A woman worked the pestle with her foot, hanging on to a bamboo crossbar to keep her



A HPON VILLAGE

balance. I had a try, but found this treadmill far too hard labour. How the woman kept at it I can't imagine.

On the outskirts of each village was a tiny *kyaung*, or temple, but many were empty and deserted by all save the gods; the villagers were too poor to provide a *pong-yi*, or priest, with food and clothing. In one village the *pong-yi* was a dear old man, whose great treasure was a clock which the villagers had presented to him. As he proudly showed it to us, he anxiously asked what the time was. Marvellous to relate, the clock was approximately correct.

Until quite recent times education in Burma was entirely in the hands of the Buddhist priests, just as in Europe in the Middle Ages scholarship and teaching were confined to the Christian monks and monasteries. Even now in the remoter districts there is no education save in the *pong-yi kyaungs*. How often have I seen the little pupils lying on the floor of a temple on their stomachs with their feet kicking in the air while they repeated aloud canons of the Buddhist scriptures! The old village *pong-yi* had only four little pupils, and he gave them a holiday in honour of our visit.

The evening was the pleasantest time on the river. The women would come down to fill their water-jars and to bathe, and after bathing they would sit down on some rock to dry their long black hair. Some would bring from the temple vases filled with large shiny green leaves, which they washed carefully in the river; they would acquire merit from this simple duty. Children would bring down the rice to wash for the evening meal. The men would scrub their teeth vigorously with their fingers. All were happy and contented. The women stared hard at me and chattered vociferously with their friends. I was the first white woman they had ever been close to.

One evening I went ashore for a stroll in the cool, and came upon an old man praying before a little shrine. He had stuck some little paper flags in the ground, and had

brought vases of flowers, and gourds full of rice and vegetables, as an offering to the gods. He intoned his prayers aloud, and as he rose from his knees he poured on to the ground water from a little pot he held.

Each evening the sweet tones of a gong sounded through the village. It was the signal that the priest had started on his evening peregrination. As he passed along the village street each housewife put into his begging bowl some tasty portion from the family meal.

The sun sank behind the hills in a yellow glory, changing the waters of the river from blue to grey with orange lights. A sudden stillness crept over the earth, and all that could be heard was the gurgle of the river and the muffled voices of the villagers. The hoarse barking of a deer suddenly rent the air, and as the noise died away the ear picked up many unaccustomed sounds of jungle life.

Below Bhamo the most interesting place was the sacred island of Kyundaw, situated in the middle of the river, opposite the little town of Shwegu. On this island there was reputed to be a footprint of Buddha, and about 2000 years ago an early king of Burma erected the famed Shwe-bawgyun Pagoda over the holy spot. Inside the pagoda he placed several images carved from the wood of the sacred Bo tree of Buddh Gaya. On the island there were also hundreds of small stone pagodas, many of them covered with jungle and fallen into ruin; for a good Buddhist acquires merit by building a pagoda, but it is no man's duty to keep it in repair.

Every year there was a great festival held at this pagoda, and pilgrims arrived from all over Burma. Although forbidden by law, there was always much secret gambling at the temple festivals, especially at a famous one like this. So extra police had to be drafted there to keep peace and order, and a civil officer usually visited the place in his launch. It was dreadfully hot cooped up in the launch,

which was like an oven. The iron roof and sides simply radiated heat, and there were no punkahs or ice.

The old Burmese magistrate was anxious to show me the sacred images, so one morning I braved the heat and went with him to the pagoda. His pink satin *lungyi* was bunched up in front, making his fat little figure even more dumpy. Round his head was wound a bright yellow scarf. We crossed the burning sands to the entrance gate, whence a roofed pathway, over a quarter of a mile long, led to the pagoda itself. This gate and path had been given by the people of Shwegu, while the eastern entrance had been subscribed for by other devotees. The old man pointed out to me the *thi*, or spire, of the pagoda, studded with rubies from the mines of Mogok, which flashed in the sunlight. All around us glowed other golden spires. Crowds of men and women, dressed in clothes of every brilliant hue, were wending their way to the temple. Tucked in the women's shining coils of hair were frangipani flowers, which scented the morning air.

Inside the temple worshippers were kneeling before the images of Buddha and making offerings of rice and fruit and flowers. The dull boom of gongs resounded through the building, and the bells on the spires tinkled softly in the breeze. Happiness and contentment filled the faces of the people as they thronged the ancient temple. There were no set services; they said their prayers just when and how they thought necessary.

We left the main building and walked along a magnificent avenue of wild-fig trees till we reached a little chapel where, in a glass-fronted case, were kept the sacred images. They were three in number, and represented the king seated on a tiger, an elephant, and a dragon, for it was by the aid of these animals that he reached the island and introduced the teachings of Buddha to Upper Burma. Since then devout pilgrims have time and again covered

these images with gold-leaf, so that now all trace of the original carving has been lost, and they are but shapeless blocks of gilded wood.

The old magistrate had the images taken outdoors to be photographed for the first time in their long history. It is interesting to note the difference in the attitude of the Buddhists of Upper Burma and the Shan states from those of Mandalay and Rangoon and all Lower Burma. The latter will permit no one to enter a temple unless he removes shoes and stockings and goes barefoot, while the former are only too pleased to welcome the European into their temples however he may be clad, and will even offer him the hospitality of the monastery.

The little town of Shwegu, just across the river from the pagoda, is noted for its pottery. Often I have walked along the pretty shaded path by the river and watched the women skilfully shaping the wet clay with thumb and finger while they turned the wheel with the other hand. Whenever a steamer called, the pottery was laid out on the bank to attract customers; water-pots and urns of all sizes, vases, teapots, cups, and bowls could be bought for a few pence.

CHAPTER XI

Elephants

THE forests of Upper Burma teem with game of all descriptions—tigers and leopards, sambur and saing and serow. But the most important of all are the elephants, which roam in immense herds about the country.

A large part of Burma's wealth lies in her valuable teak forests, but the extraction of the timber is almost entirely dependent on elephants. These huge animals drag the heavy logs from where they are felled to the nearest stream, whence they are floated down to the coast, and it is difficult to imagine any other practical method.

The large timber firms employ many hundreds of elephants, most of which are highly trained. All game in Burma is protected, and elephants, which are so valuable alive, are especially preserved from the tusk hunter. Rarely indeed is an elephant shot, save when he is a "rogue" and guilty of repeated damage to the crops. Periodically, however, wild elephants are captured and tamed by licensed Karen trappers, natives of the largest indigenous race of Lower Burma, who are famed through the country as mahouts. Catching elephants is a most arduous and dangerous profession, and full well do the trappers deserve the profits they make.

Operations commence at the end of the rains. First the herd is stalked and surrounded by the trapper and his assistants, who slowly and almost imperceptibly drive the animals towards the trap, or *keddah*. Occasionally they fire

guns or beat gongs or tap the trees to make the elephants move along. It is a very slow job, for, above all, they must avoid frightening the animals and causing them to stampede. It may take months before the herd is driven into the *keddah*. Sometimes, of course, the elephants do take fright at the noises and burst back through the ring of trappers, trampling several of them to death. Then the drive has to start all over again.

The *keddah* itself is a small enclosure with walls of stout posts, approached by a narrowing lane a mile or so long. The walls of the lane are strong and concealed by foliage. The entrance is very wide and so well camouflaged that the elephants are inside before they realize that anything is wrong. Once inside the lane they are driven rapidly along until all are in the *keddah*. They are given no chance to make a concerted rush at the walls or to demolish them piecemeal.

Directly all the elephants are in the *keddah* the gate is firmly closed. If there are insufficient animals to fill the trap, then a partition is lowered across the middle. It is essential that the trapped animals should be packed so closely together that they cannot move; otherwise they would charge and smash to pieces the *keddah* walls, or trample one another to death in their efforts to escape.

For twenty-four hours the poor beasts are left packed in the *keddah* without food or water. The mahouts then deftly climb about them, shackling their limbs with ropes of bark. Tame elephants are brought up and they force the captives step by step to some massive tree, to which they are firmly tied. For a month they are kept bound and unable to move a limb. By the end of that time their wild spirits are utterly broken. They can be trained to work.

One March eighteen elephants were trapped not many miles from Bhamo, and a fortnight after their capture I went out to see them. We were able to drive by motor to

within a couple of miles of the *keddah*, though the latter part of the track was very rough indeed. Every now and then our progress was impeded by high tussocks of jungle grass. The Burmese chauffeur drove as fast as he could, hoping that the car would clear the obstacles. But some tussocks were too high, and several times the car came to a sudden halt, shooting us forward out of our seats. At last the car could get no farther and I travelled the final couple of miles in a creaking, springless bullock-cart.

The Karen head trapper met us. He wore a pink cotton *lungyi* and head-scarf and a white jacket, and looked far too frail and lightly built to cope with wild elephants. He led us down a tiny path through the jungle, and I had not gone far before I heard the most awful roars, rising at times to wild shrieks of rage and despair. They echoed through the jungle, bearing to all a message of utter misery and pain.

Soon we came to a little clearing where were twelve elephants, each tightly bound to a stout tree. They rocked slowly to and fro, ceaselessly flourishing their trunks and flapping their huge ears. Their pig-like eyes were full of rage and despair. And as they rocked they lifted their voices to the heavens in terrible roars of agony of body and spirit. This little corner of the jungle exuded an atmosphere of woe, and the hearts of the great beasts seemed broken, as if they realized that their liberty was gone for ever.

The head trapper spoke a little English, and was only too pleased to show me everything and explain the capture and training of the elephants. Each captive elephant, he said, had three mahouts, who worked in shifts, so that day and night the elephant was never left alone. There were pillows and sleeping mats all over the ground, and several times I had to step over sleeping men; even when off duty the mahouts kept near their charges in case additional help should at any time be needed quickly.

When on duty the mahout was continually busy. The bark ropes round each huge foot had to be moved every half-hour to prevent sores. His charge had to be fed with boughs of trees and bamboo, with an occasional banana as a treat. The largest of the elephants had terrible injuries, caused by another's tusks in the *keddah*, and the mahout was dressing them by means of a pad of rags tied to the end of a long bamboo which he dipped into a bucket of lotion. His legs, too, were dreadfully galled. He had magnificent tusks and was thirty years old. "Too old," said the Karen. "Very difficult to train." He went on to tell me that every three days all the captives had to be moved to a fresh clearing or they would sicken and die. By tiny steps they would be forced along, prodded behind by the mahouts; it was a slow and dangerous proceeding.

One little fellow was only eighteen months old, and he screamed and roared all the time and tore frantically at the fetters with his trunk. When one of the mahouts passed him rather close, he let out viciously with a hind leg, for he was secured only by the front ones. The youngest of all was only the size of a pony, a baby of six months. His poor mother was so frightened at the capture that her milk had dried up, so the baby was being fed on condensed milk and a porridge of rice and sugar. He was only very lightly fettered, and we had to be careful to keep out of range of his trunk and legs, with which he was most active.

Nine years ago a timber firm had lost a female elephant which had strayed into the jungle and joined a wild herd. This old lady had been caught in the *keddah* and identified. Her old mahout had been sent for, but she was still a mountain of bad temper. She remembered the words of command and would lie down and get up when told to, but all was done with a very bad grace.

At night the camp was lit by flares to scare off tigers and leopards and other unwelcome visitors. One old tusker, too,

frequently came to try to rescue his friends. He had been scheduled as a "rogue", so anyone could shoot him without licence, but so far he had contrived to escape the deadly bullet.

When setting out to trap wild elephants, the Karens do not trouble to provide themselves with coils of stout rope or lengths of chain; nor do they carry reliable guns for use in emergency. These eighteen elephants were caught by a handful of weakly looking men whose only weapons were an ancient gun or two, rarely used save to frighten the great beasts. The ropes they tied the captives with were made on the spot of bamboo and liana. Indeed, all their appliances were home-made, and among them I noticed a large bamboo syringe, which they used for washing out the elephants' wounds.

A few weeks later I again visited the elephants in company with a forest officer, who had to measure the animals. The Government of Burma collects a royalty of fifty rupees for each elephant captured. This sum is payable even though the animal may die the moment it is caught; in the *keddah* which I saw, one elephant did die of fright and heart failure during those terrible first twenty-four hours after capture. In addition to the royalty, a tax is payable, varying, according to the size of the animal, from fifty rupees for elephants under four feet six inches, to 250 rupees for those over eight feet in height.

As we bumped along in the car I suddenly saw a fine leopard standing by the roadside. He was slowly waving his tail, and his great green eyes looked angrily into mine. I caught my breath, not from fear, but because he was so beautiful standing there, his spotted coat harmonizing so well with the parched jungle and its flickering shadows. Kaing grass grew high on either side of us, and my companion told me that at this season of the year it harboured game of all sorts. Now that the leaves were withered and

dead, their usual haunts did not afford them sufficient cover. Farther on we caught a glimpse of another leopard as it crossed the path in front of us; when a couple of seconds later we passed the spot I saw it a few yards away sitting under a tree.

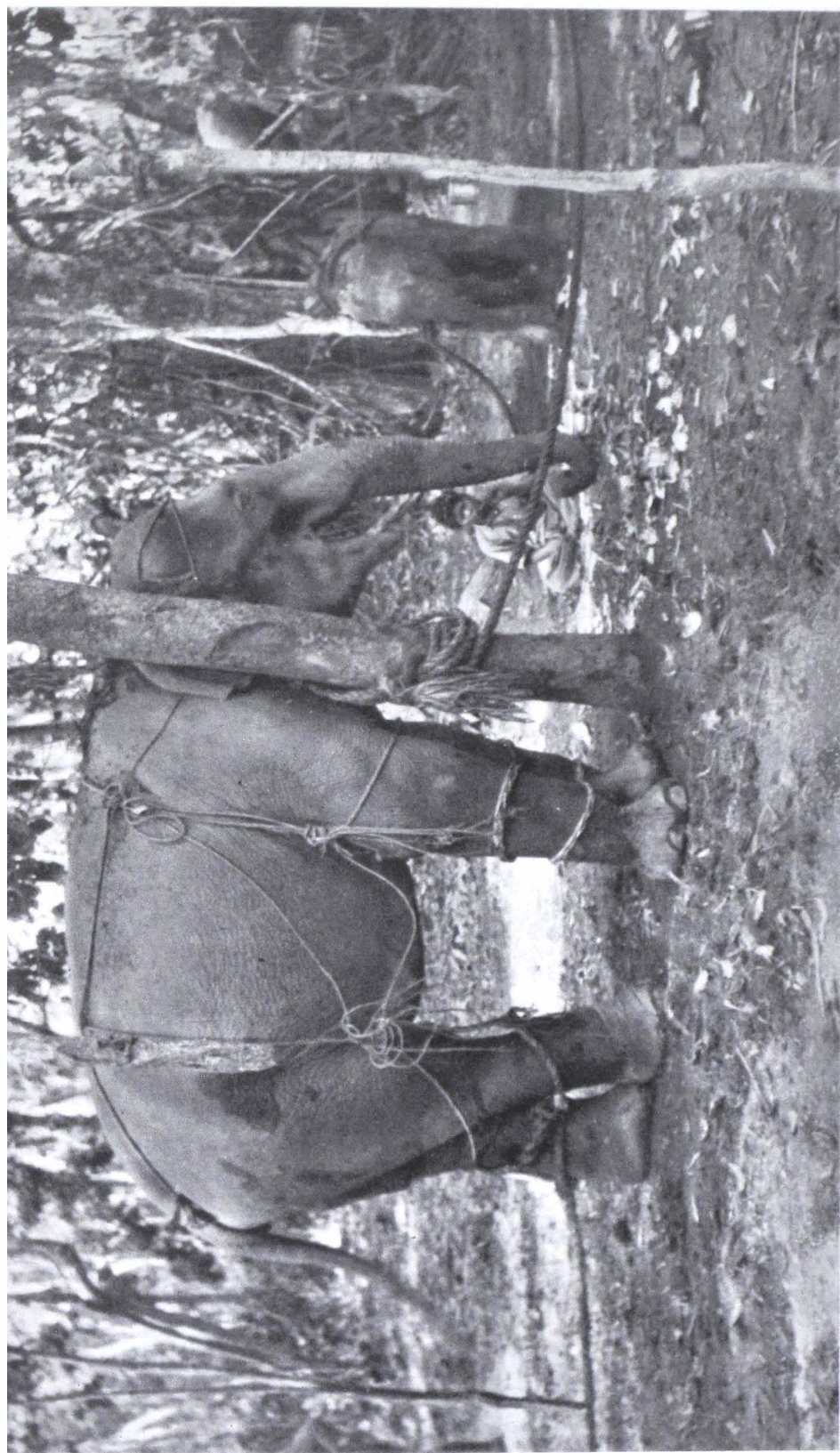
In some pools there were buffaloes wallowing, only their horns and the tips of their noses showing above the muddy water. On the edge stood others, covered with shining black slime, which they love, as it protects them from the bites of insects. They were Indian buffaloes which had been driven all the way from Nepal. The bulls refuse to work at all, so it is only the cows who make this long trek. They are greatly prized for their milk.

The buffaloes of Burma, both bulls and cows, work hard and are used for ploughing the paddy fields. Timber firms also employ them to drag the smaller logs to the streams, for they are much cheaper than elephants.

All was quiet this time in the Karen trappers' camp; nothing broke the silence but the noise of the wooden elephant bells, that strange sound which anyone who has lived in Burma always associates with elephants. It is a peculiar clip-clop which can be heard a long way off, and it enables the mahouts to find their charges when they have been turned loose to graze in the jungle.

There was a great difference in the behaviour of the captives. They were now tamed and would obey their mahouts. They were hobbled with heavy chains so that they could only walk slowly.

The first elephant brought forward to be measured had been christened Ma Shwe, Miss Gold, by the mahout. A measuring stick plainly marked in inches and feet was stood upright against her foreleg, while the mahout seated on her neck held a lath horizontally across her shoulder. I was absorbedly watching the performance when I heard a shout and turned round just in time to get out of the way



CAPTURED ELEPHANTS

of the baby elephant, who was making straight for me. He had a playful way, I was told, of winding his trunk round a person's neck! Elephants captured when less than a year old frequently die, for it is often impossible to get enough tinned milk out to the jungle for them; they need four or five gallons of milk a day. This baby did eat a few leaves soaked in rice water and tinned milk, but he was much thinner than when I saw him before.

The next animal led forward was the big tusker; he measured eight feet one inch, so a royalty of 250 rupees was payable. He was twenty-five years old and valued at about £500. After he had been measured he was driven off into the jungle, dragging his heavy chain behind him like a piece of string.

Another enormous tusker came surging through the jungle towards the measuring stand.

"Get out of the way," shouted the forest officer. "Never stand in front of a tusker. You never know what they are going to do."

Two of the young elephants had been bought for a German circus, the agent of which had travelled all the way to Upper Burma to find likely animals. Another elephant had been sold to the London Zoo for £300. Never since seeing these elephants in their natural surroundings and witnessing the awful agony of mind they endure after capture, can I bear to watch performing elephants in a circus, or any other performing animals for that matter.

As soon as the measuring was completed, we walked back to the car accompanied by the Burmese forest rangers, so appropriately clad in khaki coats and shorts, with emerald green kerchiefs round their heads. I had brought a picnic lunch, so we sat down under a tree, and as we ate the forest officer talked to me about elephants. There we sat in the midst of the primeval jungle, protected from the fierce rays of the sun by the immense leaves of the teak tree.

All was still in the noonday heat. Nothing stirred save the clouds of yellow butterflies which flew round and round in a patch of sunlight. Since then this man, still in the prime of life, has died of typhoid fever alone in the jungle.

All baby elephants, he told me, have a foster-mother in addition to their own mother, and sleep between the two to keep warm and to be safe from attack by wild animals. Should baby be in any way molested, then it is the foster-mother who rushes to the rescue and affords it protection; the real mother stands placidly by. Should perchance the mother die, then the foster-mother takes over the rearing of the baby.

The age of an elephant, I learnt, can be roughly guessed by the way the skin curls over the ears; in very young animals there is no curl at all. For the first time, too, I heard of tuskless male elephants, which he called "hines". Their strength is prodigious and they can easily defeat a tusker in battle. The hine just curls his trunk round his opponent's tusks till they snap off; the agony is so excruciating that the tusker howls for mercy. The herds are ruled by these hines.

Then there are males with small tusks like female elephants, which are called "hans". It is a debatable point, my companion continued, whether hines breed hines or not. The male elephants of Ceylon are all hines, and it may be that countless years ago the hines overpowered and killed all the tuskers, with the result that only tuskless males were bred thereafter.

Elephants love the sweet young bamboo shoots. Unfortunately these often contain the eggs of some insects, which hatch in their stomachs. The grubs bore their way through flesh and skin and emerge as black maggots, leaving a nasty sore behind them. All these sores and cuts have to be very carefully treated, for an elephant is a very valuable piece of property. They are bad patients too, so treatment

is none too easy, and a sore may easily take a couple of years to heal.

For a short time in my early days in Burma we were stationed in the southern Shan states, and there the Government provided two elephants to carry our kit on tour. Packing was quite simple; the animals knelt down while all our boxes and bundles and tents were tied on the pad with ropes. It was easier than travelling with mules, for I had not to think of the size and weight of the boxes. Marches were short too, for an elephant soon tires and can manage only eight or ten miles a day. Even then he needs one day's rest in four. Camping sites, too, have to be carefully chosen, for the elephant needs a daily bath and an enormous quantity of green branches for supper.

I loved to watch them on a difficult piece of road, particularly a steep descent. Every step was the subject of careful thought and observation, and each huge round foot was carefully and firmly planted before the full weight of the body was put on it. They would have been utterly useless in the Kachin Hills. When crossing a jungle bridge, the strength was first tested with the trunk, and if the elephant considered a bridge not strong enough to bear his weight, nothing could persuade him to proceed.

Elephants feel the heat intensely, so marches have to be undertaken in the early hours before the sun has gained strength. Their skin, too, is very sensitive, and the bites of insects worry them a lot. If they get a chance they cover themselves with slimy mud, just as the buffaloes do; failing that, they will pick up dust with their trunks and blow it over their bodies.

Once on tour near the Siamese border we had to swim our elephants across the River Salween. It was an anxious time, as both ladies were quite old. The mahouts balanced themselves on their charges' backs and urged them into the water. The great beasts were submerged save for the

tips of their trunks. The current was very strong, and I was afraid they would never get across. The blood-curdling shouts of the mahouts encouraging their steeds to greater efforts did not reassure me. Finally they did manage to reach the opposite bank, but far, far below where they had entered the water. They were both utterly exhausted with their swim.

Elephants hate dogs, which seem to take a delight in barking at them and snapping at their heels. In those early days I had a little Sealyham whose legs were too short for jungle marches, so we used to put him in a basket which was hauled up by a rope on to the elephant's back. How he did hate this ignominious mode of travelling, while the elephant, smelling one of his old enemies and hearing the barks, got very restive.

Females alone are used as pad elephants; the males are too uncertain of temper. The great strength of the latter, however, is utilized in hauling huge logs of timber. The sagacity of elephants is proverbial, and what greater proof is necessary than an old tusker picking out logs of the same size from a pile of timber of all lengths.

CHAPTER XII

The Lisus

NEXT to the Kachins the largest and most important of the frontier tribes is the Lisu. Both of these tribes belong to the Mongolian race of mankind and have spread south from an aboriginal Tibetan home, but the Lisus are tall and spare and have frequently straight or even aquiline noses, while the Kachins retain the short, stocky figure and broad, flattened nose of the Mongolian. Probably the tall, warlike Aryan tribesmen of north-western India, who for centuries made repeated raids across the Himalayas into Tibet, mingled their blood with the Mongolian ancestors of the Lisus.

The main habitat of the Lisus is the valley of the upper Salween River in north-west Yunnan, a country of precipitous mountains and deep ravines covered with dense jungle. Save on the mountain tops, the climate is very oppressive, and poisonous plants and insects abound. Of roads there are none, and the so-called paths are but ledges in the cliff-sides, so narrow as to be almost impassable to the European, though the Lisu, even with a heavy bundle on his back and his cross-bow in his hand, walks along them and up and down the steep hills as easily as if he were striding along a wide level road.

Only about half a dozen Europeans have penetrated this upper Salween valley and seen the "black" Lisus, as the Chinese call these wild, uncivilized tribesmen, and of this handful of travellers two, Dr. Brunhuber and Herr Schmitz, were murdered there by the natives in 1909. But

from their secluded home the Lisus have wandered far and wide over the mountainous districts of Yunnan and of the Burma border land. By contact with their Chinese and Shan neighbours, they have become "tamed" or civilized, and their customs and even their dress have altered. It is these civilized Lisus whom I have met and of whom this chapter mainly treats.

The costume of the black Lisu woman is, according to travellers' accounts, crude in the extreme. Just a short coat of coarse hempen cloth, with a skirt of the same material reaching only to the knees. Shoes and stockings are unknown, but they wear gaiters of the same grey homespun as the dress to protect the legs from thorns and from snake bites.

These gaiters are common to all the frontier tribes, and I once queried their usefulness, seeing that the feet are bare. "On bare feet there's nothing to be feared from snakes," I was told. "Snakes always strike high; about calf high."

Round the hair the Lisu women wear a bandeau of red cloth about an inch wide and studded with silver or bone buttons or with cowrie shells. They love jewellery and wear as many bracelets, necklets, and armlets as they can get hold of. As red is the favourite colour and coral the favourite stone of the Kachins, so the blue turquoise is the preferred colour and jewel of the Lisus. Dozens of strings of this stone, which is found in large quantities in Tibet, adorn the neck of a black Lisu belle, who also loves silver ornaments if she can get them. The poorer women and girls have to content themselves with cowrie shells, bone buttons, or dried seeds.

The dress of the civilized Lisu women is very striking and full of colour; the Chinese call them "flowery" Lisus on account of their varicoloured garments. Over short loose knickers of dark blue cotton, they wear a long coat of



LISU WOMEN

the same material, which reaches just below the knees but with the front half cut away from the waist downwards, something like a man's dress coat. Over the shoulders, and reaching to the waist back and front, are broad bands of cloth of three different colours, varying slightly according to locality, such as brown, white, and green, or red, white, and blue. The coat tail is ornamented with many small patches of the same three colours, and with rows of white seeds or cowrie shells. The gap in front caused by the cut-away is covered by an apron similarly ornamented with coloured patches and white seeds. A coloured woven belt and a triangular "tail" with tassel complete the costume, which is so neatly put on as to give the illusion of a skirt. Tubular gaiters of blue cotton, also ornamented with coloured patches, are worn to protect the legs. The hair is roughly bobbed or even cut short and then completely covered by a huge turban of dark blue cotton, with the ends ornamented with coloured patches and a fringe of reddish yarn. Over the turban is frequently worn a bandeau of red cloth edged with blue, on which are sewn a row of large white bone buttons. Silver earrings and necklaces, torques and bracelets are worn, together with as many as a dozen blue glass necklaces; even though they are unable to obtain the turquoise beads worn by their grandmothers, they still retain a predilection for blue ornaments, and I have never seen a Lisu woman wearing red jewellery, like her Kachin neighbours.

The dress of the Lisu men consists of short loose knickers such as the women wear, a long coat reaching to the knees, and gaiters, while the pigtail they usually affect is concealed by a large turban. Among the black Lisu all these garments are of whitish hempen homespun without trimming of any kind. The flowery Lisu, however, wear broad bands over the shoulders as the women do, but of plain dark blue; while between the shoulder blades on the back of

the coat is a small square of blue and black patches. The gaiters are edged with blue, while turban and belt of dark blue cloth complete a very striking costume.

It is a pity that most of the flowery Lisu men are now forsaking this stately long coat for the short, but no doubt more convenient, coat of the Chinese. In a few years' time one more tribal costume will be a thing of the past.

Like the Kachins, all Lisu men carry a long sword in a wooden sheath, but their characteristic weapon is the cross-bow, with which they are exceedingly skilful. The usual bow is about three feet broad, and is made of wild mulberry wood, which is exceptionally tough. I bought one of them and tested it by pulling the string back to the trigger with a spring balance, and the dial showed 160 lb.! I could never string a bow myself, and found that not many European men could do it. The Lisus pressed the butt against their stomach, bent forward grasping the bowstring, and then threw the body backwards so as to bring its whole weight in play. Even they doubled up their coat into a pad for the butt to rest against, and my friends found at least a sofa cushion necessary to avoid bruises!

The arrow is made of bamboo, and is only about a foot long and the thickness of a wooden knitting needle. It is feathered with a little piece of bamboo sheath. The arrow can be bent or broken by the fingers almost as easily as a match, and yet it is shot from the bow with such force that at twenty paces it will go right through an inch plank.

These plain arrows are used for practice and for shooting at birds; even when marching along with a heavy load on his back the Lisu always has his bow in his hand, ready for a practice shot at any bird he sees. They are marvellous marksmen, and some can hit quite small birds at fifty yards. I amused myself one day in a Lisu village by sticking up some silver dollars as targets, and the men hit them once

in three times at twenty yards. They thoroughly enjoyed the sport, but I found it too expensive to continue!

For big game hunting and for war the arrows are more carefully pointed—sometimes an iron barb is fixed on with twine—and behind the point the shaft is carefully pared thin and then filled up again with poison paste made of wild aconite and resin. A wound, even the slightest scratch, from a poisoned arrow is said to be fatal within half an hour. When Lisu hunters have hit a deer or such large animal they and their dogs follow in its tracks until it drops, and a wounded animal always runs in a circle, they say, so the chase is not too long. A huge piece of the flesh round the poisoned wound is cut out and thrown away, and the rest of the carcass is said to be quite free from poison and good to eat. If a Lisu is himself hit by a poisoned arrow he at once draws his sword and cuts out a big piece of flesh; it is the only way he can save his life.

The black Lisu men are said to have special weapons for war: five-foot wide bows, five-foot long swords, and five-foot high shields of ox-hide. They also wear caps of deerskin adorned with the horns as a protection against head hits, and hang strings of cowrie shells round their necks and blacken their faces to terrify the enemy. A black Lisu raiding party must offer an awesome spectacle.

Like all hillmen, the Lisus are very lazy; although keen hunters and untiring climbers, they much prefer spending their time squatting round the hearth or in the sunshine puffing away at a pipe. Their wants are few. A little plot of jungle is cleared in the spring, and amid the charred tree stumps enough Indian corn is grown for the year. Tobacco and opium poppy are also usually cultivated, and all their other needs—firewood, wild honey, meat, hemp to weave into clothes—are supplied by the jungle. Even when some Lisu family leaves the Salween valley and gradually becomes civilized, it is several years or even generations

before they relinquish their nomadic jungle existence and settle down in permanent villages with tilled fields. Forest officers hate them for the damage they do to the forest by clearing each year a fresh patch for cultivation, and so destroying all trees.

The Lisu house is made of rough poles with walls of plaited split bamboo. The floor is raised three or four feet from the ground, and in front there is a small veranda. In the middle of the house—it is only about fifteen feet long and half that distance wide—is the hearth, where logs are continually burning and filling the room with smoke and fumes. Logs of wood or roughly made low stools serve as seats, while the floor serves as bed. I shall never forget the first Lisu house I entered. It was some minutes before my eyes got accustomed to the smoky gloom. Indeed, I stumbled over what looked just a bundle of blankets, but it let out a grunt. It was the granny of the family taking an afternoon nap.

My hosts begged me to “eat wine” with them, and I reluctantly agreed. A large earthenware pot was produced from a corner of the room, along with two or three Chinese rice bowls and some roughly cut chopsticks. My host dipped from the jar a bowlful of fermented rice and handed it to me with a pair of chopsticks. I had expected a small cup of spirit! It did not taste so unpleasant as I expected; it was just rice malt.

The more civilized of the flowery Lisu usually build their houses on the ground, with a floor of hard beaten earth as in Chinese houses. The house is larger and is frequently divided into two rooms, but it is just as draughty and roughly built as that of their wild relatives. The Lisu can never throw off his hatred of restraint; he wants to be able to move to new hunting grounds the moment the spirit moves him, so what is the use of building an elaborate house?



AN OLD LISU COUPLE

The man's crossbow is lying on the ground at his feet

The Lisus are animists, worshipping—or rather propitiating—the spirits of nature, but in addition they also pay reverence to the spirit of their ancestors. This latter worship they have probably adopted from their Chinese neighbours, who rate the Lisu far higher than any other frontier tribe. Intermarriages of Lisu and Chinese are by no means uncommon, and are not deemed by the Chinese such *més-alliances* as are marriages with “wild men”, as they style the Kachins. The principal spirits worshipped by the Lisus are Misi the god of the jungle, Mina the god of the earth, Muhu the god of lightning, Mihi the god of the winds, and Makara the Lord of Heaven. The spirit of the ancestors is called Hini. Like most Oriental peoples, they celebrate the new year at the new moon which occurs about the beginning of February. These celebrations include, besides the usual feasting and drinking, dances in which, to the music of reed pipes, men and women shuffle round and round a big circle in the centre of the village. In the dim light of the stars and the glow of the fires this dance is most impressive.

Marriage customs are very simple. The man courts the maid openly, and when she accepts his wooing she gives him as a token a bag she has woven and ornamented with a diamond pattern in white seeds. He then gets some elders to act as middlemen and arrange with the girl's parents for the wedding. All preparations having been made, the bride is escorted to her groom's house, where a large feast takes place. At nightfall the bride goes into the jungle with her parents, and the bridegroom has to hunt for her. When he has found her, her parents return to the house, leaving the young couple to spend the night alone on the hillside. This is done on three successive nights, while the feasting, dancing, and carousal continue all the time.

When the birth of a child is imminent, the father offers sacrifices to the god Hini, and invokes his assistance for a safe delivery. Directly the babe is born it is washed, and

the priest then announces its safe arrival on earth to Hini and thanks him for his help. On the third day the child is given a spirit name, which is not used again until death. On the tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth days after birth, both the child and its mother are again bathed, but are forbidden to leave the house until the full month has elapsed. During this month the mother does no housework for fear that her uncleanness should infect others; her relatives and friends do all the work for her. Certain highly seasoned foods, such as chillies and bamboo shoots, sugar and spirits, are forbidden her. When the month has elapsed, the bed and bedding she used for the confinement are burnt, and the period of uncleanness is at an end.

When death is seen to be near, nine grains of rice and nine tiny pieces of silver are, whenever circumstances allow, given to the dying man to swallow. If it is a woman who is about to die, then the mystic number of grains is seven. Directly life is extinct two men seize the dead body by the arms and, calling out the deceased's spirit name, beseech him to return direct to his ancestors whence he came. The body is then washed and placed in the coffin along with some offerings, and other offerings are thrown into the nearest stream so that they may float away to the spirit kingdom. Funerals, like weddings, are great occasions for feasting, so both are usually postponed until after harvest, when provisions are in plenty. On the road to the spirit world there are nine hills that the soul must climb, nine streams it must cross, nine paths it must follow, and the priest warns it against losing its way and following animal tracks instead of the right paths. He also calls on Hini to keep a good look-out for his child who is just starting on his journey back, and to guide him whenever possible. The coffin is then covered with earth, and the deceased's bow and quiver, sword and bag are hung on a tree above the grave. A bamboo or earthenware pot is also buried in the coffin

with its neck above the ground, so that the offerings which are made regularly for the next three years can reach the deceased.

The China Inland Mission has done much work among the flowery Lisu of Yunnan, one of its missionaries, Rev. J. O. Fraser, even having given the Lisu an alphabet, in which the Bible and many hymns have been printed. I once paid a memorable visit to one of their little mission stations. The whole village was Christian, and men, women, and children all thronged round to shake my hand. I thought they were doing it only to me, copying what they had seen their pastor do, but no, they used this Western greeting among themselves, for later on I saw two Lisu men meet out on a country road and gravely shake hands. It was the sign of a Christian. Those who have not travelled in Asia far from the beaten track cannot understand how strange this greeting looked between two half-civilized savages.

One Lisu, and probably only one, has visited England. He was an officer in the Burma Rifles, one of the regiments of the Indian Army, and a few years ago he had the great honour to be chosen as one of the King's Indian orderly officers. It is a far cry from Buckingham Palace to the tribesmen in their jungle homes in the Salween valley.

CHAPTER XIII

From Bhamo to Tengyueh

THE road from Burma into China—what visions it conjures up in the mind! Along it advanced the migrating hosts of Shans, the ever-victorious Mongol troops of Kublai Khan, the invading armies of Burma and of China. By this road Yung Li, the last of the Mings, fled for safety to Burma; by the same road a few years later he was dragged back to China a captive, to die miserably by his own hand at Yunnanfu. Along it the ambassadors of the Burmese kings journeyed on their way to far Peking, bearing tribute to the Emperor.

For 2000 years this road has echoed to the tread of mules and ponies conveying to and fro across the frontier the wealth of the Indies, the riches of China. Nearly 2000 years ago envoys from Alexandria passed along it on their way to the Chinese capital. Nowadays hundreds of Chinese and Shans, and perhaps half a dozen Europeans—officials and missionaries—journey along it each year. During all these centuries the road has changed but slightly. Sometimes it has followed one river valley and passed through the frontier hills, sometimes another; parts have been roughly paved or cobbled, others are knee deep in dust or mud and slime.

From Bhamo to Tengyueh is but 135 miles, a few hours' run in a car in Europe. But in the border land there are no motor roads, nothing but the narrowest and roughest of mule tracks, which often vanish altogether in flooded paddy

fields. The quickest time in which the journey can be accomplished is a week, and normally it takes ten days. It is not a trip to be undertaken lightly. There are no hotels or shops on the way, and mules must be hired to carry tents, chairs, tables, beds and bedding, stores, clothes. The voyager must be self-supporting.

The first time I made the journey was in March. We motored the first seventeen miles as far as the "Viceroy's Camp", and there mounted our ponies, which, with the mule caravan, had left Bhamo the previous day. It was thirteen miles farther on to the rest-house where we were to spend the night—a full day's march for Burma. The cool season was at an end and, save for a thunderstorm or two, no rain had fallen for many months. The tropical spring had arrived and the trees and shrubs had put forth their blossoms, filling the air with sweet perfumes. The undergrowth was covered with purple and yellow convolvulus. Over the trees fell cascades of some mauve creeper. The scarlet flowers of the silk-cotton tree, the fairy pink and mauve of the bohinia, the delicate pink and white of the wild cherry and pear, the orange blossoms of some shrub unknown to me—how lovely they looked against the deep green of the jungle! Magnificent butterflies danced by in the sunlight, their wings black and gold, orange and red, bright blue and black, and clouds of tiny yellow ones fluttered in the centre of the path like autumn leaves falling in the breeze. Birds darted from tree to tree, flashes of green and crimson and blue.

The mule track wound along the hillside in the valley of the Taiping River, and through the trees far beneath us we caught glimpses of it dashing over its rocky bed. On either side was the trackless jungle, too thick for the eye to penetrate. Mighty trees were linked to one another by the thick green ropes of lianas, while bamboos and shrubs clustered thickly round their stems. Right to the top of the

mountains stretched the thick jungle. Once I journeyed this way in the midst of the rainy season, when the track was inches deep in sticky mud, and the only sounds to be heard were the squelch of the ponies' hoofs and the soft hiss and patter of the rain on the leaves. In that hot, damp atmosphere everything grew prodigiously, drawing nourishment from the rich loam, the deposit of countless years.

This region is sparsely populated, and one or two tiny Kachin villages were all I saw. Caravans from China came jingling along the track, the mules unladen save for one or two which carried straw for use as fodder while traversing the hills. The caravans from Burma were heavily laden with bales of cotton yarn and raw cotton to be woven into cloth by the country people in Yunnan. Occasionally we met or passed travellers, Chinese or Shan, mostly on foot and carrying by a pole balanced on their shoulders their food, bedding, and cooking utensils. There were parties, too, of Chinese Shans carrying large baskets of ducks and chickens down to the Bhamo market. Some of the girls had rosy cheeks, and all, men and women, talked and laughed merrily as they strode gracefully by.

There were large patches of dead bamboo, the ashen and buff of the flickering leaves contrasting strongly with the deep green. The bamboo only flowers once in every ten or twenty years, and after flowering all the plants die, to be succeeded in the course of time by fresh seedlings. The jungle dwellers dread the flowering of these giant grasses, for it always brings in its train a plague of rats, which devour their corn and rice. In normal years the jungle rat leaves the grain untouched, preferring the tender bamboo shoots.

While the Shan women trip lightly along with their husbands and fathers, the Chinese women are carried in *hwa-kans*, or carrying-chairs. I noticed only one tottering along the road on her tiny bound feet. The men, too, if they

can afford it, laze in *hwa-kans* or perch high up on their bedding bestride mules or ponies. *Hwa-kans* are nothing but two long bamboo poles kept about a foot apart by cross-pieces at each end, while in the middle there is a network of string on which the passenger's bedding is laid. Above him a rough framework covered with a felt mat affords protection against rain and sun. Borne on the shoulders of a couple of coolies with a spare man to relieve them at intervals, the *hwa-kan* and its occupant are carried along at a good three miles an hour for fifteen or twenty miles a day. Once when ill I was carried for several days in a *hwa-kan* and found it very comfortable but rather boring; I could not work or read, and, lying back on my bedding, I saw nothing of the scenery. Every two hours my three coolies stopped at some inn for a pipe of opium, without which they were incapable of continuing the march.

The first night we spent at Kulonghka rest-house and were lulled to sleep by the music of the river. It was the usual type of jungle rest-house, built on high piles with walls of interlaced bamboo laths and a roof of palm leaves. There was no ceiling, and spiders and insects of all kinds made their home in the thatch and occasionally dropped down on to the floor. So I kept my hat on until bedtime! The thatch was not sunproof, and numerous holes let in dangerous shafts of light. The windows were merely square mat screens hinged at the top so that they could be propped open by a stick. Our ponies were accommodated in roomy stalls, while the mules and muleteers, after putting the loads under the bungalow where we could see them plainly through the cracks in the floor-boards, repaired to one of the huge Chinese mule caravanserais near-by. The servants soon unpacked all that was needed for the night, laid our bedding on the bedsteads, which were nothing but frames with interlaced cotton webbing; set great oil-tins of water for our baths to heat on an open fire outside, got our tea, and then

went off to their own quarters to rest until it was time for our baths and dinner.

Next morning we were wakened by the tinkle of mule bells and the cries and shrieks of the muleteers as they drove the mules up to the bungalow to be loaded. We had forty mules, the majority of which were carrying a six months' supply of stores for our use in Tengyueh. The servants quickly prepared breakfast, packed the bedding, filled thermos flasks, and cut sandwiches while we ate. The mules stood in a row outside munching paddy out of tiny nosebags.

We set out on our seventeen-mile march to Nawprayang, the last rest-house in Burma. I have done this march in all weathers, but never under more unpleasant circumstances than once when I developed a high fever. The sun blazed down in a fury of heat; my temperature rose accordingly. Mechanically I stuck to my pony. I could scarcely speak. My head was swimming. The four hours' march seemed interminable. The rest of the journey I made in a *hwa-kan*, obtained with great difficulty at Nawprayang.

The rest-house at Nawprayang is a fine stone building specially constructed to accommodate a famous commander-in-chief on his tour of the frontier. It has glass windows, curtains, and fine furniture, and it was a welcome sight whenever we entered Burma from Yunnan. Compared with Chinese inns, which we had to occupy during the rains when it was impossible to pitch tents, it was the very height of luxury. Nawprayang is a Kachin word meaning "Still farther on"—such a quaint name for a village. The Chinese call it *Pa-chiao-chai*, or Banana Village, though I cannot think why, for not a single banana tree is to be seen there.

The rest-house stood on a little knoll, and from it there was a glorious view of the jungle-covered mountains and of the little mule track which disappeared round a spur



THE AUTHOR TRAVELLING IN A "HWA-KAN"

above the village. The inhabitants were Kachins and Chinese. The latter kept tiny shops and large straggling caravanserais, while the Kachins, who were very poor and dirty, scratched a bare living from the soil.

Next morning we were off early, and a couple of hours later stood in the middle of the little iron bridge over the Ku-li-hka (*hka* means river in Kachin), which there forms the boundary between Burma and China. It is a pretty mountain stream, its waters falling in cascades of white foam over the huge boulders which form its bed.

On reaching the other side we took a short cut, my introduction to Yunnan roads. It was a narrow gully with just room for the pony's feet at the bottom, but fortunately we were riding country-bred animals who were well acquainted with such tracks. The gully twisted and turned, and was so steep that, once started, it was impossible to stop, so the ponies made a rush at it, dashing round the boulders. They climbed like cats. I caught hold of my pony's mane to prevent falling backwards, let him have his head, and hoped for the best. Many times afterwards when travelling in Yunnan I had to do the same, but Shan, as my pony was named, never failed me. Unfortunately, as we were rushing up the gully we caught up some pedestrians and a couple of *hwa-kans*, and soon we were all mixed in glorious confusion. The ponies got through somehow or other without damage to anyone and soon reached the top of the climb, where they stood with heaving sides. The total result of all this effort was to save a mile of easy ascent by the road! But natives always love a short cut, no matter how bad the going or how steep the ascent.

Now that we were in Yunnan we had to keep along with the caravan, halting with them by the roadside for the midday meal. There were no rest-houses, so we used tents, which could not be erected until the mules had arrived at

night. For the greater part of the year the weather is perfect, and even in the rains I have had comfortable meals while sheltering under a thick bush or tree.

The mules had started from Nawprayang some time before us, and it was not until we had ridden for two miles beyond the frontier bridge that we caught them up, halted for lunch at a shady bend in the road. Just below flowed a little stream hidden by giant palms and magnificent tree ferns. The mules had been turned loose to graze, but they found very little to eat. The jungle slopes fell precipitously from the road down to the river hundreds of feet below, and even the sure-footed mules would not venture down, but stood disconsolately on the edge, occasionally reaching their necks over to crop a few leaves of jungle grass. A camp table and chairs were soon set up, and the cook produced scrambled eggs and grilled chicken, which we washed down with bottled beer.

The afternoon march was hot and dusty, for we soon left the jungle and started to descend into the wide plain of Kanai. Someone had been setting fire to the dry grass on the roadside, and every few yards we had to dash through smoke and flames reaching nearly across the track. The ponies were terrified, and I feared that they would shy off the road and down the precipice. We passed twelve of these fires, and our noses and eyes ran and we were covered with smuts. Finally we overtook a Chinese who was stopping every few yards to light a fire. He must have been a road employee who had found an easy way of clearing the jungle from the sides of the path.

The track became worse and worse. Mules always tread in one another's footsteps, so wherever the earth was at all damp and soft they had cut it into a succession of deep ruts or corrugations a good two feet deep and stretching right across the road. But nothing daunted our ponies, who stepped like goats from ridge to ridge. Only very

occasionally did they drop down into the mud and water of the furrows. My pony was a dun, a bare thirteen hands high. He had been bred in the Chinese Shan states and had accordingly been christened Shan. He was a shaggy little beast with a roman nose which gave him a supercilious expression, and I always felt that he held me in supreme contempt. But I had a great respect for him! Mile after mile he trudged along, needing no urging and, when called upon to do so, trotting or galloping at a good pace. Never did he stumble or make a false step.

The road undulated over the foothills, gradually dropping to the Manai plain, where the River Taiping shone like a silver ribbon amid the dry, brown paddy fields. At last, after a long, hot, and tiring march, we reached Manhsien, having passed only two tiny Kachin villages since crossing the frontier.

The entrance to the village was barred by a thick stockade and drop-gate of bamboo, with dangerous sharp stakes pointing outwards. Three weeks before a band of Kachins had looted and burnt a small Shan village in the plain, and three of the dacoits who were captured had been executed without delay by the Kanai authorities. One of the three was the son of a chieftain, and the Shans feared that the whole clan would try to avenge his death. So the villages were at once fortified, and fifty or sixty soldiers sent down from Tengyueh to maintain peace and order. The Tengyueh merchants, anxious for the safety of their cargo, telegraphed to Bhamo to stop all mule caravans, and only three or four days before had confidence been restored and the mule caravans restarted.

Manhsien is about a quarter of a mile long, with dirty tumble-down buildings nestling closely together on either side of the road. At least half of them were inns for the accommodation of travellers, and we went into one to see what it was like. The landlord, an elderly Chinese, at

once came forward and courteously offered us tea. The rooms were small and dark, the walls of plaited bamboo plastered over with mud, the floors of beaten earth. Everything was coated inches deep in dirt, and the chickens ran in and out of the rooms. This was the only accommodation to be found in Manhsien, and I was indeed thankful that we had our tents with us.

The servants found a lovely place for our camp in a tiny paddock surrounded by a high hedge of thorn and prickly pear. Everyone lent a hand in pitching the tents—the “boy”, the *mafu* (groom), the *tingchai* (office boy), the coolie, and even two of the muleteers. In Burma special peons accompany officers on tour just to pitch the tents, and even then they need the help of most of the villagers to do the hard work. The servants never dream of lending a hand, for such toil is far beneath their dignity, but here in China all helped, and in a very few minutes the tents were pitched, chairs and tables fitted together, baths ready, tea served.

Next morning we were up by 6.30 and drinking a cup of tea while the servants packed the bedding and took down the tents. Directly we had finished, the crockery was whipped away to be washed and packed. The muleteers were busy harnessing the mules and tying the loads to the trestles, and by 7.30 we were off.

Our way led along the foothills through low scrub. Occasionally when we rode through a lane with high hedges on either hand, I could almost imagine myself in England. We passed numerous villages, but the road always skirted them. Chinese villages, on the other hand, are built like Manhsien, on either side of the main road, which forms the refuse heap and scavenging ground for innumerable pigs. The Shans, too, love trees, and by the roadside were many large spreading wild-fig trees, which afforded shade to the weary travellers who stopped there



SHANS TAKING GOODS TO MARKET

for rest and gossip. The inhabitants of the Taiping valley are Shans, Chinese occupying only the market towns and villages to be found every five or six miles. Here they are solely shop- and inn-keepers, and leave all farming to the Shans.

Parallel to the road ran the telegraph line from Bhamo to Yunnanfu. The poles were but thin bamboos, and in some cases a pole was dispensed with altogether and the wire affixed to some tree. Yet every pole was numbered and dated, even though it were a living tree, and there were about 8000 of them between Yunnanfu and the Burma frontier.

The scrub-covered foothills gave way to woodland glades with close-cropped turf and huge spreading trees. Here we halted for lunch, and our table and chairs were set up in the shade of a mighty tree—a splendid place for a picnic meal. The sun's rays filtered through the large shiny leaves, while the heat was tempered by a cool breeze.

Lunch over, we continued our march, but the lovely woodland glades ended and the path led across paddy fields, now lying fallow and brown. The road was not at all good, sometimes it was under water, sometimes a sea of mud. We soon reached Lung-chang-kai and crossed the open ground where the market is held every five days. That day it was deserted save for pigs grubbing beneath the stalls.

A little farther on we came to the village itself, now all in ruins and nearly deserted. In 1924 the Shans of Kanai, incensed at the oppression of some Chinese officials, rose in revolt and destroyed all Chinese property in the state. Eventually, of course, the rebellion was put down and many Shan houses, including the Sawbwa's *haw*, or palace, destroyed in revenge. But the Chinese towns and villages have never recovered, very few of the houses have been rebuilt, and most of the Chinese live in roughly thatched hovels built against the old house walls.

Three miles farther on we came to Hsiao-hsin-kai, the end of that day's stage. The road was broad and bordered with tall trees, and was intersected by many unbridged streams, through which the mules and ponies splashed. Sometimes a narrow, rickety bamboo bridge was provided for foot-passengers, but usually they had to wade through the water. There were many Shan women on the road returning home from market, and they seemed to enjoy fording the streams, with their skirts pulled high up their well-shaped legs. If by chance one of them was splashed by our animals, all laughed heartily.

Just before the village we reached a grassy space shaded by large spreading trees, and there we pitched our camp. On either side of us were the deserted ruins of the custom house and of a large inn, destroyed in the Kanai rebellion. Several times we camped there, for Hsiao-hsin-kai had no habitable inn. Every building in the place had been destroyed, and none of the inhabitants was rich enough to rebuild. The best inn was nothing but a hovel of mud and plaited bamboo, in which an English farmer would have refused to stable his cattle. Once in the rains I nearly had to spend the night there, but I was ill and felt that I could not stomach the filth, so we made the servants put up the tents. It poured with rain all through the night, so that the bed and the bed-clothes were damp, and pools of water stood all about the ground even in the tents. The next morning I dressed with difficulty, and sat under a mackintosh sheet spread on the branches of a tree and drank my ovaltine and water (all I lived on for several days) while the servants struck camp and rolled up the damp bedding.

But during the dry season the camping-place at Hsiao-hsin-kai was delightful, and one could almost imagine oneself to be in an English park.

Hsiao-hsin-kai itself consisted of little beyond the main street, on either side of which was a row of low houses and

hovels of mud and bamboo. Between the houses and the cobbled road were wide open spaces where the market was held every fifth day. In one of the little houses was the telegraph office, the only one between the frontier and Tengyueh. We used to call there on our way up to let the servants know exactly which day to expect us, and to get the correct time.

On my first visit to Hsiao-hsin-kai it was market day, so we strolled along to see the motley crowd which thronged the street. Shans and Chinese, Lisus and Palaungs were the most numerous, but there were also many Kachins, far wilder and dirtier than those of the Burma hills, and it was easy to see why the Chinese call them "wild men". The ochre and beige of the house walls formed a most pleasing and suitable background for the bright reds and greens and blues of the various costumes. It was truly a barbaric scene.

Next morning as we sat outside our tents having *chota hazri*, the sun suddenly rose, a ball of orange fire, from behind the distant blue mountains. The morning mists dissolved like magic. Everything took on a deeper hue.

We passed through the village street, now almost deserted, crossed some paddy fields, and then entered a long sandy lane with hedges of prickly pear and giant aloe on either hand. At last we reached the bank of the River Taiping, which shone bright blue in the morning sun. A little promontory jutted out into the river, and on it was an old fort built of reddish brick. The opposite bank was lined with clumps of giant bamboo, the feathery foliage mirrored in the water, while behind were rolling grassy downs dotted with huge spreading trees, which stood out sharply against the bright red earth of the clearings. Billowy white clouds revealed here and there the dim shape of the distant mountains.

We overtook a couple of Chinese women riding mules; they were perched high up on mattresses and blankets.

The younger had rosy cheeks and flashing black eyes. Her coat and trousers were of blue silk and her three-inch feet were stuffed in blue satin shoes. On her head was a tiny black cap, while her glossy black hair was neatly coiled behind. She was a most attractive figure in her old-style garb. Her elderly companion wore a large round hat, and was so swathed in blankets that we could see nothing of her. I got my camera ready to snap them, but they screamed loudly, and a man with a gun on his shoulder who was escorting them motioned us to desist.

For the next three hours we rode through flooded rice fields. We were surrounded by broad sheets of shallow water in which grazed mules, ponies, and buffaloes. The reflections were most lovely. The track frequently disappeared altogether, and we had to make wide detours to avoid stretches of deep muddy water, or else to ride along the narrow slippery bunds between the fields, expecting each moment that the pony would slip off into the mud and water. Sometimes the water could not be avoided, and we would ride through with our feet drawn up, only keeping on the saddle by balance. It was anxious work, for the pony might at any time step into a deep hole and over we should go. But our stolid little mounts carried on unconcernedly, and picked out the best way by instinct.

We passed several caravans in those flooded wastes. Some were still on the march, strung out in long lines; others had halted for breakfast on some dry knoll where, surrounded by the loads, the muleteers had lit fires and were cooking their meal, while the animals were turned out to "graze" on the scanty herbage of the flooded fields. Nothing seems to daunt the Yunnan mule; he is a wonderful little beast, highly trained for pack work. He hardly ever makes a false step, safely carrying his load up and down narrow slippery mountain tracks, along stream beds full of loose stones and boulders, through thick greasy mud, through deep water.

The mules are quite free, and trot along in single file. The leader is a large mule, usually dun coloured, and is chosen for his strength and intelligence. Round his neck is hung a collar of bells which ring loudly as he walks along, his bridle is covered with red pompons and fringes, while other gaudy ornaments are stuck in the front of the saddle. He knows the voice of his master and obeys his orders, and woe betide any other mule which tries to usurp his place at the head of the caravan. On arrival at the halting-place his load is removed first, but saddle and bridle are left till the last; even then he has to do his tricks, wheeling round and round, to the right or the left, at the word of command, before his saddle and bridle are taken off and he is set free to join the others in a roll and graze.

Mules are very liable to stampede from fright and upset their loads, but ponies have a calming effect on them, so every fourth or fifth animal in a caravan is a pony. They look so ashamed and down at the mouth; perhaps they do feel that they have lost caste by being mixed up with mules. But accidents still happen, and many a time have I seen one of my precious boxes tipped off down the *khud*. It always seemed to be the crockery case which was singled out for disaster. Sometimes, too, a nervous mule would rush past a narrow place which he did not like, and his load would catch a projecting piece of rock, throwing him off the path. But it is very seldom that they are hurt, even though they roll down a steep hillside.

The muleteers are most particular about the shoes of their animals. Every hoof is examined at the midday halt and again in the evening, and a missing shoe is replaced at once. The stony roads are very hard on shoes. Often these game little animals may be seen limping painfully along behind the caravan, usually as a result of the carelessness of the muleteers in driving in the nails. Saddle galls are also very common, but the muleteers do their best to

cure them, cutting away the hair, washing out the wounds, putting on mutton fat.

At night the mules were tied close together in a row by one foot to a stake, and there was hardly room for them to lie down. There they stood under some open shed munching away at some paddy straw. No matter what the weather, even if forced to spend the night in the open in rain or snow, no covering of any sort was given them. Their food was usually unhusked rice, but when that was unobtainable they ate beans or maize with almost equal relish.

The muleteer's orders to his charges are given in a high shriek, and the mules which have wandered far and wide in search of grazing trot back for supper at the welcome sound. There is something wild and barbaric in the long-drawn-out wailing call. When on the march the muleteer gives a shriek and the mules turn to the right, a yell and they turn to the left, a different note and they carry straight on at cross-roads.

The muleteers convey information to a following caravan by some freshly plucked branch, just as do the gipsies of England. Perhaps one road is impassable through floods, perhaps a caravan is journeying over a new road; the green branch blocks one path, and warns those behind to follow the other.

The third night in China we slept at Chiu-cheng, the former capital of Kanai State, sharing the camping-ground outside the walls with pigs, mules, and buffaloes. Like all the market towns in the valley, it is surrounded by a wall of mud bricks. But in the rebellion of 1924 much of the wall was destroyed and it has never been repaired. The main gate stands by itself, detached from the wall, a memorial arch to the ravages of war.

I much preferred the camping-ground, even with the pigs and buffaloes, to the inn where we were once obliged to spend the night on account of torrential rain. Its only



A CHINESE MARKET VILLAGE ON THE MAIN ROAD

entrance was through a stable yard full of thick black mud in which several pigs rooted, and where the mules were tethered. From this yard we passed into a large open shed where the loads were stacked, where our meals were cooked, and where the servants slept on mattresses spread on the bare ground. The other three sides of this inner courtyard were the inn storehouse and kitchen, the innkeeper's private apartments, and the guest rooms. These were in a two-storied building, and the upper storey, approached by a steep stairway, was our apartment. There was no door, and the stairs opened right into the room. The floor was of rough unplanned wood, thick with dust and grime, and the walls were of sun-dried bricks, bare of plaster or whitewash. Ceiling there was none, and through chinks in the tiles the sky could be seen. Holes in the thick walls served as windows and for ventilation.

It was to this uninviting apartment that we arrived one afternoon, dead tired and wet through after an eight-hour journey over the roughest of tracks. But the fatigues of the march were nothing to the discomforts and filth of the Chinese inn. I was too tired to worry where to put my clothes, what to do with towels and sponges, where to tread to avoid touching the dirty floor which our tent carpet was too small to cover. Everywhere, everything, was indescribably filthy, and we had to sleep, eat, and bathe in the same room. The boy did stretch a rope across one end, over which he hung towels and blankets to give us a little privacy when bathing. There was no furniture in the room, but we had our own chairs and tables and beds.

After tea we strolled through the little town. There was a temple with a beautiful three-tiered roof of grey tiles. The old priest invited us to enter, and offered us tea in handleless cups. Through courtyard after courtyard we passed, until we came to the innermost shrine where, before the images on the altar, were offerings of rice and fruits,

vases of flowers, and coloured paper streamers. All were thickly coated with dust. Large cotton umbrellas hung from the roof. In each corner was a heap of rubbish.

Two other times I have visited this temple. Once in the morning when I found the priest clad in long flowing robes, squatting before the altar with a volume of Buddhist scriptures open on his knees. Before him sat a congregation of twenty or thirty Shan women intently listening to his exposition of the words of his Master. How devoutly they bowed their high-turbaned heads. The second occasion was at night. It was a Buddhist festival. Three priests, clad in robes ornamented with patches of many colours, and clasping in their hands a lotus flower, a bell, and a gong, led a procession of half a dozen youths round and round the temple, chanting as they went verses from the Buddhist scriptures. All the people of the town were crowded in the courtyards to listen and watch, and it made an impressive spectacle in the dim light of the moon and the oil lamps.

Next morning we crossed the town by its cobbled main street, passed the ruined east gate, and struck off through the rice fields. In some places the going was quite good, but every few hundred yards there was a deep ravine, up and down which the ponies and mules had to clamber on steep and narrow paths full of loose stones and boulders. They looked impossible for a pony or a laden mule, but the little beasts managed them without a stumble, carefully picking their way. Once or twice the road was a steep staircase cut out of the solid rock, fit only for goats and chamois. Pedestrians did not have to climb down and up the ravines; for their benefit there were bridges of three or four bamboos laid side by side, sometimes with a plaited mat of bamboo laid on top as a tread.

For three long hours we rode, and I just trusted to Shan, who plodded stoically along without a stumble. Once or twice he did slip a little, but then the track was too steep and

greasy for him to stand. Up the ravines he dashed at a trot or even a gallop, and I had to be careful to keep my legs away from projecting boulders. Even a slight accident would have been nasty, for we were two or three days' journey from the nearest doctor.

But worse was to come. The road divided into two branches, one leading up over the hills, the other down into the bed of the river itself. The latter route is much shorter, but is only possible during the dry season; during the summer rains the torrent shifts across from bank to bank, undermining first one and then the other, and bringing down in its turbulent course huge boulders and thousands of tons of cliffside.

We dismounted from our ponies and scrambled down the rough winding path to the river. It was far too steep to ride and, even as it was, I could hardly keep my feet. Soon we reached the river bed and continued along the scarcely distinguishable track of earlier caravans amid the boulders and stones and sand. The bed was about half a mile wide, while the shrunken river flowed in a narrow winding channel. Bare mountains rose steeply on either side. Grey and white rocks, pale silver sand, brown mountains gave an impression of desolation and loneliness, but the clean neutral shades had a cold and hard but gleaming beauty of their own. I felt so small, so insignificant, amid all this terrifying grandeur.

Suddenly our onward path was barred by a turn in the channel, and we had to take to the cliff, climbing a path so steep that I had to cling to the shrubs by the side to help me up. And no sooner had we got to the top than the path descended steeply to the river bed again. I was so tired that I just slid down. Once more we marched along the river bed, and soon came to a tiny muddy stream rushing down a narrow channel, which it had worn in the soft granite sand. How harmless the little stream looked! How

difficult it was to believe that it could ever have brought down those thousands of tons of rock and sand! Yet after a heavy mountain storm this tiny stream, now only a few inches deep, a few feet wide, becomes a raging torrent, its dry bed a deadly quicksand.

This gorge we had traversed is called Hun-shui-kou, the Muddy Water Ravine, and is a stumbling-block to all schemes for rail or motor road between Bhamo and Teng-yueh. No bridge or viaduct could be built on the shifting sand of the river bed, and all the hills on either bank are of soft or decomposed granite, subject to frequent and serious landslides.

For another mile we marched along the sandy bed, and then left the gorge by a winding path shaded by willows and other water-loving trees. A flight of hundreds of stone steps led straight up the side of the mountain. Shan clambered up as a matter of course. It is incredible how daily throughout the year hundreds of heavily laden mules scramble up and down these steps. At the top, the path, never more than three feet wide and cut out of the rock and sand, wound round the mountain. On the outer side was a sheer drop of 1000 feet to the rocky river bed. I was terrified, for Shan would walk as near the edge as possible, for he feared the hard cliffside more than the empty space. I breathed a sigh of relief when we emerged on to terraced paddy fields.

Hun-shui-kou is the boundary between the two states of Kanai and Nantien, and by the roadside we passed the Nantien tax office, which collects dues on all goods destined for the state, but does not interfere with through cargo for Tengyueh and beyond, save to impose a small levy on each animal to pay for protection from robbers. Highway robberies are, however, very rare, though some of the country people are not above waylaying solitary travellers or small parties when they find the opportunity. We had



THE ROAD CUT OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN SIDE

a couple of Kanai soldiers with us, more to add to our dignity than to serve as protection, and at the tax office they handed over their responsibilities to the Nantien men, who furnished us with an escort to Chetao.

We stopped for our midday halt on a small plateau surrounded by trees and bushes, and with glorious views over the river to the hills beyond, on the sides of which we could just distinguish the winding paths leading to Kachin, Lisu, and Palaung villages.

I was glad of a rest, but we had a long, long wait for the mules, and for our lunch. When I thought of the difficulties of that march, I wondered how any of the poor beasts got safely through with their loads. At last we heard the tinkling of the mule bells and the shouts of the muleteers, and half an hour later we sat down to scrambled eggs and bacon and grilled chicken.

While we were eating, the local postman passed us. He wore ordinary blue cotton trousers and a huge round straw hat to protect him from rain and sun, and his sole uniform was a dark green cotton coat inscribed with "Chinese Post Office" in Chinese characters. Across his shoulder was a carrying-pole, at one end of which was a black waterproof bag containing the mail, at the other his bedding rolled up in a piece of mackintosh. His round was from Tengyueh through Nantien, Kanai, Husa, and Lasa; five days for the return journey, sleeping where he could on the way. Winter and summer, rain or fine, he trudged along.

Great bunches of white jasmine hung from the trees and sweetly scented the air. All the Shan women we met had stuck bunches in their turbans, which fell jauntily over the right ear; the nosebands of the Shan pack bullocks were decorated with the flowers, and bunches were even stuck on the loads. A short march brought us to our camping-ground, a pretty dell surrounded on three sides by trees,

while the fourth gave us a lovely view across the river to the hills on the farther bank.

We started very early next morning, for there was a long march before us, and it was hardly light when we mounted our ponies. Half an hour's ride brought us to the official rest-house. Twenty years before it must have been pleasant and comfortable, but it had been neglected and was now in ruins. It overlooked the large Chetao common, where we camped on other tours.

Half a mile beyond the rest-house we came to Chetao itself, a large village with paved and cobbled street lined on both sides with shops, where lived both Shans and Chinese. Off the main street was the rambling *haw* of the Nantien Sawbwa. Once, long ago, the little town of Nantien was the capital of the state and the residence of the Sawbwa, but when the latter shifted his *haw* the Chinese names of the towns were not altered, though the Shans themselves call Chetao by the same name as the state, Mōng Ti.

A couple of miles over the foothills and sandy slopes which fringed the paddy fields brought us to Nantien, the largest town in the plain, now mainly inhabited by Chinese. Like most other Chinese towns and villages in Yunnan, it is surrounded by a wall as a protection against the wild tribesmen, and now when the tribesmen are pacified the walls are still maintained to keep out bandits. The ordinary Chinese word for village is *chai*, which strictly means a fortified camp, showing how the earlier soldier settlers had to live in a state of perpetual guard against the "barbarians" round about them. The wall of Nantien is built of sun-dried bricks, and a good push would probably knock it over. Elaborate tiled archways with wooden doors guard each entrance. The gates are approached by steep stone steps, and men were at work repairing the gateway. Shan was quite terrified at the noise, and danced round and round the scaffolding before I could get him through the gate.

All the Chinese women in Nantien and other parts of the border land had bound feet; only a few of the young girls had natural ones. I was told that the Chinese women living among the Shans and other border tribes, whose women all had normal feet, clung to the revolting old custom to differentiate them, the governing race, from the "uncivilized barbarians".

Leaving Nantien, we marched along through the paddy fields till we came to the Nan Sung River, a small tributary of the Taiping. Once it had been spanned by a long many-arched stone bridge, which was built four or five centuries ago and which still stood, a monument to the skill of the mediæval builders. But the river had shifted its bed far away from the bridge, so we had to ford the stream. The water was not deep, just reaching the ponies' girths. But once during the summer rains we only just managed to cross it. I was really frightened, fearing that any moment my pony and I might be swept away by the force of the current. I clung to Shan, the rushing water rose higher and higher and reached his breast, but he struggled on and managed to get to the other bank. The two dogs tried to swim after us but were swept down-stream. Luckily they landed on a sandbank some distance away. A second time the gallant little springer spaniel dashed into the river, and a second time she was swept down-stream. A third time she entered the water, and a passing Chinese waded the foaming river with her, holding her by the collar to keep her from being washed away. The little cocker puppy crossed on a pack pony clutched in the arms of its rider.

Somehow or other the mules all got over without accident, but most of the kit was soaked. How those heavily laden little beasts managed to keep their feet I cannot imagine. The muleteers encouraged them with shouts, and hurried them so they had no time to think or pause.

That bright March morning the sun blazed down on

our backs, and we longed for trees and shade, for we were sick of brown rice fields and bare mountains and stony roads. It was time for the midday halt, but there was not a scrap of shade, so on and on we rode till in desperation we decided to halt near a tiny stream in the meagre shade of one of the little granaries which were dotted about the plain. Tired out, we crouched against the wall and waited for the mules to arrive.

How different the landscape is in the rains! Then the mountains look as though they were covered with green velvet, and there are lovely shadows in their giant folds. The fields are bright emerald with young paddy plants, the atmosphere between the storms is clear and sparkling, fleecy clouds chase one another about a sky of brightest blue.

After lunch an hour's ride brought us to Je Shui Tang, Hot Water Pool, where, in a ravine, boiling hot water bubbles up from the earth. Travellers and coolies often stop to take a bath in its medicinal waters. A dozen shops and houses have been built on the banks of the stream.

For four more miles the path meandered along the hillside, not far above a little stream which roared over its boulder-strewn bed, and which had flowed down from Tengyueh, nearly 2000 feet above. We crossed the stream by a bridge and climbed steeply up the mountain side. At last we found a camping-ground in a sloping meadow. It was not too convenient, but all of us, both men and beasts, were tired out. We had been on the march for eleven hours, including the tiffin halt, and had covered twenty-three miles.

We were only four or five miles from Tengyueh, so next morning we set off at 7, having previously sent on the cook at daybreak to have breakfast ready for us on arrival. The path still led upwards over an old lava bed, a good mile wide, and the road was composed of huge uneven blocks of igneous rock, so trying to the ponies' feet

that we dismounted and walked. At last we reached the top. All around us were grass-covered hills and rolling downs, dotted everywhere with large, elaborately built stone graves. We were traversing a huge cemetery. We rounded a shoulder of the mountain and suddenly saw Tengyueh, a tumbled sea of grey roofs and white walls, spread out below us. Soon we were clattering through the stone-paved streets to the west side of the city where, separated from the wall by a lawnlike glacis, in the middle of a walled compound, stands the British Consulate.

CHAPTER XIV

Tengyueh

TENGYUEH is the capital of the north-western frontier division of Yunnan, the entrepôt for China's trade with Burma. In many maps it is called Momein, the Burmese corruption of its original Shan name of Mōng Myen.

Originally it was surrounded by a stockade, but after the Mongol conquest of Yunnan in the thirteenth century a rampart of earth, twenty feet wide and thirty feet high, was thrown up round the city. A couple of hundred years later the earthen dyke was faced with solid stone, and massive gateways were built in the centre of each wall. The gates themselves were of thick wood covered with thin plates of iron, while above, on the wall, were quarters for the guards. The city is roughly square, each wall being about 1100 yards long, and all round is a glacis about fifty yards wide, stretching to the ditch from which the earth for the rampart was dug. The wall and gates still form the city's main defence against brigand bands, but the stone facing has collapsed in many places, and the gates are rotten and difficult to open or shut.

Directly I saw Tengyueh I felt that I was meeting again an old friend; it was the willow-pattern plate come to life. There were the camel-back bridges over little streams, the men in blue garments with large round hats on their heads, the women tottering along on tiny feet, the sedan chairs, the curving roofs. The streets were narrow, cobbled, and paved with stone. Pigs wandered about at will during the



SHOPS AND STALLS NEAR TENG YUEH CITY GATE

day, and at night they were penned in wooden hutches outside the houses. There was not a single wheeled vehicle in the district—no carts or carriages or rickshas, not even a wheelbarrow. There we were back in the Middle Ages, free from the disadvantages, lacking most of the advantages of civilization. Never did we meet a tourist, rarely did we even see a white man. There were only four British residents, and there were no other Europeans save two Swedish missionaries and their wives. On the rare occasions when we went out to dinner one of the servants walked ahead with a lantern, just as long ago linkmen lighted the way in the streets of London.

The main streets from the four gates crossed in the centre of the city under a massive stone archway, on top of which was built a lovely pavilion called the Tower of the Star of Literature. In this tower used to hang a large bell which was sounded as a warning in times of danger. Some years ago, however, the beams of the tower got too rotten to support the bell, so it was removed to a small pavilion in a temple near-by.

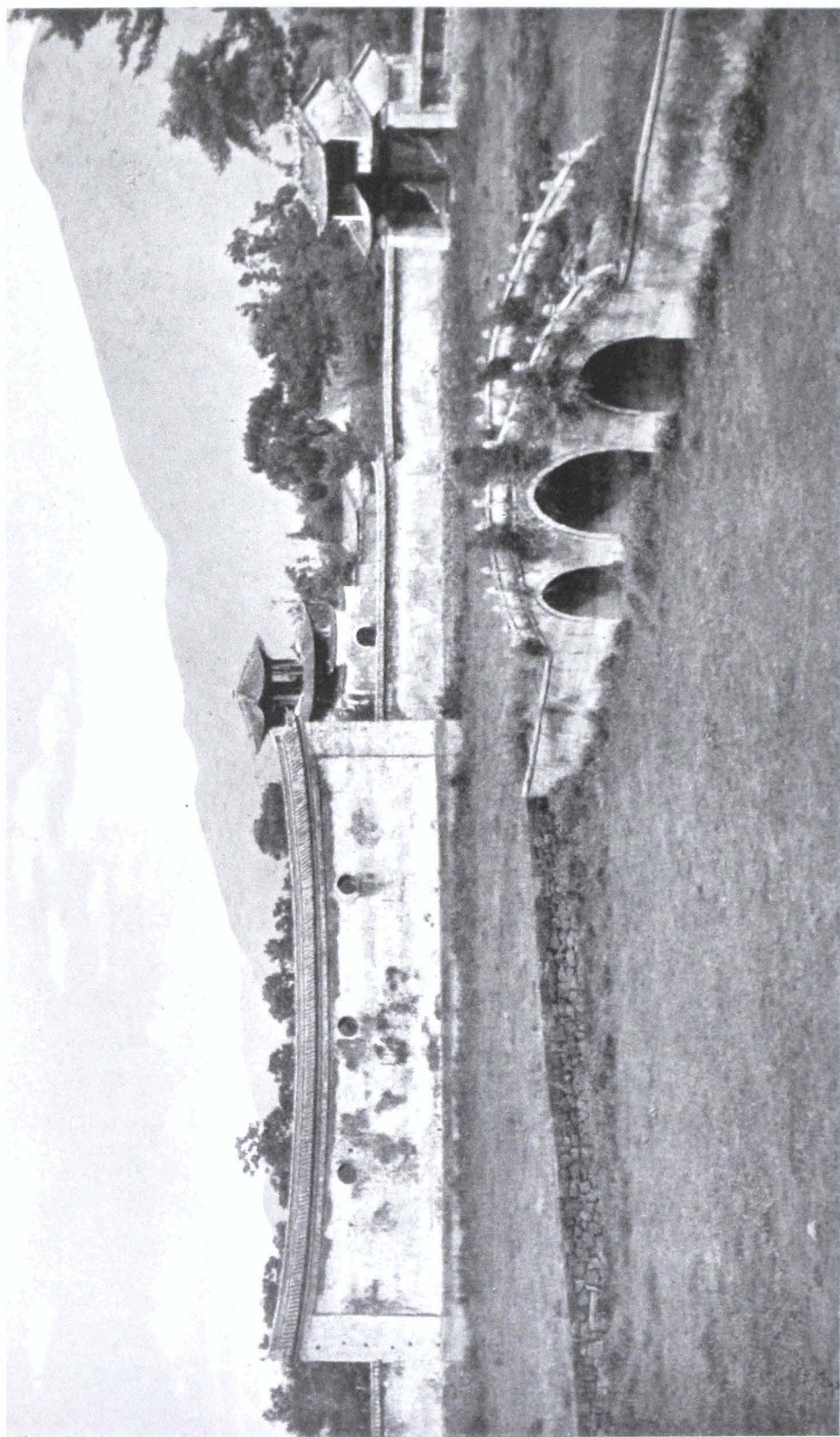
Inside the city walls were many market gardens. The houses and shops were confined to the four main streets, and some of the side roads looked like lonely country lanes. Years ago there had been a flourishing Mohammedan quarter, but Tengyueh was the last stronghold of the Panthays, and when in 1873 it was captured by the Chinese imperial forces the Mohammedan men, women, and children were killed and their houses burnt and destroyed. When peace was restored none rebuilt their homes within the ill-fated city walls, and to-day the main business quarter is outside the south gate. The wealthy merchants themselves reside in the country villages three or four miles away.

In the south suburb were the shops where the paper effigies to be burnt at funerals were made—men and women, horses and sedan chairs, all gaudily painted. There, too,

worked the spirit-money makers, who beat out lumps of lead into the thinnest of sheets of "silver". One long street was devoted to the jade cutters, and no matter how late we passed by we always heard from behind the shuttered windows the noise of the treadles which turned the lathes and cutting wheels. Many of the workers were women who had their household duties to perform and their children to look after! The jade itself comes from the mines in Upper Burma, where Kachins slave in the intense heat of the fires they kindle in the pits to split up the precious rock. The lumps are sold by auction for what they will fetch, the purchaser "buying his pig in a poke", ignorant of its true value until after he has had the lump cut up. Perhaps for a pound or two he may have acquired a perfect matrix of translucent green stone worth many thousands; perhaps his purchase may be valueless. For jade is of many colours and qualities—brown, mauve, black, white, greens of every shade, some worth their weight in gold, others not worth the cost of cutting.

The loveliest building in the city is the Temple of Confucius, generally called the Red Academy because its walls, buildings, and gateways are painted red. It was built during the Ming Dynasty on the site of the ancestral home of Tengyueh's most famous son, who became vice-president of one of the ministries in Peking. There until a few years ago the magistrates and officials of the city proceeded each year in state to offer prayers and sacrifices before the memorial tablet of the great sage. On those occasions, and on no other, the main gates of the temple were opened. But now the republican Government has ordained that such ceremony shall no more be held, so the great gates remain closed throughout the year.

There is an air of desolation and neglect about the place. Outside one of the gates, sheltered by the huge "spirit wall", squatted a beggar. Filthy rags scarcely covered his



SPIRIT-WALL AND BRIDGE IN THE RED ACADEMY, TENG YUEH

emaciated body; his possessions were an iron cooking pot and some sacking. His eyes were dim with age, but, hearing our footsteps, he stretched out a scraggy hand and whined for alms. He was reputed to be nearly a hundred years old. He had made his home in the gateway, and there he would stay till he died.

In front of the temple was a large enclosure surrounded by dull red walls. On either side of the spirit wall were red barred gates beneath memorial arches with delicate grey-tiled roofs. The broad paved paths, so overgrown with weeds and grass as to be scarce distinguishable, led across a triple-arched marble bridge which spanned a dried-up lake. From the bridge wide stone steps led to the upper terraces, where round moon gates gave entrance to the temple itself. Once held in so much veneration, this temple to Confucius was now neglected and falling into ruin.

In a lofty hall was enshrined the tablet to Confucius's spirit, the severe simplicity of which gave it a feeling of reverence absent from the garish decorations of Buddhist temples. On either side were halls where stood memorial tablets to the sage's disciples and other worthies. The courtyard was shaded by lofty pines, and green moss stained the marble stairway, on which a dragon was carved in high relief.

An old woman hobbled towards us and proffered tea from an ancient kettle, pouring the colourless liquid into tiny blue cups. From the next courtyard came the droning voices of schoolboys, for some of the temple rooms had been turned into a school where arithmetic and geography were taught instead of the words of the sage.

As we walked back from the Red Academy along South Gate Street an old priest came up and thrust his begging bowl before us. On his head was a broad straw hat, his long gown was a mass of tiny pieces of cloth of all shades of

blue and white and grey, just like a patchwork quilt. It was known as the "robe of a thousand pieces" and was the emblem of his poverty. Each tiny piece of cloth was the gift of a different person. He looked the very essence of devotion. When he had passed along we asked a shopkeeper about him. The old priest was a hypocrite, he said, and lived on the fat of the land, for none dared refuse him food. How thankful all would be if only he would shift to some other quarter!

The Yunnanese are of very mixed blood, descendants of Chinese soldiers and emigrants from central China who settled in the province hundreds of years ago and took to themselves wives from the aboriginal inhabitants. They are more superstitious than the pure Chinese, and in their religion animism is mingled with Buddhism. Fortune tellers and soothsayers flourish, and lay priests are in great demand to cast out devils and heal the sick. But rarely is a Buddhist priest to be found living in a temple, though nuns are quite common, for the Yunnanese men are unwilling to become ministers of a religion which demands abstinence from the pleasures of the flesh.

One of their many superstitions was that in a temple just outside the city walls dwelt a dragon who controlled the rainfall. One summer the rice plants wilted in the hot sunshine, so the farmers decided that something must be done to remind the dragon of his duties. One day a "dragon" was sent from the temple to promenade the town. First came men with maces, followed by others carrying ceremonial umbrellas. Then came the dragon itself, composed of a dozen men walking in pairs, each holding aloft a pole wreathed with stag moss. The wreaths were joined to one another by a rope, and as the men walked along they waved the poles to and fro to simulate the writhings of the dragon.

The inhabitants of every house were prepared for the



HALL OF CONFUCIUS AT TENGYUEH

procession; pails of water lined the streets, and as the "dragon" passed they flung the water over its bearers, who were soon drenched to the skin.

For three days the procession wended its way through the streets. On the third day rain started to fall, and continued so long and so heavily that the farmers feared their crops would be washed away by floods. So they went to the temple and implored the dragon to stop the deluge. But the dragon took no notice of their supplications, so the farmers applied to the city magistrate, who agreed to do what he could to stop the rain. Proclamations were posted throughout the city prohibiting the killing of cattle for meat, for cattle are used for ploughing and are hence sacred to the dragon; the south gate of the city, which led towards the dragon's home, was shut, and the market was moved from the south suburb right up the mountain side. Three days later the rain ceased, the sun shone, and the harvest was saved. The dragon had been appeased.

The villagers of western Yunnan believe that the soul after death proceeds to purgatory, where it stays until the sins its owner has committed on earth have been expiated. Not until full punishment has been meted out for all its sins is it permitted to cross the "No Alternative Bridge" into Paradise. Now in purgatory there are several different places of torment, and that where married women who have borne children are detained is called the "Pool of Blood". To shorten or even to obviate detention in the Pool of Blood, ceremonies are held occasionally at various Tengyueh temples, and those matrons who perform the pilgrimage three times on earth are guaranteed immediate entrance into Paradise after death. One spring the ceremony in connexion with a little nuns' temple was performed just below the consulate. Over the little Tengyueh River a special bridge of bamboo had been built and decorated with coloured hangings and Buddhist pictures. This re-

presented the No Alternative Bridge. The dry, fallow rice fields on either side of the river were thronged with sight-seers, and armed soldiers guarded the bridge and denied entry to any unauthorized person. The women who were to make the crossing were dressed in their best black robes, while across the shoulders was tied a broad scarf of red silk, a gift from their sons. Near the bridge sat a priest, from whom the women bought a yellow paper lotus flower and a large yellow paper scroll, on which were written some words from the Buddhist scriptures. Ten shillings or more—enough to keep a whole family for a month—they paid for the scroll, a third of their passport to Paradise.

After all the women had crossed the bridge, a procession was formed to the temple. First came a large paper image of the Buddha who guides the soul into Paradise, guarded by men carrying imitation pikes and javelins. Next came the priests, clad in flowing robes of brown and blue, with embroidered mitres on their heads; they were not the yellow-robed monks of the temples, but secular priests who live in their own homes and marry and are indistinguishable from ordinary people. Following the priests came the women, leaning on their sons' shoulders and clutching their paper flowers and scrolls.

When they reached the temple, prayers were intoned by the priests, and then the image of Buddha was burnt, together with some paper money to enable him to pay for his journey back to Paradise.

The women carefully preserve their yellow scrolls, which are burnt when they are on the point of death, so that the Buddha may know that a soul is on the way to the spirit world and may permit it to cross the No Alternative Bridge and proceed straight into Paradise.

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The first British Consul arrived at Tengyueh in 1899. There was no house to be found, for the city had not re-

covered from the ravages of the Panthay rebellion, so the local officials gave him quarters in the old city granary, where the Government stored grain in times of plenty, ready for distribution in famine years. The old practice has been discontinued, and the granary is now filthy and fallen into disrepair, the resort of beggars and coolies, but even in those days it could not have been at all comfortable. The consul did not like the place at all, so he leased a courtyard in the dilapidated *yamen* of the salt commissioner and had it put into repair. For two or three years the British Consulate remained in a courtyard of a Chinese *yamen*. One day I went to call on the new salt commissioner's wife, a pretty little thing who had come from Yunnanfu and hated the rough life of the frontier. I understood a lot directly I entered the courtyard. The tiles were broken and the roof leaked, door and window frames were rotten, the paint was peeling off. She and her pale, consumptive-looking husband met us outside and offered us chairs on the veranda with its floor of uneven brick. She seemed ashamed to invite us into her rooms.

A new consul came and found the *yamen* courtyard most inconvenient. Further repairs were necessary, so he persuaded a Chinese merchant to build a semi-foreign house and lease it to the consul. For twenty-five years the British consuls lived and worked there. I went over two or three times to have tea or dinner with the Chinese doctor and his wife who bought it when the new consulate was built. They kept it spotlessly clean, in perfect order, and it was comfortably furnished. But, oh, to think of living there for year after year! The rooms were built Chinese fashion round two courtyards, one for the consul's private use, the other for the clerks and servants. In the centre of each courtyard were gardens full of flowers, and pots of flowers stood along the veranda. But it was all so depressing that I felt as if I were in a prison. The windows all looked into

the courtyard, so that there was no view; nothing to be seen but other rooms.

About ten years ago the British Government purchased a six-acre plot and started to build a consulate. It was a lovely site, just outside the west gate, with an extensive view of the hills and mountains. The house was to be a solid stone building, comfortable but plain. It was a bigger and more costly proposition than was realized. There were no workmen, no masons or carpenters who had even seen a European house, so they had all to be trained, and when they were trained they struck for higher wages, and so it went on. Bandits came and occupied the city, there were wars and rumours of wars. All tools, all fittings had to be carried up by mule or coolie from Bhamo. At last, after eight years' work and vast expenditure, far beyond the original estimate, the consulate was finished and occupied.

It is a very plain house, painfully plain, with its smooth stone walls, its tin roof, its brown woodwork. But inside it is a bit of England. It is most beautifully fitted up and well furnished—a veritable oasis in the desert of mud and wood houses of the border land. And in its spacious gardens, surrounded by a high stone wall, one can hardly realize that one is in China, and that just outside are the mud and filth, the dirt and squalor, the rooting, wallowing pigs.

The Chinese officials in Tengyueh were very hospitable, and we were often invited out to dinner or lunch with them. The great drawback was that they had no idea of time, and we got rather tired of turning up at the appointed hour and then having to wait hours before the meal was served. One day the magistrate sent a most pressing invitation for us to lunch with him in his *yamen*. It was lovely weather, and we wanted to go out for an excursion that afternoon, so we accepted on condition that food would really be served at noon so that we could leave about one.

We liked the magistrate, who had a keen sense of humour

and was always cheerful. He was lame in one leg—his son had accidentally shot him in the thigh—and he used to ride about the town on a little white stallion. What a job his servants had hoisting him up on to the saddle! He usually wore a suit of brown Harris tweed, yellow gloves, brown, elastic-sided boots, and a blue felt hat. He always rode at a walk, his bodyguard of gendarmes, armed with ancient rifles and mausers, marching on either side.

We reached the *yamen* at 11.30, as we had promised. A guard of honour was drawn up just inside the gateway, and as we entered the bugles rang out, the drums boomed, the soldiers presented arms. A servant conducted us across the courtyard and through the main doors, which are opened only for important visitors. The servants bearing our cards had to go through a small door at the side. Here our host met us and conducted us across a second courtyard, around which were the offices for the staff. The hall through which we passed was the judgment hall, where on a table were a large vermilion pen rack and some wooden tallies, used as warrants to constables to effect arrests or carry out other orders of the court. Above the magistrate's chair hung a large board on which was painted in white characters on a blue ground the text of Sun Yat-sen's will.

A third courtyard we crossed, and then we entered the fourth, where were the magistrate's private apartments. Some of the guests had already arrived, for the magistrate had invited them for 11 o'clock, and had told them to be sure to be punctual. And they had! All were hard at work eating sunflower seeds, a Chinese craze which I could never understand. I always found it difficult to get any of the kernel out of the shell, and even when I did succeed, it was very dry and tasteless.

On and on we sat, and conversation, never too easy, as our host spoke no English and I no Chinese, languished.

At last some men passed across the courtyard carrying large baskets of firewood. This, we found out, was to cook the lunch, which they had not started yet! An hour we sat there. The patience of Orientals, their capacity for doing nothing and enjoying it, has always amazed me. The other guests just nibbled at melon seeds and sipped tea and smoked cigarettes. There was no conversation, but they needed none. Occasionally the Chinese lady guest rose and went to the door to spit.

Two or three nuns came into the courtyard; they wished to see the magistrate's sister, who was very devout, but she had returned to her home. They looked like boys, with their clean-shaven heads and long grey cotton gowns. On the tops of their heads were the nine sacred scars, where were stuck the burning sticks of incense the day they took the vows. I got them to pose for photographs before they left.

Several times we reminded our cheerful host that we must go, that he had promised us lunch would be ready by noon. He was in no way disconcerted, but sat smoking cigarette after cigarette. Once or twice he went out to see how the cooking was getting on, and buoyed us up on his return by saying that all was ready. At long last an old man and a boy started to put the dishes on the table, and we sat down to the usual Chinese delicacies—bird's nest soup, sea-slugs, pig's stomach, evil-looking mushrooms, deer's tendons. Luckily there was a hungry dog under the table near me! We had brought some bottles of beer with us, for the magistrate had warned us that he had no foreign wines, and we felt that neat rice spirit is hardly the drink for a hot day. Our host was not a bit offended; indeed, he said he would join us in finishing up the beer!

It was 3 o'clock before we left the *yamen*. The magistrate accompanied us to the reception courtyard, and then hurried back to his other guests, who were still at

table. The guard got into position just in time to present arms and play us a parting tune on their bugles. We were too late for the long ride we had arranged, so we decided to climb Lai Feng Shan, the pagoda-topped hill overlooking Tengyueh. To the north of Tengyueh is a hill where once a phoenix came to live. Now, the Chinese regard the phoenix as the sacred king of birds, which appears only in times of peace and prosperity. One day this bird flew over Tengyueh and alighted on the hill behind the city. This was a signal honour, so a pagoda was erected on the summit of the hill, which was named Lai Feng Shan, the "Hill to which the Phoenix came".

From the top of the hill, 7000 feet above sea level, we had a lovely view of Tengyueh, 1500 feet below us. All the houses and shops were grey, against which stood out brightly the Red Academy, the white-walled custom house. All round the city stretched the paddy fields, fallow and brown, through which meandered the silvery Tengyueh River. To our right and left ranges of hills rose 2000 feet or more above the plain, while in the blue distance was the great Shweli-Salween divide, with peaks rising to 12,000 feet above the sea. Just beyond these lofty mountains flowed the rushing Salween, two full days' journey away, but less than twenty miles as the crow flies.

It was a wonderful view, with mountains all round and yet no feeling of being shut in. In the dry seasons when all was brown, in the summer when the plain wore a patchwork quilt of paddy fields of every shade of green, I loved to sit there with my back to the old pagoda and gaze over the valley of Tengyueh.

CHAPTER XV

The Tengyueh Countryside

THE dense jungle which once clothed the hills that encircle Tengyueh has long disappeared, for the Chinese in the search for fuel have gradually denuded the countryside of timber till now nothing remains but coarse grass, which affords scanty grazing for the sheep and cattle. The evils of deforestation are now taught in the schools. Arbor Day is celebrated by the planting of pine saplings and the sowing of pine seeds on the bare hillsides, but many decades must elapse before they are again covered with woods and forests. The peasant, too, must be taught to spare the axe and to refrain from cutting down the young trees and lopping off the lower branches.

Wooded valleys and spurs may here and there be seen, but they are temple property. From earliest times man has spared the sacred groves dedicated to his gods, and the trees and bushes which surround the many lovely temples situated around Tengyueh are safe from the woodman's axe.

Many of these temples to Buddha were destroyed or wrecked by the Mohammedans during the Panthay rebellion. One alone escaped all damage—Yuan Lung Ko, the "Pavilion of the Chief Dragon." Even their religious fervour did not blind them to its beauty. In a thickly wooded ravine through which flows a little stream, the temple is built on the steep hillside overlooking a small lake of clear water.

Under a carved stone archway roofed with dragon tiles



BRIDGE AND PAVILION OVER THE TENGYUEH WATERFALL

the path runs alongside the lake to the temple, where courtyard rises above courtyard, hall above hall, tower above tower. Grey roofs, reddish-brown fretted windows, white walls, set in a background of deep green pine trees, are all reflected in the still waters of the lake.

Slowly we walked beneath the archway to the temple entrance. From inside came the sound of children's voices reciting in unison, for the main building had become the village school. We climbed up the steep stone steps to the courtyard above, followed by half a dozen schoolboys who had finished their lessons. Hanging from the walls were bushes of jasmine with large bright-yellow flowers. Up more steps we climbed to the next courtyard, where was a lovely octagonal tower with sides and doors of carved and fretted wood lacquered dull reddish brown. In the tower hung a massive bell. To the highest courtyard we scrambled—the steps were narrower and steeper. There in the main hall were enshrined gilt images of the three great Buddhas. Dust covered everything, toning the bright colours to one harmonious whole.

But to the inhabitants of Tengyueh, from one point of view at least, the most important temple is Lung Kwang Tai, the "Tower of the Dragon's Brilliance". Built on the summit of a little hill, it overlooks the waterfall and the river, and has spacious guest rooms and terraces which are a favourite spot for entertainments and dinners.

Across the falls themselves a grey stone bridge has been built, and in its centre is a pavilion with curving roof, sheltering seats from which one can watch the water fling itself over the rocky cliff. Never could I sit there without thinking of those hundreds of Mohammedan men, women, and children who in 1873 were hurled alive down the falls to be dashed to death on the rocks below. For twenty years the terrible Panthay rebellion had bathed the province of Yunnan in blood. The Turki Mohammedans who had swept into the

country with Kublai Khan had become Chinese in dress and customs and language, but they had retained their religion and converted many Chinese, so that the Mohammedans, or Panthays, as they were called, became the richest members of the community and aroused the jealousy of the non-Muslim inhabitants. A dispute over some mines sufficed to set light to the smouldering resentment, and a rebellion broke out in 1854. For nineteen years the province of Yunnan was laid waste, and of its population of eight millions over seven millions lost their lives.

The "capital" of the Mohammedan rebels was at Tali, where "reigned" Tu Wen-hsiu, a young Chinese who styled himself Sultan Suliman. At last, by the treachery of some of his followers, the imperial forces captured Tali, and the Sultan took poison before surrendering. But his surrender was in vain, for a few days later the Chinese massacred every Mohammedan man, woman, and child in the city. Some had already fled to the west, and it was at Tengyueh that they offered a last feeble resistance. Parts of the province are still half depopulated, since even after sixty years of peace Yunnan has not yet recovered from the ravages of those bloody massacres.

One day the Chinese Frontier Commissioner, usually styled the Tupan, invited us to lunch at Lung Kwang Tai. He was the principal official in Tengyueh, a gentleman of culture and learning, who had once been governor of the province. His own cooks prepared the food in the temple kitchens, and his retainers served it in the upstairs room overlooking the falls.

The Tupan, who spoke a little English, told me of a superstition of the people. They believed that beneath the waterfall dwelt a huge dragon, a god in whose power rested the prosperity of the town and countryside. It could ruin the crops and flood the district. He and others who desired the benefits of civilization wanted to construct a

hydraulic station and harness the power of the falls to provide electricity for Tengyueh and its suburbs, but they could not overcome the prejudices of the inhabitants.

We had been invited to lunch at 1 o'clock, and it was already nearly 2. All the guests had arrived except our unpunctual friend the magistrate. At last the Tupan ordered the servants to bring in the meats; we would wait no longer, he said. It was past 3 when we left to walk back to the consulate. On the road along the river bank we met the magistrate riding his white pony stallion and accompanied as usual by his bodyguard. We asked him where he was going, and he replied "To the Tupan's lunch". We told him it was over long ago and that he really ought to learn to be punctual. He laughed and, nothing daunted, continued on his way to the temple!

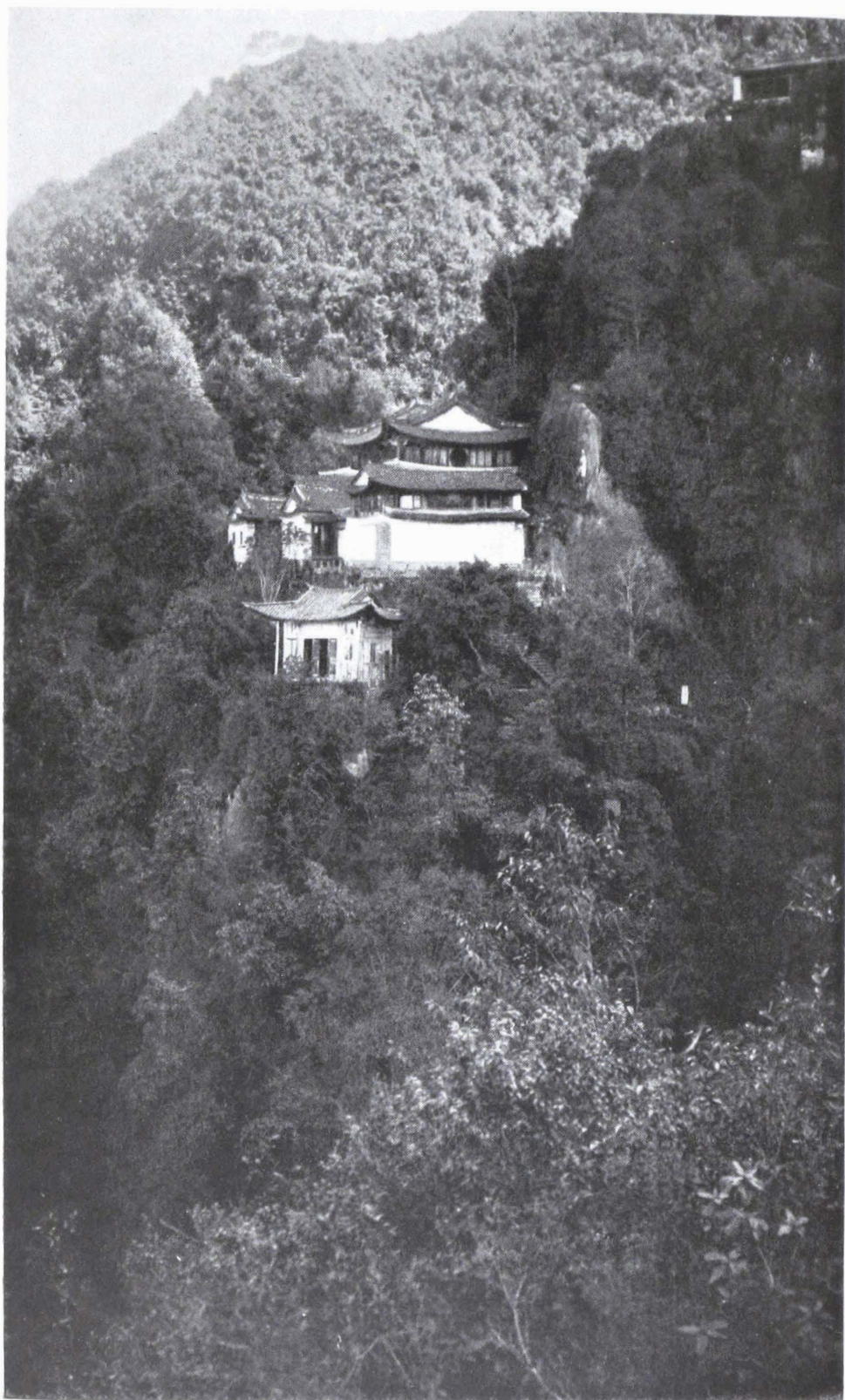
The wealthy Tengyueh merchants lived in the villages two or three miles away from the city, and of these villages by far the wealthiest was Ho-Shun-hsiang, the "Village along the River", where they had built themselves many fine houses. The village was just one long straggling street at the bottom of the foothills, on which the houses and the clan temples were built looking across the rice fields to the river. Each of the three or four "houses" or clans had its own temple, where were kept the spirit-tablets of the deceased members and the coffins ready for the aged. There on certain anniversaries and festivals all members of the clan gathered to offer sacrifices to the souls of their ancestors, and there was held a small school for the tiny children of the clan.

One day the Chinese doctor asked us to ride over with him to see the wedding festivities then in progress between two of the most important houses of Ho-Shun-hsiang, to one of which he belonged. It was the second day of the celebrations, and the bride and groom were receiving the congratulations of their friends. Arrived at the village, we

clattered up some steps into a courtyard. Our *mafu*, or groom, took our ponies, but the doctor's had a steel dog-chain round its neck, with which he secured it to a post. The courtyard was filthy and full of guests—all men—who sat or stood sipping tea and cracking sunflower seeds. The yard was covered with the husks they had spat out. In one corner some boys were banging drums and hitting cymbals fixed in wooden frames. It was unbearably hot and smelly, and myriads of flies buzzed about and crawled over the food. A narrow, stifling passage led to the private quarters, on the way to which we passed the small dark kitchen, where on smoke-grimed walls hung lumps of raw meat black with flies. Women bent over steaming cauldrons or squatted on the filthy floor preparing vegetables for the pot.

We felt a trifle awkward, for we had brought no present. As friends arrived they were presented to the young pair, who bowed low in acknowledgment of their gift. The bride was a plain little thing and looked utterly miserable. Her face was white and strained, and she was half dead with fatigue, so that an old woman had to support her on each side. Her clothes were very gaudy: a vivid crimson bodice and a bright blue skirt, both heavily embroidered; pink cotton stockings, and black shoes. The groom, on the other hand, looked very drab in a long robe of black brocade. They bowed low as we were presented, and readily consented to pose at the doorway for a photograph. All begged us to stay for the feast then being prepared, but we had seen enough of the culinary arrangements and begged to be excused.

Next we paid a visit to the bridegroom's uncle in his house next door. He received us in a pleasant room opening on to a little courtyard full of pots of flowers and shrubs. The black and gold lacquered chairs were placed stiffly against the walls. He was a fat jolly-looking old man,



THE TEMPLE OF THE PRECIOUS PEAK, TENGYUEH

dressed in a long blue gown, with a black skull cap on his head. Tea and cigarettes were brought, and our host smoked a beautifully chased water-pipe. We rose to depart and found that we were expected to stay to a meal. We waited for ages, and when the food was at last ready our host himself placed the dishes on the table.

Except on one or two occasions I never met any of my hosts' wives, though I did catch sight of some busy in the kitchen. The two doctors' wives had modern ideas, and the wife of one of the officials used to be present when I dined at their houses. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and no doubt felt very daring, but I'm not sure that their husbands altogether approved of the innovation. The border land is very conservative and does not like new-fangled customs.

From the consulate windows we could see, glimmering white among the green of a wooded ravine, five temples built one above the other on the hillside and called by the Chinese Pao Feng Ssu, the "Temples of the Precious Peak". A narrow path which in the steeper parts gave way to a flight of stone steps led up the hill from one temple to the other. Residents of Tengyueh would often spend a few days in the large guest rooms of the temples, or would journey out there for a picnic lunch. One day when we climbed up, a Chinese gentleman was giving a party to his many friends; dinner was over, and they were sipping tea and smoking and admiring the glorious view from the terrace over the plain to Tengyueh. That temple was built in the solid rock, and from the terrace the hillside fell sheer away for several hundred feet. The sides of the ravine were covered with flowering trees and shrubs of all kinds: rhododendrons white and rose and red, azaleas scarlet and orange, lilies and orchids of many colours, anemones and begonias and primulas. There were the ancestors of so many of the flowers which adorn the English

gardens of to-day. A priest clad in a long grey robe entered the main shrine and, falling on his knees before the gleaming gold image of Buddha, intoned the evening prayers. As he prayed he rang a little bell to punctuate his requests and struck a hollow wooden skull with a wand, causing it to give forth a dull, weird sound.

Seven miles to the west of Tengyueh was an extinct volcano known from its shape as Ma-an Shan, the "Saddle Mountain". From the rocks at its feet welled forth a crystal-clear spring which formed a little lake. According to the country people, the water gushed from the mouth of some dragon prince whose lair was beneath the mountain and who ruled the waters and caused the rain to fall. So over the spring was built a lovely little temple dedicated to him and called Lung Wang Ssu, the "Temple of the Dragon King". It was a favourite spot for a day's picnic, a lovely ride over the rolling foothills covered with grass, where grew in profusion edelweiss and anemones, primulas and buttercups and gentians. Scattered here and there were plantations of trees grown solely for firewood. Pheasants abounded in the grass, and the dogs hunted far and wide and looked quite disappointed when no gun was fired at some fine bird they had put up. Occasionally a hare was startled from its form, and the half-trained dogs chased it till they were out of breath.

The banks of the lake were walled with stone; in the middle was a little pavilion with curving roofs. Sacred carp swam in the water, and rocks were spread about the bottom of the lake to prevent poachers from using a net. In some marshy ground beside the lake tall yellow primulas grew in profusion. On the banks and in the crevices of the walls were little mauve primulas, *Primula malacoides*, so beloved by the London florists in the early spring. The late George Forrest, that noted plant collector who sent the first seeds to England, told me that it caused a great sensation when

it was introduced to Covent Garden. It is hardy and easily grown from seed, and produces its mauve blossoms profusely just at a time when blooms are scarce in England. It was one of the most successful botanical discoveries of recent years.

It would take a whole book to describe the beauties of the temples. Their very names are poetic, as, for example, Hwa Yen Ssu, the "Temple of Paradise", usually known to the European residents as the Flower Temple. In its courtyard were two immense camphor trees, whose perfect shape and dark glossy leaves gave them an air of unreality. The first time I visited the temple a young husband was there with his old father praying for the health of his infant son. The priest was intoning some prayers while the young man knelt before the altar on which he had placed his offerings. His father stood behind with bowed head. We left them and stole quietly through the large hall, where two warriors, seated one on an elephant, the other on a lion, guarded the images of the Buddha.

Farther away to the west, amid the paddy fields, was Shui Ying Ssu, the "Temple which is Reflected in the Water". Its multiple curving roofs had ridges of delicate tracery, with a prancing dragon at each end. In the entrance court was a pond of pink lotus, across which a causeway of carved marble led to the main shrine. A couple of boys followed us to the entrance, eager to earn a few coppers by holding our ponies. Neither had reached his teens, but they scrambled for a cigarette and puffed at it in turns with great enjoyment.

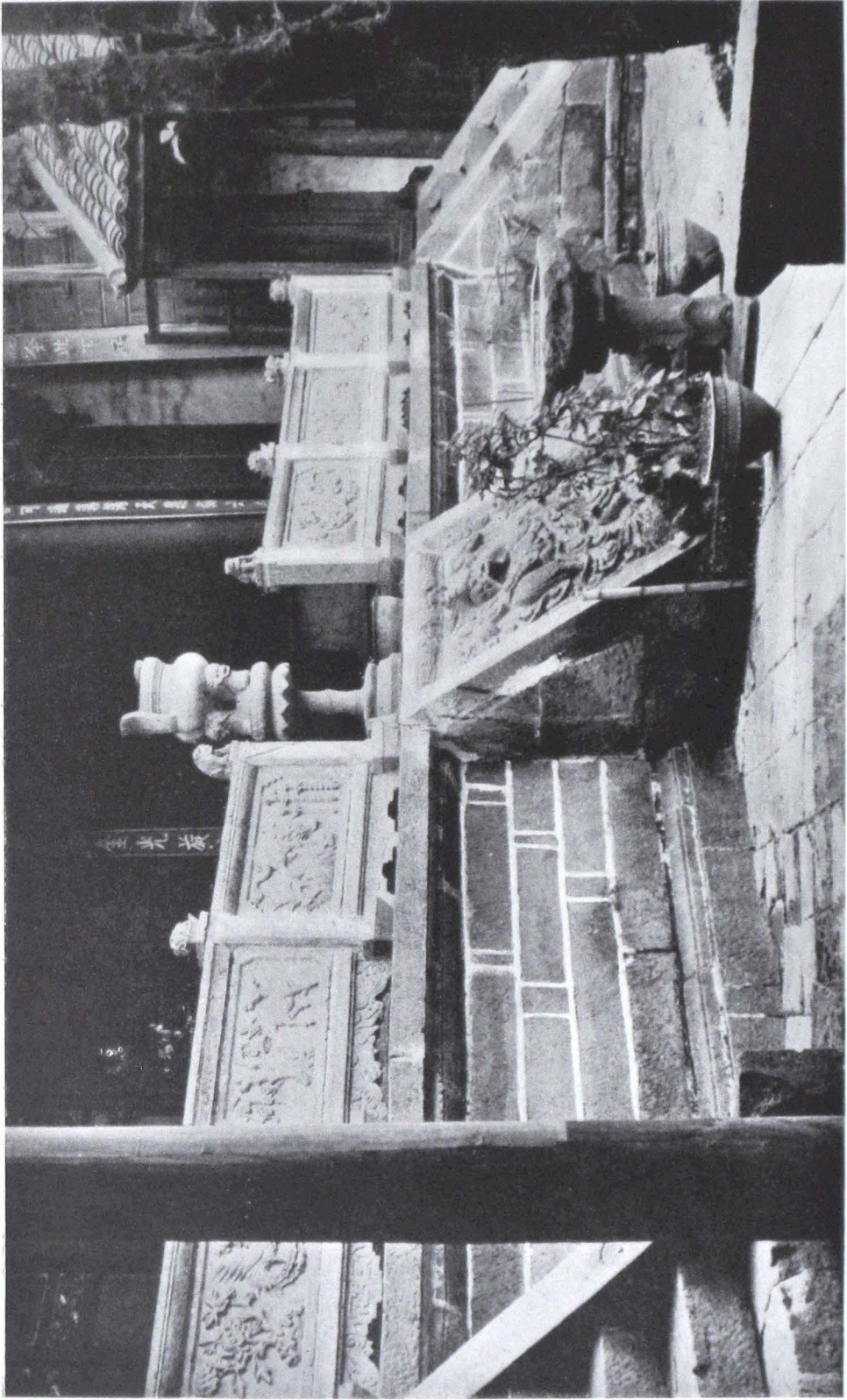
For hundreds of years the inhabitants of Tatung, one of the villages in the Tengyueh plain, have been famed as carvers of amber. Blocks of the petrified resin from the mines in Upper Burma are brought to Tatung, there to be cut and polished. One day we rode over to dine with a wealthy merchant whose home was in the village and whose

family's firm had branches in the big cities of Yunnan and Burma and in Calcutta too. He met us at the door of his house, a tall, thin man with a very gentle expression. His long silk robe was a lovely dull blue, and on his head he wore the little black skull cap loved by the Chinese. As the amber carvers stop work about 5, he took us first to one of the largest workshops, promising that dinner would be ready on our return.

The amber "factory" was up a narrow little lane, and a steep staircase led to the workroom. All round the room near the windows were benches and lathes. Beads to be strung as necklaces and bracelets were the main output. One man with a sharp knife cut off a piece of amber and roughly shaped it into a cube, a second rounded the cubes on an emery wheel, a third polished the beads on a leathern wheel with sand, a fourth bored the beads, and a fifth finished them by hand with leather and powder.

In a corner of the workroom, where the light was best, the master craftsman sat at his bench. In a basket before him were blocks of rough uncut amber, dull and colourless. He took up one block and held it to the light. Then with a little scalpel he cut from the amber the opaque wood and stone till the block was all transparent. Long and carefully he studied the amber, turning it this way and that, deciding at last into what shape he should carve it. He had no set designs to work to, but his aim was to make the most of each block, cutting away as little as possible of the amber. He carved groups of gods or men, birds or beasts, trees or flowers, and when the block had been roughly shaped to the pattern he had decided upon he spent hours carving the features and incising the design. He was an artist, a sculptor, working without model, solely from the imagination.

Adjoining the workshop was the showroom, where, in cupboards, hung strings and strings of amber beads of every



THE TEMPLE OF PARADISE, TENG YUEH

shade from palest lemon to brightest orange, from orange to deep reddish brown. Some looked like marbles of sugar candy, others like solidified balls of dark sherry. One, the best of all, was the colour of flame, and shone like balls of liquid fire. My companion wanted it for a friend who had asked him to buy the best necklace he could find. For nearly an hour they haggled, but the price was too high. At last our merchant friend persuaded the amber dealer to accept the offer, and that lovely necklace now adorns an Irish colleen's neck.

On shelves were Buddhas and other gods, horses and buffaloes, vases and cups, all of solid amber. Some were semi-opaque and only roughly carved, the work of an apprentice or unskilled hand. Others were of lovely clear amber, beautifully carved and of elegant design, the work of the master.

We left the amber shop and strolled back to the merchant's house. Dinner was served in a pavilion in a little courtyard gay with pots of flowers. Then, as the sun was setting beyond the hills, we mounted our ponies and slowly rode back across the paddy fields to Tengyueh.

CHAPTER XVI

The Chinese Shan States

ALTHOUGH there are in the south-west of Yunnan a few other Shan states ruled by their own princes or Sawbwas, the term "Chinese Shan states" is usually confined to that group of principalities west of the River Salween and comprising the basins of the Rivers Shweli and Taiping. They are eleven in number, though three—Husa, Lasa, and Mengpan—are really not Shan at all. The inhabitants of Husa and Lasa are Achangs and Achang-Chinese half-breeds, only the chieftains and their families being Shan. An account of these two states and of their inhabitants is given in Chapter XVIII. Mengpan only became a separate state in 1899, when that part of the frontier was demarcated. Its inhabitants include Chinese, Kachins, Lisus, and Palaungs, but not a single Shan, while its chieftain is Chinese.

The real Shan states are Nantien, Kanai, Chanta, Lungchuan, Meng Mao, Chefang, Mangshih, and Luchiang. Early native records of these little kingdoms do not exist, so their history dates only from the latter half of the thirteenth century, when the country was conquered by the Mongol armies of Kublai Khan. The Sawbwas tendered their submission to the Mongol Emperor of China and were confirmed on their thrones. As the Mongol power waned the Shan kingdoms regained their independence, and it was only after a long struggle lasting through the fourteenth century and up to the middle of the fifteenth that the new

Chinese dynasty of the Mings was able to subdue them and reincorporate them in the Chinese Empire. The five Shan border kingdoms were divided into ten states, of which Chinese officers were appointed hereditary chieftains as a reward for meritorious service. In one or two cases Shan princes who had espoused the Chinese cause and fought against their kinsmen were similarly rewarded.

These Chinese chieftains had brought neither wife nor family with them from their distant homes, so they took to themselves Shan wives, usually members of some princely family. It is the tongue of its mother that a child first learns, and so their descendants became Shan in all but name. Nowadays, while proud of their Chinese origin and able to speak and read and write Chinese with fluency, the Chinese Sawbwas and princes speak Shan amongst themselves, and their wives and daughters wear Shan dress and frequently are unable to speak a single word of Chinese.

It was a lovely spring morning when we set out from Tengyueh to visit these Shan states. Over the paddy plain we rode, striking south-eastwards on the Lungling road, past Tatung, the amber village, to the foot of the hills. We climbed a good 2000 feet and then dropped to the little paddy plain of Menglieh. There was no suitable place for a camp here, so we stayed the night in a Buddhist temple built on a little wooded hill overlooking the village. It was quite pretty and fairly clean, and in the courtyard were bushes of gardenias covered with pink blossoms. Right on the summit was an old bell tower with a lovely curving roof, but, alas! it was falling into disrepair. The temple was deserted, and the servants put our tables and beds in the main hall just below one of the altars, so that a huge golden image of the Buddha looked down on us. We had finished dinner and were thinking of bed when a Chinese nun, clad in long grey cotton robes, her shaven head showing the scars of the nine burns of her initiation, entered the hall

and lit sticks of incense before each of the gods. Then she knelt on the prayer mat before each altar and intoned some prayers, at the same time hitting a gong and ringing a bell. She ignored us completely as she performed her devotions, but later she came and invited us to move into the guest rooms. We refused, pleading tiredness, for we had already seen those rooms, and they were not so clean as the main hall. She was delighted with an empty beer bottle we gave her, and at once filled it with flowers and placed it as a vase on the altar. There were four nuns belonging to the temple, she said, but the other three were away assisting at some private ceremonies. She retired to her room, and for over an hour we heard her voice reciting prayers or reading the scriptures aloud.

During the next two days of our journey the scenery was magnificent, the path winding up and down the mountains and valleys, mainly wooded with firs and with deciduous trees, now just breaking into leaf. Occasionally we passed azalea bushes, a mass of pinkish blossom, but the commonest shrub had tiny white waxen flowers dropping like little bells from the branches and making a glorified Aaron's rod. The wild cherry and pear trees were masses of pink or red or white blossom. There were stretches of rolling grassy downs dotted with tiny gentians, some deep blue with golden centres, others white with the petals edged with palest blue. The hedges between the few fields were of japonica with scarlet flowers, and over them hung wild roses, pink and white and cream.

We spent the night camped in a clearing near a little mountain village. The following morning we were off early, and soon reached the valley of the Shweli, which was still cloaked in thick mist. We crossed the river by a cable suspension bridge, of which there are many in this part of China; a dozen or more iron chains, with links a foot long and an inch or more thick, stretch from bank to bank, and

on them planks about eight or ten feet long are laid cross-wise. The iron chains are embedded in the solid rock, a gateway being built above at either end to protect them from the weather and to afford shelter to travellers. There are no rails or sides to the bridge to prevent people and animals falling over, but accidents are very rare. Not more than three laden mules are permitted to be on the bridge at one time, and the muleteers are very careful to abide by this restriction, which they know is in their own interest. The bridge sags a lot in the middle and sways too. I was only too glad to be safely across, and hardly ventured to look at the waters rushing past far below me in the rocky channel. Shan did not mind crossing at all, but Rufus, another of our ponies, was very nervous and spread his legs wide, with his belly nearly touching the boards. He advanced by tiny steps until nearly across, when with one bound he reached the bank.

A mile or two farther on were some hot springs, much frequented by the people of the neighbourhood on account of their curative qualities. Mat huts were built all about the little valley and in them the patients lived. Most of the springs were enclosed, so that they could bathe in privacy, but there was one large open pool about three feet deep fed by streams of natural boiling and cold water. It would have been far too hot for me, but bathers did use it, sitting for an hour or more in the water, and emerging red as boiled lobsters.

Lungling city is most beautifully situated in the centre of a horseshoe of mountains whose wooded spurs, each surmounted by a temple or pagoda, stretch round it like green claws. Later I climbed up one of these spurs and sat in the temple on its crest gazing entranced at the panorama spread out below me—in all directions hills and valleys fading from green to blue and grey.

From Lungling it is an easy day's march down to

Mangshih, but the journey in the opposite direction is long and tiring, for the descent of over 2000 feet to the Shan plains is very steep. We were in a different country now. The lower slopes were dotted with bohinia trees covered with pale pinky-mauve, orchid-like blossoms. The last mile or two of the road led over rolling grass-clad downs, with huge wild-fig trees planted to give shade to the traveller. All around the little town was just a lovely park, and beneath some spreading trees, near which flowed a tiny crystal spring, our tents were pitched. It was a veritable Arcadia. While the servants were getting everything ready and preparing lunch I strolled among the trees and picked a bunch of bohinia blossom for the table.

That afternoon we wandered through the little town, with its mud-brick houses, and went into the large temple and monastery, with its gilt images and coloured pictures and umbrellas, its tall poles with fluttering banners, its orange-robed priests. It might have been a temple in Upper Burma.

The Sawbwa's palace was a huge rambling Chinese *yamen*, larger and in rather better repair than the Meng Mao *haw*. A huge painted spirit wall barred the main gate to all demons. No sentry or gateman stood on duty at the entrance, and pedlars used the porch as a market-place and spread their wares on the floor, where the dwellers of the *haw* came to inspect them and make their purchases.

After going through the first and second courtyards and passing the quarters of the servants and soldiers, we came to the Sawbwa's courtroom, a large hall open on one side, where on a raised dais were the Sawbwa's chair and bench—it can hardly be styled a throne—surrounded by the gilt swords and spears and other emblems of Chinese officialdom. There the Sawbwa sat when dispensing justice to his subjects.

Through the hall of judgment we passed, escorted by the Sawbwa, into the reception court, where guests were enter-

tained. We were conducted to the seats of honour on the wooden couch, with its satin-covered cushions and mats. On either side of the courtyard were vacant rooms for guests, which the Sawbwa was most pressing that we should occupy, but we preferred our tents in the sylvan glade.

Dinner was served on the veranda of a side room, which was just behind the reception court and which overlooked a little ornamental pool round which grew many flowering shrubs. The food and wine were Chinese; the other guests were members of the Sawbwa's family.

Behind the reception court were the private living rooms, where were a few easy chairs and a few pictures and ornaments, but everything was dirty and dilapidated, rough and devoid of comfort. On the back of the little devil-screen were pasted some Christian texts and some cigarette advertisements, and yet the Sawbwa had a large private and official income and could have lived in the greatest luxury! In the women's court behind, where lived the Sawbwa's six wives with many relations and servants, there was even less comfort.

The costumes of the Shan girls and women greatly intrigued me. Until about twelve, the Sawbwa told me, girls wear long, tight trousers and a short coat, and their hair is braided in a pigtail and wound round their low, black cotton turbans. When they are about nine or ten they also tie a narrow piece of cloth round their waist like a short apron. With their teens girls become marriageable and discard trousers, wearing instead a long black skirt. Usually only one girl of a family may wear a skirt, so where there are two sisters the younger has to continue wearing trousers until the elder has married.

When she marries, the Shan maiden changes her low turban for a tall one; many are a good foot high, and look like black stovepipes perched on the wearer's head. This is the only real change in her costume, but a married woman

wears black or grey coats as well as white ones. She is also less careful of her personal appearance; she chews betel, so her teeth and lips are stained almost black, but the unmarried girl denies herself this pleasure and preserves her teeth white, her mouth unstained.

All women and older girls wear leggings of dark blue cotton like the skirt. They usually go barefoot, shoes being reserved for the most ceremonial occasions. Shan shoes are of embroidered cotton or silk, bending up at the toe and exposing the white sole.

For festive occasions the skirt is trimmed with a band about eighteen inches wide, composed of narrow strips of silk and satin of all shades, frequently embroidered in gold and colours. Leggings are similarly trimmed, while a bunch of jasmine or other flower is stuck in the turban just above the right ear.

The Shan woman's costume is beautiful in its simplicity: the neat white bodice, the black skirt and turban, the barbaric mixture of colours in the trimming, the coquettish touch of the posy in the hair. A throng of Shans at a temple festival is a sight never to be forgotten.

The afternoon after our dinner with the Sawbwa we walked down a mile-long avenue of trees to where preparations were being made for the ceremony of blessing the seed and ensuring an abundant harvest. Only women who were fruitful and had borne children took part; barren and unmarried women were excluded. The matrons, who had brought with them baskets of jasmine flowers and rice, knelt on the ground before an old man and repeated after him some prayers. He blessed their offerings, and they then walked round a small enclosure, scattering their offerings on the ground.

That night after dark the ceremony was continued. The enclosure was filled with matrons engaged in the many operations of making cloth; some were preparing



SHAN MATRONS PRAYING FOR THE HARVEST

the raw cotton, others spinning the thread, others weaving. There were crowds of onlookers, and a special mat shelter had been erected for the women of the *haw*.

The Sawbwa and his brothers are very keen on motoring, and a motor road was being constructed from Mangshih through Chefang to connect with the Burma roads. The Sawbwa had already bought two or three cars, and had them carried across the hills to Mangshih, and he and his relations and friends used to drive along the few miles of road already built. Now all the work is completed.

From Mangshih we journeyed to Mengka, high up in the hills, where resided the Chinese Administrative Deputy, charged with the superintendence of the three states of Mangshih, Chefang, and Mengpan. He was quartered in a temple just outside the village and was not so exiled as many another Chinese official in Shanland, for all the inhabitants of Mengka were Chinese. It was a lovely spot, high up among pine forests and tea plants, far removed from the enervating heat of the plains.

Another day's march brought us to Chefang by a rolling, downhill road past bushes of white roses and bridal wreath, through clumps of red and mauve primula. Chefang is a dirty little village, and the Sawbwa's *haw* is as dilapidated as the one at Meng Mao. We arrived on a lucky day, for the Sawbwa's eldest son was due back with his bride, the daughter of the Sawbwa of Nantien. For four days they had been travelling, accompanied by many relatives and servants and escorted by a hundred soldiers.

We waited about in the palace to watch the wedding ceremonies. At last the sound of bugles heralded their approach. Both bride and bridegroom were travelling in sedan chairs, her chair being closed so that no one could see her, for even her bridegroom had never yet seen her face. Poor little bride of fifteen!

He got out of his chair, clad in long Chinese silken

robes and a soft felt hat, with sashes of bright red silk hung over his shoulders and a bunch of jasmine stuck in his hat. She was veiled with a long, thick cloth of red and gold brocade, so that nothing of her could be seen save the hem of her silken skirt. Two old women supported her, for the veil was so thick that she could see nothing. Behind her walked her four maids all in bridal costume, slave girls who accompanied her from her old home and who would remain with her until they themselves were married.

Bride and bridegroom advanced slowly to a couple of cushions placed before a low table in the inner courtyard. There both knelt, both sipped from the same cup. The newly married couple slowly moved off to the private apartments, the little bride still veiled and supported by the two old women. Before her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, her grandmother-in-law she knelt and kow-towed several times, knocking her head on the ground. It was a simple but impressive ceremony, in which I was too interested to take a photograph.

Later I saw the bride's wedding dress. The skirt was of heavy black satin, the lower half covered with panels of red, green, and blue brocade richly embroidered in gold and silver thread and brightly coloured silks. Round the edge was a heavy fringe of tassels composed of chains of finest gold.

The bodice was of stiff white brocade. The torque or necklet was a ring of solid gold, as thick as one's thumb and over a foot in diameter, and along it climbed dragons exquisitely moulded in gold filigree. An elaborate chatelaine set with jewels hung in chains of gold from her waist.

To the large black head-dress were fixed gold bosses of intricate design set with jewels, and from them depended fringes of countless tiny chains of gold. Gold bracelets and earrings completed this magnificent costume, which gleamed and sparkled in all the colours of the rainbow as the little

bride sat in her apartment. Its total weight was enormous, and it was little wonder that the poor child needed two women to support her.

The costumes of the four bridesmaids were similar to the bride's but less elaborate. Their turbans were low, as maidens' should be, and their ornaments, their torques, and the trimming of their dresses were of silver instead of gold.

After the ceremony was over the bride's luggage and presents were carried past into her new home: boxes and trunks of clothes, tables and chairs, cabinets and chests. That night and for several nights feasting and merriment would continue, and for days the Sawbwa would entertain the scores of retainers who had accompanied his new daughter-in-law from her home.

With such ceremonial is the wedding of a Sawbwa's son celebrated, but the marriage of ordinary people entails far less expense. Before their marriage Shan girls are permitted great freedom, and they are not required to retain their virginity until wedded—their only care is to avoid giving birth to an illegitimate child. Even in such cases they are not "ruined". Marriages are usually of inclination; the lads court the girls as in England. They are a merry, laughter-loving people. At the New Year there are great rejoicings, and the young people join together in games resembling our skittles and medicine ball, in which their elders frequently take part.

From Chefang we journeyed for several days across the country to Lungchuan, originally the largest of the states and including both Meng Mao and Chefang. The *yamen* was large and dilapidated, like all the others. In the halls hung the antlers of *thamin* deer shot by the Sawbwa and his son, and in the entrance court a black bear was tethered to a pillar.

From Lungchuan a day's march brought us to Husa, which is described in a later chapter, and a second day took

us to Lung-chang-kai, in the valley of the Taiping. Next morning we wended our way to the ford to cross the river into Chanta. After much shouting, boatmen poled over long narrow rafts of bamboo, in which loads and passengers were ferried across the swift stream. Two of the ponies were enticed into a raft, but the third, Rufus, stoutly refused. So the raft pushed off with the two animals, while he had to swim, the *mafu* holding him by the halter. The mules were driven with much shouting into the water and made to swim across, and some which tried to turn back were urged on with stones. The current caught them, and all struck out stoutly for the other side, where stood the head muleteer loudly shouting the dinner call. They got into shallow water and stood for a minute to recover breath and strength, then they struggled to the bank and began nibbling the first blades of grass they saw.

We were met at the ford by the Sawbwa of Chanta, a nice-looking young man who had spent many years in exile in Burma. Long ago his father, the Sawbwa of Chanta, revolted against the Chinese, and when he was crushed his young son managed to escape across the border. For years the state was governed by a Chinese official alone. Finally the young Sawbwa was permitted to return, but his power had been weakened, his *haw* was occupied by the Chinese magistrate, and most of the revenues of the state were retained by the Chinese. Gradually, however, his authority was returning, and the Shans were bringing their disputes to him to settle. He and his family and entourage lived in mat huts, but there, on a virgin site, a new *haw* was being built, a new capital was springing up. Resentment at the occupation of the old *haw* by the Chinese deputy had died.

What a contrast was this mat palace to the old *haws* of Mangshih or Meng Mao! All was clean and new, gleaming new straw and bamboo. We sat in the reception hall and drank a welcome glass of bottled beer. Outside was chained

a shaggy Tibetan hound, and about the yard hobbled three or four wild geese which the Sawbwa had shot down only slightly wounded.

We bade farewell to the Sawbwa, who sent a couple of his soldiers to accompany us as guides, and set off for Kanai. Soon we struck the river bank and followed a path over the low hills on the northern shore. It was a lovely walk: a sandy path across the grass-clad downs, sometimes in the open with views of the Taiping, sometimes in groves of shady trees, through clumps of feathery bamboo, past plantations of pineapple.

At last we reached the ford to Kanai Hsin-cheng, New Kanai, just at the bend where the River Taiping turned north. Some Shan women were just before us, and pulled up their skirts when they waded into the water. As the depth increased, they held their skirts up higher till they could lift them up no more. They shrieked with laughter as their skirts got wet. They turned and watched us, sitting on the saddle with our feet thrust out straight before us, and how they laughed when we got wet too from the splashing of the ponies' feet!

From the river's bank it was but a short distance to New Kanai, picturesquely situated on a little wooded spur. We rode past the *haw*, on to the compound where lived Philip Tao, brother of the Sawbwa, of whom we have heard before. He had a lovely little estate where he lived with his mother. The garden was prettily laid out, with a small ornamental lake, in the middle of which was a summer-house where in fine weather we had our meals. There was a little Japanese house furnished in European style with easy chairs, and there we were given a most comfortable bedroom.

The Kanai *haw* was partially destroyed by the Chinese soldiers after the rebellion of 1924, but the Sawbwa had defied Shan convention, which called for a change of site after such a disaster in order to cut the evil fate. He had

engaged an army of carpenters and builders, who were repairing, renovating, and rebuilding the old *yamen*.

Kanai has had several capitals. The first was established on a plateau a few hundred feet above the plain and not far from Hsiao-hsin-kai. Now the site is deserted, though a few massive trees still stand to show where lived and ruled Hsi Chung-kuo, a Chinese from Nanking who was installed by Emperor Cheng Tsu in 1403 as the first chieftain of Kanai. A few years later, as a reward for faithful service, he was granted by the Chinese Government the surname of Tao, which has been borne by his descendants ever since.

The Kanai Sawbwas rendered loyal service to China in the expeditions against the rebellious state of Luchuan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but when in 1582 Nandaboyin, King of Burma, in alliance with many of the Shan Sawbwas of the border land, invaded Yunnan, the lord of Kanai was forced to flee to Yungchang, and for many years the state was occupied by the Sawbwa of North Hsenwi, who established his capital in the plains. His palace has disappeared, but the town which grew up around it is called Kanai Chiu-cheng, Kanai Old Town, to this day.

When the Manchu armies defeated the Chinese and seized the whole of the empire, then the Taos regained their old kingdom, and in 1659 Tao Chien-hsuan received from the first Manchu Emperor confirmation of the title and rank of hereditary lord of Kanai, and built a new *haw* on the other side of the river. The town which grew up round the palace was called Kanai New Town.

Such is the history of Kanai as it was told me by my host. Similar to it are the histories of all the other Shan kingdoms of the border land.

From the *haw* a motor road had been constructed round the foothills. It was only five miles long—a tiny spin for the two cars the Sawbwa kept and which had been carried

on men's shoulders across the hills from Bhamo. But he was having the main road on the other side of the river made fit for motors, and dreamt of the day when a bridge would be built across the river and he would be able to drive his car from Kanai right through to Bhamo and Mandalay.

The next day we pitched our tents on the large grassy common outside the village of Chetao. Towering above the low houses was a large temple, its elaborate tiered roof outlined against the sky, its long white prayer pennons floating in the breeze. Here worshipped the Sawbwas of Nantien, and just behind the temple could be distinguished the massive grey-tiled roof of their *haw*. Behind the temple and *haw*, right against the foothills, was a huge factory chimney, for one of the Sawbwa's brothers had received a technical education in Japan and had established a porcelain factory in his native village.

The Sawbwa was away on a visit to the Sawbwa of Lungchuan, but he was to return that same evening. As we sat outside the tent, gazing over the houses at the wooded mountains, a soldier suddenly appeared on the road bearing aloft a large yellow flag on which were inscribed in black characters the name and title of the Sawbwa. He was followed by thirty or forty others clad in dirty uniforms of grey cotton and grey forage caps. On their feet were sandals of plaited straw. Many carried umbrellas. Their guns were old and rusty, and their ammunition was carried in grey cotton bandoliers. There was no military order, and they slouched along all over the road.

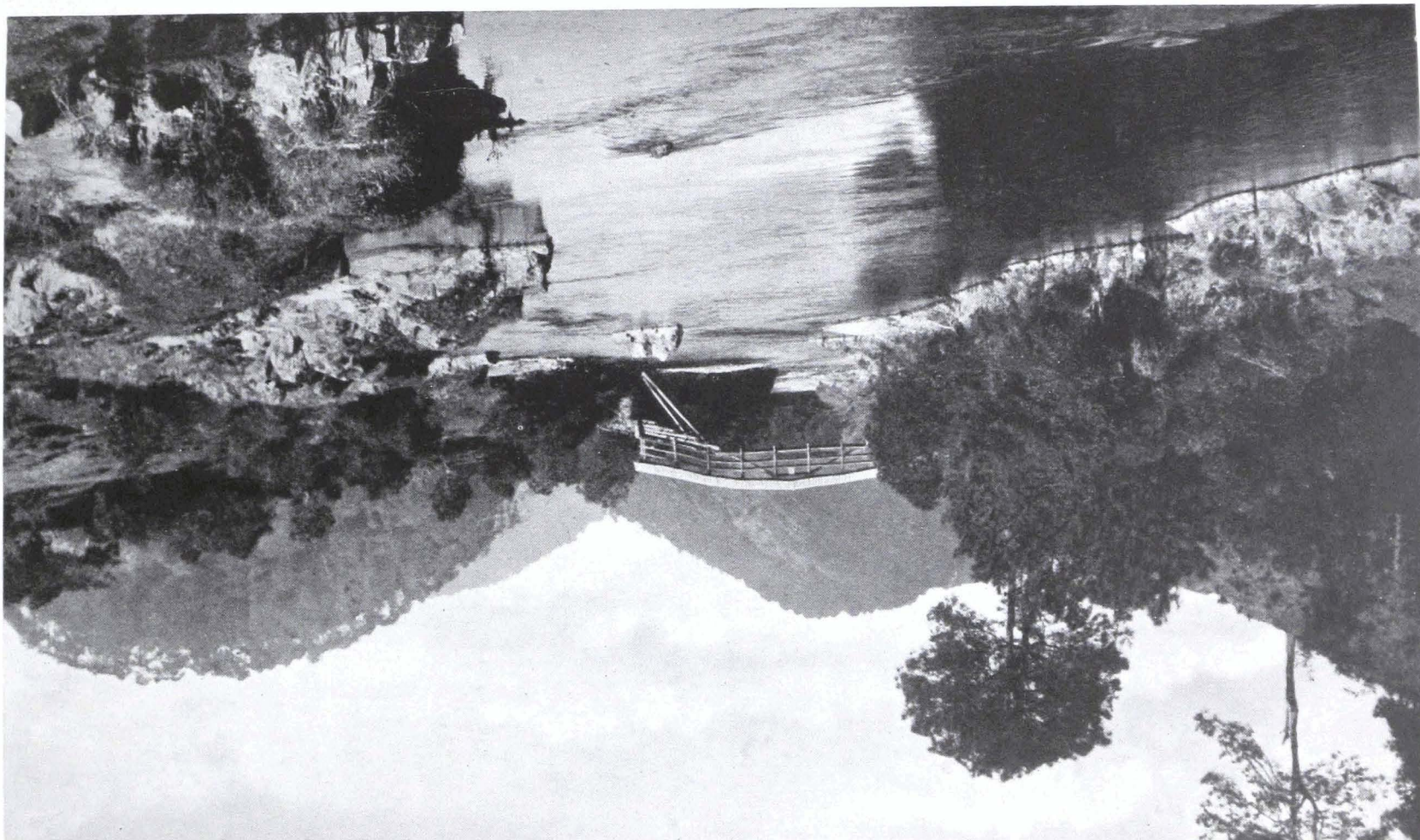
Behind them in green sedan chairs came the Sawbwa and his eldest son, while in a *hwa-kan* was a Chinese friend who had gone to Lungchuan with them. Servants and mules with the baggage brought up the rear. All were hurrying to reach the palace before sunset. It was too late to pay a call on the Sawbwa that evening, and next morning

we were starting at dawn for Tengyueh, so we sent one of the servants with a card to tender our respects.

We climbed a little way up the hillside to watch the sunset. The sky was soft pearly grey, and the sun a ball of rosy light, glowing like a huge red-hot ember. It emitted no rays of light, and yet the flooded rice fields below were lit as by a fire. As we returned to the camp darkness fell, soft-toned gongs resounded from the temple, and the muleteers were calling the mules to their evening meal. Fireflies danced to and fro, a nightjar croaked nearby. Fiery serpents crawled over the mountain side, for the farmers were burning off the old dried grass so that the pastures would be covered with tender shoots for the cattle to graze upon. A light suffused the sky and gradually became brighter as from behind the deep blue mountains a pale orange moon appeared.

The sound of footsteps and of voices heralded the return of the servant. A soldier in grey was with him dangling by the legs a pure white cock. The Sawbwa regretted he was too tired to receive us, and sent his card and the cock with his best wishes for a safe journey. We tipped the soldier and sent another card to the Sawbwa with thanks for his present. Did a white cock mean anything? White elephants certainly are held sacred by the Shans, but a white cock is always tied on a coffin by the Chinese and sacrificed at the graveside to the deceased's spirit. I have never been able to discover if any significance attached to the Sawbwa's present, but, at any rate, next day the cook killed it and we ate it for dinner.

CANTILEVER BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER SHWELLI



CHAPTER XVII

The Shweli and the Salween

ONE bright spring morning we set forth on a trip to the Rivers Shweli and Salween. For the first four miles we followed the paved pathway which led from the north gate across the paddy fields, now dried and brown. At the end of the plain we journeyed up a narrowing valley till we reached Hai-kou and its little lake. The hillsides were well wooded, and the pink and white blossoms of the wild cherry trees and the white and red of the rhododendrons lighted up the dark-green background of pine trees and the yellowy green clumps of bamboos. High up above us on the other side of the mountain was the pretty little lake Ching Hai, a favourite camping ground for week-end parties from Tengyueh; in summer there was bathing in the cool waters of the lake, in winter shooting of the ducks on its surface or the pheasants in the woods around. Even as we marched we could hear the pheasants calling to one another, those lovely pheasants of Yunnan with plumage of shaded metallic blue. Occasionally, too, we heard the hoarse croak of the Amherst pheasants. Never have I seen a more beautiful sight than once when, as we were climbing a path to a temple, five of these lovely cocks, glistening with blue and scarlet and white, suddenly flew over my head.

The cobbled path continued up the narrow winding valley, on either side of which bracken and shrubs and pine trees covered the hills. At last we reached the top of the divide and paused for a few moments to look back on Ching

Hai sparkling in the sunlight. Then we descended gradually to the village of Hui-kai, where we camped for the night.

Next morning we continued our march along the little valley, past the village of Pei-chiao-ho, where a pretty camel-back bridge led across the stream to some hot springs, then down a roughly cobbled path to the River Shweli, which we crossed by a bridge called Hsiang Yang Chiao.

Many and varied are the bridges of the Yunnan border land—the stone camel-back bridges, some with two or even three arches, the piers always furnished with boat-shaped prows to enable them to withstand the force of the summer floods: the ingenious bamboo bridges of the Shans, built, like the one at Nawngma, without a single nail: the jungle bridges of the Lisus and other tribespeople, built of lianas and bamboos and made V-shaped, the tread but a single bamboo pole, on which one progresses carefully like a tight-rope walker, hands wide apart to grasp each side of the bridge, as it sways perilously to and fro: the cable suspension bridges which span the widest rivers, such as the one which crosses the Shweli near Lungling: the cantilever bridges where massive poles firmly planted in each bank stretch out over the water towards one another, the gap being joined by beams laid on the ends of the poles. Some of these cantilever bridges are most elaborately constructed and are even roofed with tiles to preserve the timbers from the elements.

Hsiang Yang Chiao was a mixture of two types. It started as a cantilever, and roofed timbers projected several feet from either bank, but the gap was too wide to be bridged by poles or beams, so iron cables were stretched across instead and planks laid on them.

For two days we journeyed up the valley of the Shweli. Away to our right was the lofty Salween divide, covered with dense jungle, and between us and it lay undulating foothills and paddy fields. On our left was the River Shweli,

crossed by many bridges, usually of the roofed, wooden cantilever type, which led to the villages on the right bank. Our path usually kept near the river, threading its way through the thick scrub. There was just room for one laden mule to get through, and whenever two caravans met one of them had to get off the path and wait in the jungle. We passed two or three little market towns: Chu-chih, where the two head-streams of the Shweli united; Wa-tien, away across the paddy fields on a little spur of the foothills, where we spent one night; Kai-tou, where we lunched in a ruined temple surrounded by a crowd of interested spectators.

The Shweli was at that season a clear shallow stream, gurgling in its rocky bed. Fish abounded, and at several places the villagers had constructed traps. A thick fence of plaited bamboo was built right across the stream, and in it were two or three openings, large at the entrance, narrow at the lower end, which led into pens. We saw several quite large fish which had been thus caught.

On the third day we reached Chiao-tou, at the head of the valley, and camped by the side of the stream, ready for the hard ascent of the morrow. We rose early, and for hours climbed up the foothills, sometimes through thick woods, sometimes through rhododendron scrub. There were flowers of wondrous shape and size, of every shade of pink and crimson, orange and yellow, cream and white. There were small bushes, there were giant trees. Many and famous are the plant collectors whom Yunnan has attracted; many are the seeds and plants they have gathered and sent to Britain, where they have been grown and acclimatized and now grace parks and gardens there. It was in this neighbourhood that George Forrest, the most famous of them all, was working when he suddenly died at Tengyueh.

We stopped for lunch at Chao-yang-tien, where was a tax office, which levied *likin*, or transit tax, on all merchandise crossing from the Salween valley. While we rested

there a couple of farmers came down the hill with a score of piglets. They had to pay five cents ($\frac{3}{4}d.$) tax on each little porker. It was a long and slow job getting them to market; one man drove them by waving a long, thin bamboo from side to side of the path, while the other walked ahead dropping every few yards some grains of maize to entice the piglets on!

After lunch the road got steeper and steeper. In some places rough stone steps had been built, but they had now all fallen into disrepair, and each step was a good foot high. At some of the worst places the mules had to be pushed up. At others the path between the boulders was too narrow to let a laden mule through, so the loads had to be lifted off by the muleteers and servants and carried up to a wider part. On either side was dense jungle, and from the path the mountain side fell steeply down to a stream which we could hear falling over the rocks several hundred feet below. It was a dangerous, hard climb, and one of the servants' ponies slipped over the side of the path and fell right down, to be killed against a rock. After much trouble its rider and a muleteer managed to climb down to it and retrieve the saddle and bedding.

The thick foliage met over our heads, so that by sunset it was quite dark. We struggled on, and about 6 o'clock reached Chai Kung Tang, an old and dilapidated temple. There were only three dirty rooms round a small courtyard. There was no food for the mules and ponies save the grain we had brought with us, and as there was no grass it was impossible to turn them out to graze. The muleteers cut for them what bamboo they could see in the dusk. The water, too, was very scanty.

Over the entrance was a small loft or attic, and there we camped out. It was dirty, and we were nearly suffocated by the fumes from the fires the servants and muleteers had lit below. The whole room was filled with smoke.

Next morning an hour's steep climb brought us to the

top of the Ma Mien Kuan pass, nearly 11,000 feet above sea level. Then came the descent into the valley of the Salween, which flowed nearly 8000 feet below us. The path was worn narrow and deep between the rocks, and many a time had the mule loads to be carried round some extra bad bit. But we were descending, and the foliage was not thick above our heads. We could see over the wooded spurs. Flocks of green parrots flew past us. All around could be heard the chattering of monkeys—a noise somewhere between a dog's bark and a duck's quack—but not one could be seen. Occasionally, too, we heard the hoarse bark of a deer. At last we reached Hui-po, the first village since Chao-yang-tien. It consisted of just a couple of cottages, where the muleteers and servants slept. Our tent was pitched in a fallow field.

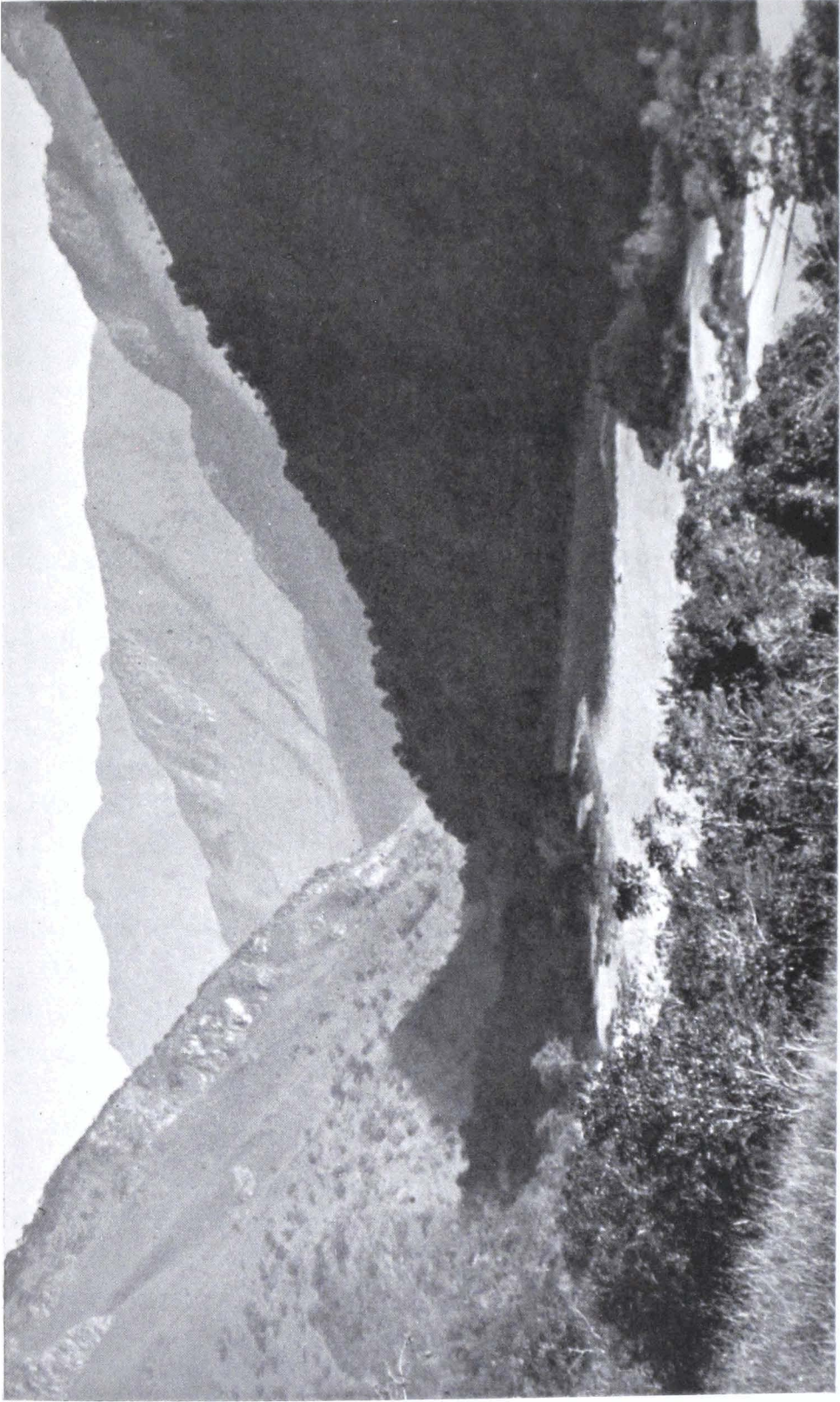
No straw was obtainable for fodder, so the mules and ponies were turned out loose in the fields to graze. Next morning all but two trotted up when called for breakfast, but one riding pony and one mule were nowhere to be seen. The muleteers searched far and near, and at last found them together contentedly grazing in a little copse a mile away. It was quite late when we started down the hill between the terraced rice fields. The road was full of loose stones, and on either side grew trees and bushes, with mauve convolvulus covering the branches. A final steep descent brought us into the market village of Manyin. A temple and an inn had tiled roofs, but most of the houses were tumbledown hovels thatched with straw. Stalls lined the main street, where the country people were buying provisions and selling vegetables and jungle produce. All wore Chinese dress, but the aquiline noses of the men and the bare, natural feet of the women betrayed their Lisu ancestry.

Below the village the road divided, one branch continuing straight on to the ferry across the Salween, the other, which

we took, turning north up its right bank. After fording a deep little stream, we struck across the foothills down near the river. Even then in the winter season the air was warm and oppressive; we were less than 3000 feet above sea level, for in the past thirty hours we had dropped 8000 feet. Flowering shrubs and plants and creepers grew in great profusion—huge bushes of rhododendrons with white and pink blossoms, mauve marguerites and asters, flowers of all colours, which I had never seen before. One creeper bore sprays of white flowers with curved sepals; they resembled tassels of wax and filled the air with a faint but pleasant scent. Another had white feathery flowers like spiræa, and when seeding the sepals grew very long and turned a lovely shade of purplish green.

The scenery of the Salween valley is magnificent. The river bed is a deep narrow furrow cut through the mountains. The clear blue water eddies round the rocks, and falls in foaming rapids. The banks are walls of solid rock, with here and there patches of silvery sand. On either side the mountains rise steeply for thousands of feet. They are all thickly covered with jungle, and down the deep ravines fall tiny torrents. Occasionally between two spurs the valley widens out a little, affording space for some paddy fields and a village, but the valley is sparsely populated, the inhabitants being all Lisus who have adopted Chinese dress and language.

Our path led sometimes through long rank grass, sometimes along the river bank beneath an archway of trees. Once we climbed over a grassy plateau in the middle of which, hundreds of feet above the river, was a lovely little lake 500 yards long. In it were several tiny islands covered with trees, and wild duck swam on its waters. Every mile or so we had to ford a stream, swiftly flowing in its rocky bed. They were only two or three feet deep, but between the rocks were holes deep enough to drown a mule. One



THE VALLEY OF THE RIVER SALWEEN

of our baggage ponies did slip into one and swam round and round until it found bottom again. The pack floated off, and had to be retrieved by the muleteers. Luckily there was nothing to spoil in the loads.

The first night we spent at the village of Wan-chiao. As our caravan approached and the villagers saw our soldier guards, they hurriedly drove all the mules and cattle away into the fields, lest the soldiers might requisition them. We reassured them, and they became quite friendly, offering us a vacant room in the farmhouse. The second night we camped in a field near Laimo, where the servants just spread their beds under a tree and lit bonfires to keep them warm and dry in the thick night mist.

The next day we reached Teng-keng, a village built on a ledge in a hollow high up the mountainside. It is the headquarters of the *tussu*, or chieftain, whose yamen consisted of four two-storied buildings round a little courtyard; all the other houses of the village were low hovels roofed with grass. The *tussu* met us at the entrance and offered his guest room. It was an upper room with windows looking over the Salween, and we accepted with pleasure, for there was no suitable camping site. All the ground sloped down steeply towards the river, and only the lower fields were terraced for rice cultivation, while the upper levels were devoted to opium poppy, all in full flower.

The *tussu* himself was a sallow Chinese of about forty-five, sodden with opium smoking. Five hundred years ago his ancestor, a Chinese official, had been appointed hereditary chieftain of the Lisus there, and his descendants had ruled at Teng-keng ever since. He appeared to be very poor, and his revenues were mainly derived from the "fine" of two dollars a *mou* (about £1 an acre) which he exacted from all land under poppy, for the Lisus were too poor to pay many other taxes. He himself farmed some land and also bred pigs, which he fattened in sties; the floors were well off

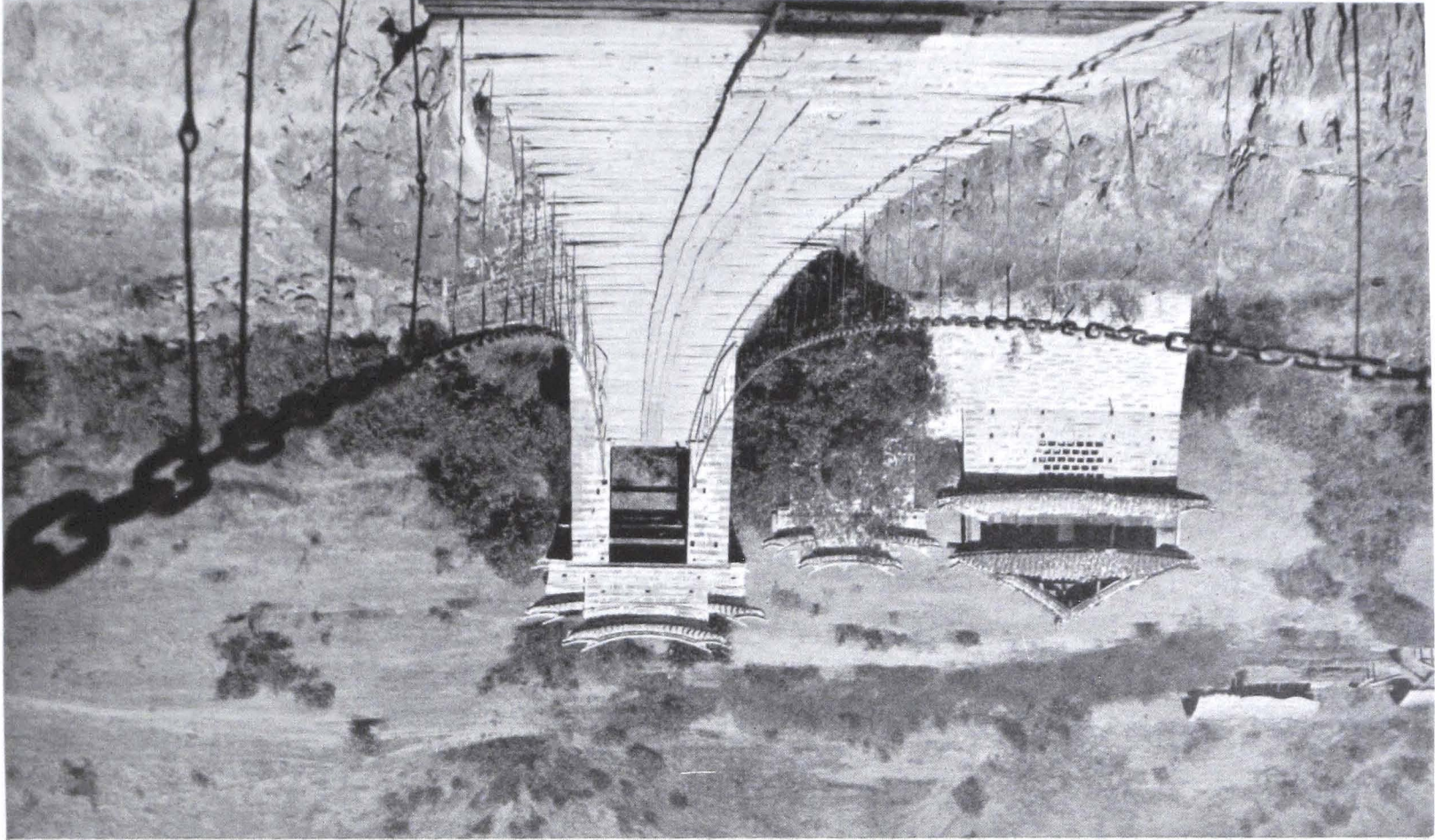
the ground so that the pigs had no chance to root about, but simply ate their food and then lay still on the floor. He presented us with a leg of freshly killed pork, which tasted very good indeed when roasted.

That afternoon and the following day we wandered about the hills, visiting the Lisu huts, photographing the people, purchasing cross-bows, and watching the men shoot at dollars; but all this I have already described in Chapter XII. The next morning we set off on our homeward journey. For two days we followed the same road as we had come, sleeping the night in a little clearing in the jungle far from any village. In the middle of the night we were awakened by a strange barking noise, and when I peeped out of the tent I saw three barking deer standing on a rock two or three yards away. The noise startled them and like a flash they were off into the jungle.

We did not turn to the right through Manyin and over Ma Mien Kuan pass, but followed instead down the bank of the Salween. Soon the character of the country changed, the valley widened out and paddy fields appeared. The inhabitants, too, were different, for we had entered the Shan state of Lukiang and were now among Shans. How natural it seemed to be back among the long-skirted, high-turbaned women, but how ill all looked compared with the Shans of the Taiping and Shweli valleys! The Salween is notorious for its deadly summer climate and poisonous miasma. Almost all the people were goitrous too.

Some of the most interesting features of the rice-growing districts are the rice-hulling mills, which are worked by water-power. The commonest and simplest type consists of a heavy tree trunk, pivoted in the middle. At one end is stuck a thick pin of wood which falls into a hole in a stone, and the other end is hollowed out to form a trough. Water from a stream is made to fall into the trough, and the weight causes that end of the trunk to drop and the other end, with

A CABLE SUSPENSION BRIDGE, SHWANG LUNG CHIAO



the pin, to rise. As the trough drops, the water is tipped out of it and the pin falls again into the mortar, which is filled with paddy, and the hull or husk is broken off the rice by the blow. A contrivance I saw here was more elaborate, so that one stream of water worked four of these primitive mills. A water-wheel had a long, thick axle, into which were fitted four pins protruding a foot at each end. Each pin hit a pivoted hammer, raised it and let it fall again into the mortar of grain. So each revolution of the wheel caused each hammer to rise twice. Women were attending the mills, which belonged to the whole village, and each family used them in turn.

I have also seen a third form worked by a water-wheel which turned a long horizontal bar of wood, at each end of which were heavy stone wheels that ran in a groove full of paddy.

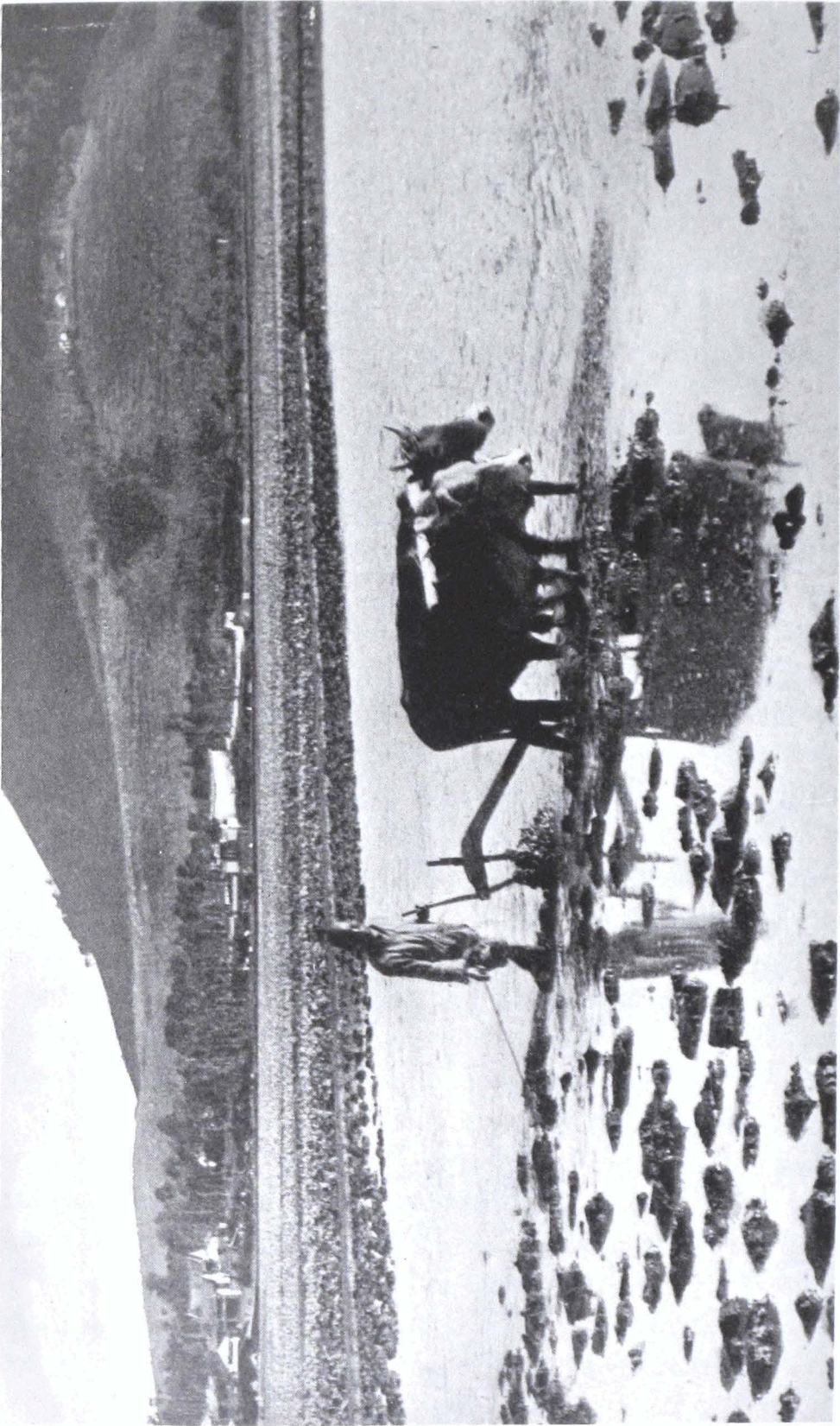
The hulled rice is usually winnowed by being thrown up in the breeze, though I have seen winnowing machines like ours, but turned by hand. The whole industry of rice cultivation and preparation is most interesting: the ploughing of the land with a wooden plough tipped with iron and pulled by oxen or buffaloes, the harrowing of the flooded fields, the planting of the seedling plants, the weeding, the reaping, the threshing with flails or by beating the sheaves against the side of a big basket or the treading out of the grain with oxen.

The second day in Lukiang State we halted for lunch beneath a tree overlooking a fine suspension bridge, Shuang Lung Chiao, the "Bridge of the Two Dragons". There were two bridges really, for the river was quite wide there. The first was about eighty feet long and stretched from the bank to a little island of rock in the middle of the river, the other stretched across the 120 feet from the rock to the far bank. Traffic was very small over the bridge, and, indeed, only one old man with a mule crossed while we rested there. Only

when the main Salween bridge, two days' march farther down river, was under repair was the traffic diverted to the Bridge of the Two Dragons.

The valley gradually widened. There were narrow defiles when the foothills reached right down to the banks, but the plains of paddy fields became more frequent and more extensive. The jungle ceased, giving way to thick grass and occasional pine trees. We marched for two more days, camping by night in the dry rice fields near some village, where we could purchase paddy and straw for the mules, and chickens, rice, and vegetables for ourselves. At last we reached the main Lukiang plain, several miles wide, stretching from the foot of the great divide to the Salween. We followed a path across the foothills to join the main road from Tengyueh to Tali and Yunnanfu, the old "Ambassadors' Road".

Our last noon halt was at a place called Shih-tou-cho-tzu, or "Stone Tables". There were huge benches of solid stone on which the passing coolies rested their burdens and sat for a gossip. That morning two of our mules had strayed, and for hours the muleteers searched for them without success. A countryman with a couple of empty pack mules happened to pass our camp, so we asked him to hire us his two beasts till ours were found. He refused, but the soldiers of our escort impressed them, and the loads of the missing mules were put on their packs. We promised to pay the owner for the hire, but he was very uneasy; he knew nothing of Europeans, but he had had dealings with soldiers, and they never paid for anything they took. When we halted at Stone Tables he wanted to take his mules away and depart without any hire, but we refused and made him share the servants' meal. What a relief he must have felt when a muleteer arrived with the missing mules! And what astonishment when he received a dollar—the full market rate—for the hire of his two mules for half a day!



PLOUGHING THE FLOODED PADDY FIELDS

We soon joined the main road and started the long, steep climb up the pass. On a little spur, on the outskirts of a village, we camped for the night. There was a glorious view across the valley of the Salween, which could be seen shining in the sunlight several miles away under the hills of its left bank. We could just distinguish the suspension bridge and the road to Tali winding up a valley on to the plateau beyond. To our right, a few miles up the valley, was the *haw* of the Lukiang Sawbwa, the lord of the Shans of the Salween. We had met him several times, a pleasant young man with both Shan and Chinese wives. He, too, had been bitten by the craze for motor-cars and was building a road from his *haw* to the Salween bridge, less than a score of miles away. Some day he hoped a motor road would be built across the lofty mountains to Lungling and on to connect with that built by the Sawbwas of Mangshih and Chefang.

The next day we made an early start on the long, hard climb over the 9000-foot pass and down the far side to the Shweli. It was a well-worn road, which for centuries had carried the traffic between Burma and China, yet it was only a path, or at best a very narrow lane. The mountain-side was covered with thick jungle. Rhododendrons grew in great variety and profusion, their white and pink blossoms covering the bushes and bestrewing the path; orchids hung from the branches of the trees, and lilies grew in the glades. We halted for lunch in a shady dell near the top of the pass, and the mules and ponies were turned loose to graze by the roadside under the watchful eyes of the muleteers.

The journey down was shorter and less steep. The jungle and woods soon ended, and grassy slopes gave way to terraced rice fields. We reached the Shweli River and crossed by a cable suspension bridge, at one end of which a tax station collected dues on all merchandise. Low cliffs formed the far bank. We gazed from the bridge at the water rushing swiftly below. In this roadless land it is a

great pity that none of the rivers—neither Salween nor Shweli, Taiping nor Mekong—is navigable. All, even the largest, are mountain torrents, their beds bestrewn with boulders, and only in a few places does the swift current permit ferry boats to cross.

A mile past the bridge we reached the large village of Kan-lan-chai, man and beast tired out with the long, hard march. Our servants and muleteers were Mohammedans, the “boy” and the head muleteer were natives of the place, so clean and comfortable quarters were ready for us in a private house. On the walls hung scrolls with texts from the Koran in Arabic letters, and the usual Chinese extracts from the writings of Confucius were absent.

Tengyueh lay but twelve miles away across the plateau which rose before us, and a lovely march it was across rolling country, past plantations of pine trees, through woods of rhododendrons, across open grassland. Near the top of the plateau we passed two towers of stone shaped like huge beehives. They were old Mongol signal stations which sent up columns of smoke to warn the next garrison of a rising of the tribes. Once they were built every dozen miles along the road, but now only a few remain, the rest having fallen down and the stones having been used by the farmers to build houses or walls.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Valley of Enchantment

HIGH up among the mountains of the frontier are the two little states of Husa and Lasa. They occupy a valley, less than a mile wide and under twenty miles long, which is called Mongsa by the Shans and Maingtha by the Burmese. By me, however, it will ever be remembered as the "Valley of Enchantment".

There is the home of the Achangs, a tiny race who are found nowhere else and whose origin and early history are totally unknown. Many, many centuries have they dwelt in the valley, and there are not even legends of earlier inhabitants. But in 1441, after the revolt of the Shan states of the border land had been successfully put down, Chinese soldiers were settled in this fertile and healthy valley, and two Chinese officers named Lai and Kuan were appointed hereditary tribal captains to rule Husa and Lasa, the eastern and western halves of Mongsa.

The chieftains of the two states sought wives among the neighbouring Shan princesses, so that now the ruling families are practically Shan, and the tribal captains style themselves Sawbwas. The soldiers, on the other hand, married Achang girls and founded a race of half-breeds, who to-day form nearly half of the inhabitants of the valley. The men of the border tribes have lost their distinctive dress and wear coats and trousers of the blue cotton like the Chinese, but the women cling to their tribal costumes. The present dress of the Achang women has undoubtedly been

greatly influenced by that of their Shan neighbours, but they still retain a large turban of peculiar shape which must have been part of their ancestral costume. The Chinese half-breed women, while adopting Chinese trousers, have retained a huge turban which betrays its, and their, Achang origin.

All was quiet on the border land when we decided to set off on a trip to Mongsa, but the Tupan insisted on us taking an escort in case the Kachins started trouble. So two soldiers accompanied our caravan from Tengyueh to Chetao, where the Nantien Sawbwa supplied us with four of his men to "protect" us as far as Husa. Their uniforms were of tattered grey cotton, their rifles were old and rusty, and their kit was nothing but a red blanket which served as bedding at night and overcoat by day.

It was pouring with rain when we started from Chetao. The muleteers wore long cloaks of palm fibre, our servants bestrode their ponies wrapped in long ponchos of thick felt, while our escort, like all Shans we met on the road, were muffled in red blankets. All day we rode down a long narrow valley called by the Chinese Lo-pu-pa, or "Turnip Valley", which is roughly shaped like a turnip—long and narrow and tapering to a point. A small river meandered down its centre, and on either side were rice fields. Splash! splash! the ponies and mules plodded along. The road took a delight in crossing and recrossing the little river, and in one hour I counted that we forded it thirty-six times. The dogs were tired and showed no inclination to explore the fields and hillsides for game, but paddled along with sad, anxious expressions and longed for the shelter of the tents. As we got farther down the valley, the river got deeper and broader, and bridges spanned it, some of rough planks and others of plaited bamboo with numerous holes. I was relieved each time we got safely across, for I feared that they would never bear the pony's weight. The mules

shared my apprehensions and generally preferred fording the river to trusting themselves on a bridge.

One of the escort marched in front of my pony with his rifle over his shoulder, pointing straight at my head, and I was thankful that it was unloaded. At the start he wore felt slippers, but they soon got soaked through, so he put grass sandals on instead, and tied the slippers on his rifle to dry. He acted as guide and pointed out to me all the best places to ford the streams.

We met the Tupan's secretary returning from an official visit to Lungchuan. He was huddled up in a sedan chair and looked the picture of misery, as did his attendants and the baggage mules which straggled along behind him.

About midday the rain stopped and soon after we found a lovely camping ground on a little knoll overlooking the plain. The sandy soil soon dried. Just below us was a tile works, and after tea we went down to watch the men. We could not understand what they were making. From the wet mud they were moulding short, broad drain-pipes scored with three furrows, like bars of chocolate. We were astonished when we were shown how each "drain-pipe", after baking in the kiln, could be broken into three tiles!

The valley had gradually widened, and we had now reached the thick part of the turnip. The flooded rice fields formed a vast lake, the grey water of which was covered with an emerald film of weed. Large flocks of ducks and geese swam about, sand-pipers and herons waded in the water, and kingfishers darted to and fro, flashes of glistening blue. Shan villages, partially hidden amid bamboo groves and spreading fig-trees, edged the foothills. The sun shone and billowy clouds were heaped about a sky of purest blue. It was spring time; the young leaves shone like jade, and the red earth of the plots on the hillsides recalled the fields of Devon. Parties of laughing Shan girls and boys passed us. The world was young and beautiful.

In places the "road" was very narrow, just a slippery little bank across the paddy fields. I rode ahead, holding up a large paper umbrella, for the sun was very hot. Suddenly Shan decided that the path was too slippery and dangerous even for him, so he jumped down into the flooded fields. Rufus was just behind, and shied violently as my umbrella swung round, so that his rider slid gracefully off on his back! A little farther on Rufus got another shock. A man came along with a couple of geese slung by the legs at either end of a carrying-pole. The poor things craned their necks up, cackling loudly. It was enough to startle any pony. Usually the Shans carry ducks and geese in roomy baskets, so that they suffer little, even on a long march.

We camped at Pa Wei, the "Tail of the Valley", in a little dell on the foothills from which we had a lovely view down the valley through which we had come. The escort had gone to find quarters in a village nearby and the servants were putting up the tents. Suddenly the peace and quiet was disturbed by shrieks and yells, and we saw several Shan villagers approaching the camp brandishing sticks and stones. One dived into the bushes alongside the camp and dragged out four very bloody ducks.

The yelling and shouting increased, so we told the servants to fetch our gallant escort, who soon arrived clutching their rifles. The villagers got even more incensed, and at last we found out the cause of the trouble—two of the escort had killed and stolen the ducks as they marched along. They acknowledged what they had done and said they were quite willing to pay the value of the ducks, but that made the trouble even worse.

The villagers demanded ten dollars compensation for each duck, assessing the value on all the eggs that the birds might have been expected to lay in the future. The market value was less than a dollar each, and finally the soldiers agreed to pay up four dollars. But no, the villagers would



ACHANG-CHINESE WOMEN

not accept that, and eventually we ourselves had to give them two dollars in addition, which we intended to take off the escort's fee later.

Peace was restored, and we had returned to the tents to bathe and change when suddenly the uproar recommenced. Both sides demanded the dead ducks, and matters were getting more and more serious, as neither side would give way. Suddenly one of the villagers picked up the four ducks and strode away, followed by his companions, and as they walked down the hillside they hurled abuse at the soldiers, who returned it heartily. Scores of villagers who had been watching the proceedings from the surrounding hills joined them in their victorious procession back to the village, while from behind a rock overlooking us a man appeared carrying a rifle. He had lain there ready to fire on us if the soldiers dared to touch his friends.

We asked the boy why the soldiers had meekly allowed the villagers to make off with the ducks after they had paid such a high price for them. "Oh," he replied with a grin, "they've got three more ducks in the muleteer's box!"

The thought of those three ducks haunted us all that afternoon, with the fear that the villagers might count the ducks and find three still missing. Night fell, and we sat outside the tent in the cool air talking of the duck feasts both soldiers and villagers were enjoying. Suddenly lights appeared from the village below; peasants carrying torches were climbing the hillsides around us, and we could hear their voices calling out to one another. We summoned the boy and sent him forward to reconnoitre. He disappeared anxiously in the darkness, to reappear a few minutes later.

"It's all right," he said. "They are looking for a cow which has strayed. I could hear what they were calling."

The relief was intense. We sent the boy for a drink to celebrate, and sat talking till the moon flooded the valley with silvery light. "Never, never again," we said, "will

we accept an escort of soldiers. They are far more dangerous than any marauding Kachins.”

Next day we climbed out of Turnip Valley on to the lofty hills. There were no villages to be seen, and not even a single house. Occasionally some wild-looking Kachins, armed with swords and guns or bowed down with loads on wooden yokes hanging from bands across the forehead, would pass. Their ragged clothes hardly held together, their unkempt hair was bound with filthy rags, and their skin was grimed with sweat and dirt. They resembled pictures of prehistoric man. One woman we saw looked hardly human. She wore no turban, being presumably unmarried, and her thickly matted hair stood out all over her head. She had an immense goitre as big as a football. Slowly she plodded up the steep hill, a heavy load of firewood on her back.

At last we reached the top of the divide and walked amid grass and bracken. Behind us lay Turnip Valley and its flooded rice fields, and before us the Namwan River and the plain of Lungchuan, extending to the wooded range beyond which lay Mongsa. We were very hazy about the road, as so few Europeans have travelled this way and the maps are far from reliable. But a Chinese who had attached himself to our caravan for safety said he had been that way eight years before and would show us the road—it would all be on his way to Burma. The path shown on the map, he said, was impossible for mule traffic, and he would take us by another route. So, rather doubtfully, we accepted him as our guide. He was a pleasant-looking fellow, a Mohammedan, and his white cotton coat and trousers and felt hat looked far too smart for the jungle.

Our guide led us along a sandy path through the woods. The cuckoo was calling, shrubs with bell-like blossoms in all shades of pink and red grew on either hand, bee orchids and edelweiss grew in the clearings among the bracken,

brightly coloured birds flew from tree to tree. We had crossed the boundary into Lungchuan State, and there, in the jungle, was a tiny customs house built of mud bricks, with some very bored-looking soldiers standing on duty outside. It was an outpost of the Tengyueh customs to watch the cargo carried from Burma across the hills into China.

Around each village were patches of opium poppy. Some were a blaze of white blossoms, others showed nothing but the dark-green capsules. Each evening the peasant scored the capsules with a tiny rake made of knife blades fixed into a piece of wood, and next morning the juice, the raw opium, which had exuded was scraped off with a sickle-shaped knife.

There was no level place on the hillside where we could pitch our tents, so down and down we walked until we found a fallow field overgrown with grass. A stream trickled down amid the trees behind us, and the village lay a quarter of a mile away. The mules were a long way behind, so we sat down in the shade by the stream, where it was cool. A tall Shan strode past. His black sleeveless coat revealed his muscular tawny arms, his tight blue trousers, rolled up to the knee, were belted round the waist with a green-tasselled girdle, and on his head was a wide round hat secured beneath his chin with green and yellow ribbons. From his shoulder hung a scarlet haversack decorated with a long fringe and cowrie shells, and a sword in a wooden scabbard. At a respectful distance behind this magnificent figure trotted his little wife, carrying two baskets of rice by a pole balanced on her shoulders.

The faint sound of bells heralded the approach of the caravan. The head boy was perched on a pile of bedding and blankets which almost concealed his tiny pony. The muleteers had gathered armfuls of sticks so that they could cook their meal at once, and our cook carried a small dead

tree, while one of the escort had a rifle on one shoulder and a heavy log on the other. The box containing our glass and crockery had been thrown by the mule, and as the boy had packed a dozen eggs in the empty cups, everything was in a sticky yellow mess. Some cups were smashed, but our one and only teapot was spared.

Our evening walk was spoilt by the attentions of a young bull buffalo who followed us down the tiny path between the terraced rice fields. Buffaloes are nasty beasts, and hate the very smell of a European, though tiny native children can do what they like with them. This buffalo blocked the path for our return, so we had to scramble up the steep terraces. If he had charged, nothing could have saved us.

The route we took to Mongsa is rarely used even by the country people, who prefer to travel along the Taiping valley and then climb up the mountains from Lung-chang-kai. From the bottom of the valley we followed a tiny footpath up the mountain side. Occasionally it disappeared altogether or divided into two, and our guide would then hurry forward and examine the ground for footprints, sometimes trying each path before deciding which was the right one. We were ahead of the caravan, so he always plucked a branch and placed it over the wrong path to warn them which way we had gone—it was the *patrin* of the gipsies of Europe.

For hours we climbed steadily through steep rocky gullies, where there was barely room to pass without scraping our knees. The muleteers had to carry the loads several times too. It was terribly steep, and our sweating ponies halted every few yards to rest, their sides heaving and shaking. The higher we got the smaller became the path, and we feared that we were lost. We only saw one little Kachin village lying a hundred yards off the main path, and not a single traveller did we meet. Occasionally we caught glimpses through the trees of mighty mountains intersected by wooded valleys, and then the path plunged

once more into the thick jungle. Orchids clung in masses to the branches; some had flowers hanging in gigantic tassels of gold and white, others had white petals tipped with purple, others again had creamy petals marked with a splash of deep violet brown, while the centre lip was orange.

A final scramble and we reached the crest. The path circled the mountain top for a little, and then dropped down the bare hillside. So steep and slippery was the grass that we could barely stand upright. Below us was a tiny village with mud-brick houses. The entrance to the village was barred with prickly japonica branches to prevent the cattle and pigs straying into the paddy fields. We forced our way through the fence, up a tiny rocky stream bed, and through a hedge into a grassy sloping meadow, which we had marked down for our camping ground as we descended the mountain. Bushes of salmon-pink azalea overhung the stream. Trees of white rhododendron dotted the mountain-side. The scent of may-blossom filled the air. The cuckoo called from the trees, which were clothed in fresh green leaves. The sun shone from a clear blue sky. A gentle breeze tempered the air.

Nearby was a Buddhist temple which the villagers were repairing. Men and women were constantly passing our tents carrying heavy planks and beams which had been cut and shaped in the jungle. The women were dressed like Shans, though their turbans were lower and their skirts shorter, but their squat figures and coarse features, their general lack of cleanliness and grace showed at once that they were not Shans but Achangs. What the original Achang dress was like, or what induced the Achangs of Husa to discard it and adopt that of the Shans, is unknown. The Achang women of Lasa, only a few miles away, still wear a distinctive costume, though that, too, shows great Shan influence.

Next day we rode along a stone-paved path through leafy lanes. The hedges were covered with large white roses, with brilliant yellow stamens; the unopened buds were creamy yellow; they climbed over the tallest trees and fell from the topmost branches in cascades of blossom.

We passed Buddhist temples with grey-tiled roofs, and pagodas with slender golden spires rose here and there amid the trees. Beside each bridge and spring little flags of white paper or cotton were stuck in the ground, and under each large tree was a T-shaped altar. All around us were the evidences of strong religious feeling. The people had retained their animistic beliefs, their worship of the spirits of nature which dwelt in every tree, every stream, every hill, and to them they had grafted the Buddhist faith.

Sometimes the path debouched on to a common dotted with numerous stone graves. It was on one such broad expanse of turf, just outside the mud walls of Husa city, that we made our next camp. On either side were woods of walnut and birch, pine and fir, through which ran little paths leading to the rice fields beyond. Between them we had a glorious view across the valley of distant blue mountains.

All day long women were passing our camp, and pausing on the way to gaze at the strange white people. Some balanced a pole on their shoulders from each end of which hung baskets of manure for the fields, others drove cows, some had tools to work in the fields, others had just come to watch. They stared at me, and I stared back at them. All were half-breeds, Achang-Chinese. Over dark blue cotton trousers they wore long tunics of the same material, tied round the waist with broad belts of coloured embroidery. Earrings and bracelets were of solid silver, and a silver chatelaine hung from a button of the tunic. The most striking feature of the costume, however, was the immense turban of the same dark blue cotton, which stuck out a foot

all round the head like a halo. In the middle of the turban a disc of the hair showed. It was as large as a meat-plate, black and greasy and smooth, and round it was a circlet of chased silver ornaments. I coaxed one of the women to come near, and touched the hair to see if it was real. My fingers were covered with thick black grease which took hours to wash off!

They were a happy crowd and roared with laughter at my investigations. Their cheeks were rosy, their eyes danced with fun. Their figures were short and sturdy, their legs well developed, and they reminded me of thick-set little ponies. Directly I took out my camera they all ran away as hard as they could go, for they feared that I might catch their souls in my little box and take them away and do them harm. It took a whole day's coaxing and stalking before I got any to pose.

Several of the women had brought their embroidery with them—a belt or a pair of shoes. The designs were cut out in paper and pasted on to the coloured cotton, and then outlined in white chain stitch and the centre filled in with different bright colours. There they stood about and stitched, keeping one eye glued on the camp and our doings. How they gossiped! Excitement rose high when we had a meal outside the tent in full view of the crowd. I longed to understand their remarks!

One afternoon a woman came to visit a grave near-by the tent. From her basket she produced little earthenware bowls filled with rice and vegetables, which she arranged at the foot of the grave. Then she stuck some sticks of incense in the ground and lighted them. Dropping on her knees, she bowed her forehead to the ground three times and then burnt a pile of yellow paper "money" for her dead husband in the spirit world. When the little ceremony was over she put the bowls of rice back into her basket and walked slowly away.

Soon after our arrival the Sawbwa of Husa came to call, surrounded by many attendants. He was tall and clean shaven, his complexion very dark. He was dressed in a long silken Chinese robe, and on his head was the usual little black cap. On and on he sat, drinking vermouth and smoking cigarettes, until I thought that he would never take his leave, so interested were he and his companions in all the details of our camp.

That afternoon we walked to the *haw* to return his call. Husa is a tiny village, surrounded by a mud wall. Mud houses and hovels cluster on either side of its cobbled street. The palace was the usual rambling collection of buildings and courtyards, all falling into ruins. Our servant preceded us, holding aloft our visiting cards, and the Sawbwa met us and conducted us to the reception room. The room was dilapidated and dirty, and the floor was just rough planks which had never known a scrubbing brush. Facing the entrance was the usual wooden couch of honour, while black-lacquered chairs were arranged stiffly against the wooden walls, on which hung some torn scrolls, a kitchen clock, and a feather brush. On the table stood a gramophone. One side of the room was open to the courtyard, on the opposite side of which were the stables where stood the Sawbwa's white ponies. The whole palace was full of people, who pressed into the courtyard to gaze at us and stood about, spitting, chewing, and smoking.

The Sawbwa was most anxious that we should photograph the many ladies of his family, but they took an interminable time to titivate and get ready. For two long hours we sat in the reception room sipping tea, chewing melon seeds, nibbling biscuits, while the gramophone grated out some Burmese or Chinese "melody", or a song by Harry Lauder. We longed for the peace and comfort of the camp, but we wanted the photographs even more.

At last the ladies were ready, and grouped themselves



SHAN PRINCESSES IN BRIDAL ARRAY

in rows to be photographed. They wore long black skirts trimmed with bands of black velvet, white coats, and black turbans, and each girl had a posy of flowers stuck over the ear. Two of the princesses, however, the Sawbwa's daughter and niece, had put on their gay bridal robes and were loaded down with jewels and gold. They loved being photographed and had no illusions about losing their souls. They eagerly clamoured for pictures, which they expected us to produce then and there. At last we had photographed them all and were making ready to depart when the Sawbwa blew a whistle and up rushed his bodyguard in their grey cotton uniforms. He wanted his portrait taken standing in their midst.

It was with deep regret that we left our camp and journeyed on to Lasa. This "city" was smaller, and the *haw* poorer and dirtier. The only suitable spot to camp was in the courtyard of a Buddhist temple. The old priest welcomed us warmly at the gate and had no objection to us pitching our tents there. He even allowed our servants to sleep in the monastery, for it apparently mattered nothing to him that they were Mohammedans and that none of our caravan was of his faith. Their cooking and eating, talking and smoking would not defile the temple or interrupt his devotions.

The Achangs of Lasa wear a distinctive garb, which we wanted to examine and photograph. The Sawbwa, a pleasant and obliging young man, promised to collect some women in full dress after lunch. At the agreed hour we returned to the *haw* and were offered seats and refreshments while the women got ready. For an hour we sat there sipping tea and yawning. A servant arrived and spoke to the Sawbwa.

"The girls are all out working in the fields," said the Sawbwa to us in Chinese. "I sent a messenger to bring them in and they will be here in a few minutes."

Another long wait ensued. The Shan Sawbwas and their

families, even many of their numerous retainers, have nothing to do, and enjoy doing nothing; they have no books or newspapers to read, no shops to visit, no entertainments save a religious festival or a strolling theatrical company. They could never understand why we should be in a hurry; there was plenty of time ahead. Life as we lived it was beyond their conception. Our visit was a gala day for them, and they would talk about it for weeks and months after.

Finally, when our patience was nearly exhausted, three unmarried girls arrived. Their short black skirts and their black coats were trimmed with strips of red and gold brocade. They wore quantities of silver jewellery, bracelets and brooches, earrings and chatelaines. Over the ear was stuck a yellow marigold. Their turbans were enormous, like those of the half-breeds of Husa but without the silver ornaments.

They were shy and nervous, as they feared the power of the lens. Only the threats and persuasion of the Sawbwa forced them to pose for us, but when the ordeal was over and no dire disaster had befallen them they were women again—they wanted copies of the photographs for their parents, for themselves, for their sweethearts.

But there was still no sign of the married women, and even the Sawbwa began to get impatient. At last one timid woman did appear. She still wore her working dress, plain skirt and bodice without the strips of red brocade. But her turban was wonderful; it was double and shaped like a huge cubist cottage-loaf turned upside down on her head. There was a framework of bamboo on which the blue cotton was carefully wound in tiny knife pleats. No wonder she had taken such hours to appear, for to bind such a turban must be as lengthy a proceeding as was dressing the hair of Madame Pompadour. How pleased we were to be able to examine the turban, to photograph it and its wearer!

As the sun was setting we strolled away from the houses

up the grassy slopes behind the little town. At the edge of a wood was a tiny well, with little flags fluttering beside it, and rice and fruit placed there for the spirit of the stream. Beneath a large fig tree was an altar on which burned sticks of incense. A peculiar feeling of awe crept over us. We were alone, but all around us were spirits, who dwelt in the trees and woods, the rocks and streams, the wells and bridges. The valley was enchanted.

Some deep resounding notes broke the silence. Louder and louder grew the sound, rising and falling in a gigantic tremolo which echoed through the valley and ended in a shrill wail. It was the Sawbwa's guard heralding the sunset on their long brass horns.

Two wild-looking men, Kachins, appeared along the path. Tattered rags barely hid their lithe brown bodies, and long swords in wooden scabbards hung from their shoulders. To my greeting they replied with a broad smile, showing their betel-blackened teeth. They were returning from market, they said, to their homes high up on the mountains. We passed on, but turned to see them still standing in the pathway gazing after us. Several times they held up both their hands beside their faces in salutation. It was the border land's farewell.

