



R O N A L D    K A U L B A C K

S A L W E E N

L O N D O N  
H O D D E R    A N D    S T O U G H T O N

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TO  
H. A. K.





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འཕགས་སྤེ་པོ།

*Virudhaka, one of the four guardian Kings, guardian of the South*

## CHAPTER ONE

“ Let us probe the silent places, let us seek what luck betide us ;  
Let us journey to a lonely land I know.  
There’s a whisper on the night-wind, there’s a star agleam to guide us,  
And the wild is calling, calling . . . . . let us go.”

Robert W. Service : *Songs of a Sourdough.*

IN my extreme youth, and given the time and place, I could frequently be found with my brother engaged in the creation of streams and sluices, with now and again a canal as a kind of second-rate after-thought ; so that when I was in Tibet with Kingdon Ward during 1933, and not very far from five of the biggest rivers in Asia, it was natural that my thoughts should leap to one of these as a possible goal for a future journey. Of them all, the Salween seemed the most promising, for the Brahmaputra and Irrawaddy had

already been done, as had most of the Yangtse ; and to reach the Mekong by the shortest route would have meant crossing the Salween in any case. Furthermore (and it was this which really decided me), although the source of each of them is in Tibet, only that of the Salween was still unknown. As time went on one or two details were added, and when we left England it was with the intention of exploring the valley of the Ngagong Chu (a large tributary of the Brahmaputra) and the range forming the south side of it ; as much as we could of the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed ; and the upper part of the Salween itself, with the source as our final objective. In our spare time we were to collect reptiles, insects, and flowers for the British Museum of Natural History, and, as a matter of fact, we were supposed to be gathering in small mammals as well ; but since at the end of two years we had nothing to show for our pains apart from a stoat, a squirrel, and a diminutive field-mouse, the less said about that the better. To do ourselves justice, this was not so much due to our own inefficiency as to the strong prejudice of the Tibetans against taking any life of a high order in the neighbourhood of a holy place ; and, as we were hardly ever out of range of some monastery, mammal collecting rather went by the board.

The expedition began life with two tremendous strokes of good fortune. The first of these was when John Hanbury-Tracy enrolled himself as Chief-of-Staff, for from beginning to end he was an ideal companion, always ready for more than his fair share of work (or, what is much harder, to sit down and do nothing if the occasion demanded), and unfailingly even-tempered. And the second was when Lewa

and Nyima Töndrup, with a third called Nyima Dorje, were engaged to go with us by Mrs. H. P. V. Townend, of the Himalayan Club. We were more than grateful to her for all the trouble she took in servant-hunting on our behalf, and Lewa and Nyima Töndrup in particular were treasures. Nyima Dorje too did a very good best for nearly a year, but he is better fitted for comparatively short expeditions, and at the end of that time his longing for home began seriously to interfere with his work, and he gave notice. Lewa, a Sherpa from north-east Nepal, was my personal servant, and in charge of the other two, the baggage and the coolies. He had been four times on Everest ; on many of the other important peaks in the Himalaya including Kangchenjunga and Nanga Parbat ; and he was first to reach the top of Kamet with Frank Smythe ; losing all ten of his toes as a result through frost-bite. He was a remarkable man, with a strength of character (not to mention a strength of arm) sufficient to persuade all who came under him that his word was law ; and we were very fond of him. Nyima Töndrup, a Tibetan, “ did ” for John, and was, besides that, the general factotum who could be relied upon to do almost anything at a pinch. He had been Lewa’s shadow for a number of years in the Himalaya, and was happy with him, for the one was as delighted to give orders as the other to receive them. He had a round face, a stout figure, a delightful smile, and a most attractive personality. Nyima Dorje, also a Sherpa, was small, slim and our cook. Previously a coolie like Nyima Töndrup, he had been promoted to the rank of assistant cook on both Everest and Nanga Parbat, and that had given him his training. He was a cheerful teetotaller, with



specialities of omelettes and highly-flavoured cakes. We had only three days in Calcutta in which to do the dozens of last-minute jobs which always crop up, and we were shown so much hospitality and given such a wonderfully good time, that if Mrs. Townend (who is incidentally my aunt) had not added to her kindness by putting us up and doing every possible thing to assist, I believe we should have missed the boat to Rangoon. As it was, she took most of the labour on her own capable shoulders up to the very last minute before sailing, and it was entirely owing to her powers of persuasion that we did not have to leave Nyima Dorje behind on the quay on account of a heat-rash which a perspiring doctor insisted was highly contagious. Excitement reigned supreme until he was hurried hastily on board, to have the complaint cured by sea breezes or sea sickness, as the case might be.

We reached Myitkyina,\* the railhead in Upper Burma, on April the 4th, 1935, after two very sticky days in the train. There are about a dozen English people in Myitkyina, and, of course, a club ; a small native town with a few shops ; a force of Military Police, a polo ground, and the silent Irrawaddy. It was cheering to find that J. K. Stanford, the Deputy Commissioner, and Mrs. Stanford were still there. They were old friends from the time when I had come down that way from Tibet ; and for a week they helped us through an ordeal of packing, sorting, weighing, and calculating, by ministering to our comforts, arranging for the mules, and rescuing us at intervals from the welter of bales and boxes which filled the Circuit House. On one historic afternoon they

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\* Pronounced Mitchinar.

prevailed upon us to take time off for a golf match. We were none of us champions, our advance being slow rather than sure, but John and I had been abstainers from the game for about seven years, and were in very good form. We hit the ball nearly every time (our rallies back and forth over the greens were a feature of the match), and won by a narrow margin as the sun went down.

At last everything was ready, and we could breathe again. Fan Li San, the chief merchant, was providing twenty-six mules to go up as far as Fort Hertz, where we would have to engage coolies, and on April the 9th these set off with five Chinese muleteers and our three servants. We left them to their own devices for a couple of days, while we went down to look at the Pidaung Game Sanctuary a few miles south of Myitkyina. With about two hundred and sixty square miles, this sanctuary is much too small, but even so it is by far the largest in Burma, and it contains a fair selection of most of the important game animals. We had one interesting afternoon there, during which we saw a small herd of *saing*, and a few sambur, barking deer, and pea-fowl, but the country was very dry and the bison and other game had moved elsewhere till the rains broke. On April the 11th, we had lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Stanford for the last time; loaded ourselves and our bedding into an aged Chevrolet with a small and pessimistic driver, and set off after our caravan to a loud clattering as of potsherds from the engine. The most touching farewell came from Heather, the spaniel, who was appallingly sick as we drove away.

The senility of the car was such that, although we cannot have started later than about three o'clock

in the afternoon, it was past seven by the time we had covered the thirty-three miles to Weshi, where we caught up the mules ; but it was the next morning, when we discovered that the entire funds of the expedition had been left behind in a hat-box and that only the Chevrolet stood between us and penury, that the full horror of that ancient automobile really came home to us. As luck would have it, our fears were unfounded, for late that very night it crept up with us again at Nsop Zup, eight miles further on, and a triumphant policeman handed over the cash with a sigh of relief.

Fort Hertz is two hundred and twenty miles north of Myitkyina, or twenty marches over a very good road—good enough to take light cars in the dry season for the first hundred and thirty-four miles to Sumprabum. The one available car was the Chevrolet, however, which would never have succeeded in taking us and our baggage, even in relays, as far as that ; and although a fortnight later this would have been most annoying (as we should then have stood a very poor chance of passing through the jungle in the Tamai Valley before the monsoon broke), as it was we could take our time on foot and be happy. After all, the faster one travels the less one sees, and it is only when living and moving at the slowest rate that one can get real enjoyment out of a journey.

For the whole of the way up to Fort Hertz, the path runs over low rounded hills, covered with forest and cut by streams and rivers. It is luxurious travel, for the marches have been arranged for the sake of the mules or bullocks which use the road. One day is about fourteen miles and the next no more than eight, so that in the cold weather they can be doubled quite

easily, and in the hot the animals have a slack time every other day. At the end of each march is a small palace of a rest-house, usually built on a hill where it catches the breeze, and containing two bedrooms (each with a wash-room attached), a dining room, a verandah, and several chairs and tables ; besides an astounding collection of old novels and magazines, some of them dating from 1912, and all of them well worth reading.

Doubtless to a casual observer, most of those marches would have seemed very much alike, but to us each was a delight. True, every day began in the same way, when at five-thirty an enormous copper alarm clock went off beside my bed with a noise like a dozen telephones in action. This was enough to wake the servants as well, and a fire was lit. Nyima Dorje hastily boiled some water, and presently Lewa and Nyima Töndrup hurried along, one to my room and one to John's, with a huge cup of tea apiece and a beaming grin. Then a wash and a shave, and while we were having our breakfast of chicken and eggs, or eggs and fried potatoes, our bedding was packed up. By half-past seven the last of the mules had left, with the servants in close attendance, and then John and I would sit on the verandah reading until perhaps ten o'clock, when it was time to start after the baggage.

All that was pure routine, and it was not until we were out of the bungalow that life began to be interesting. There are a number of little things which come back to me at once. One is the monitor lizard, thirty inches long, which we saw on a sandbank by the river. He fixed us with a look of dark suspicion, but seemed able to cope with the situation until the mules came round a bend in the path. This was too

much for him and he cantered off with an amazing see-saw action and frightful effort to the edge of a rock and, presumably, into the water. We spent some minutes hunting for him, but without success. Then there were black and white hornbills with huge yellow beaks which flapped over from time to time, singularly unsteady in the air and inclined to sink by the head. There were jungle-fowl like brilliant barnyard chickens ; orange-bellied squirrels scampering along fallen tree-trunks ; a barking deer swimming a stream ; and a pathetic beetle, like a minute Sisyphus, patiently rolling a ball of dung twice as big as himself up a steep slope. Four times did his burden take charge and career downhill, and four times did he begin again from the bottom. Our sympathy went out to him, but we could not stop.

Altogether there was plenty to see, and hardly a march went by without some small excitement or other, even if it was only meeting with other travellers and having a chat with them. There was a fair amount of traffic ; small bands of Kachins on the way to a near-by village, perhaps for a sacrifice ; bullock carts from Sumprabum, or caravans of mules from Fort Hertz ; and sometimes a few Gurkhas from the Military Police going to spend their leave in Myitkyina and taking their wives with them. Lewa's greatest thrill came one evening when, having borrowed my gun to shoot green pigeon in the forest, he walked into a panther. He immediately let fly with No. 6 shot (fortunately missing the beast), and came home very disappointed, convinced that it had been the largest leopard ever seen.

The tumult of our convoy could be heard from a great distance, for almost without a pause the mule-



teers exhorted their beasts with loud falsetto shrieks and the banging of a gong ; and in their spare moments they sang with shrill quavering voices. This was not all due to high spirits on the part of the Chinese, but, oddly enough, because the din keeps the mules in a placid frame of mind and induces them to walk peacefully along the road. If, on the other hand, the shouting and banging stop for more than a minute or two at a time, the mules are persuaded that the march has come to an end. They stop, lie down, roll on their loads, or wander over the country, and the confusion is tremendous. In Tibet there is the same cheerful custom with yaks as well. Our muleteers were aided and abetted, on most days, by troops of invisible gibbons which kept pace with the baggage, hooting and yelling in the forest on both sides of the path ; and the drumming of innumerable woodpeckers on the trees, and especially on the bamboos, sounded like not-too-distant machine guns in full blast, so that the "deathly hush of the jungle" was strangely lacking.

A week after leaving Myitkyina, I strained a tendon in the back of my heel, which made walking very painful for a while, in spite of yards of elastic bandage. John gave me a drastic course of massage after every march, and Lewa, not to be outdone, brought bucket after bucket of cold water to stand my foot in, with such good effect that in seven or eight days I was nearly fit again. Lewa's solicitude was one of the most extraordinary things about him. He was always a complete tyrant to coolies and villagers, and, with a mind as hard as his body, he would roar with delighted laughter at any point in his stories where someone was killed or hurt ; yet, for the whole of those

two years he cherished me as his one ewe lamb, with a selfless devotion which would have done credit to a saint ; and he would have been the same to anyone else whose servant he was. That Nyima Töndrup should have looked after John as carefully as he did is not astounding in the least, for his is a doglike mind which finds its best outlet in devoted service ; but Lewa has two quite distinct sides to his character, which together make him the finest servant on a journey of this kind that it would be possible to imagine. On the one hand he is vain, swaggering, boastful, and callous ; and, on the other, inordinately faithful, brave, hard-working, honest, and frank—a man in a million.

On April the 25th, we reached Masum Zup, where I had spent ten days in 1933 wondering if Brooks Carrington had pneumonia, and if so what were his chances of pulling through. There was no work for us to do in Burma in the way of survey or exploration, but we had been busily collecting insects on the road up from Myitkyina, and had just started on reptiles. We had not yet begun to bother about flowers, because Kingdon Ward and other botanists have done Upper Burma so thoroughly that it would have been a mere waste of time. Beetles and other hard-bodied insects, such as grasshoppers and scorpions, are packed in small boxes of carbolized sawdust ; butterflies are folded flat, and kept in triangular envelopes ; and flies are spread out carefully on trays of thin crêpe-paper, perhaps thirty trays in a cardboard box. When one is constantly on the march in a damp country it is very difficult to find time to dry the insects properly before finally packing them away ; and at Masum Zup we brought out what we had

already got for inspection and airing. All went well until we lifted up the fly-box, when, to our horror, we saw an ant. We opened it up in a frenzy of haste, and sprayed Flit everywhere, but it was too late. Small red ants were there in scores, and out of nearly two hundred specimens we saved only twenty-four. The rest were chewed to dust. This was very disheartening, but things might have been far worse. The beetles and butterflies were intact, and in any case the chances of finding new, or even rare, insects in that part of Burma were so remote as to be almost negligible.

None the less we were feeling rather depressed when we were suddenly cheered by sounds of merriment coming from outside. Lewa had found a friend in the shape of the caretaker of the bungalow—a Gurkha, as nearly all of them are in Upper Burma—and together they were celebrating the meeting. We called them in, and while Lewa squatted on the floor, softly beating a Nepali tomtom (or dambu), the caretaker let himself go in a series of graceful, stylized little dances with much solemn twirling and clapping of hands. We found this soothing to watch and were presently in a normally sanguine frame of mind again. In the middle of the performance in came an old Gurkha with long drooping moustaches and an air of great dignity. He came to attention and saluted, and I suddenly recognized him as the man who had revived me with eggs and bananas when I arrived at Fort Hertz from the north, footsore and weary, and with no coolies. He was delighted that I remembered him, and said that now all would be easy, for he spoke the local dialects like a native, and would come with us as an interpreter. He had been my host,

if only for an hour, the last time I had seen him, and it was sad to disappoint him, but we were forced to say that we had already arranged for an interpreter to go with us as far as the Tibetan frontier, beyond which we knew a great deal more of the language than he did. His anxiety to come with us was intense. He wanted no pay, he said, and he was a hard worker who would be more than worth his food. All he desired was to go into Tibet to see the country.

He continued to plead most earnestly to be allowed to come with us, offering one inducement after another and throwing his daughter into the balance without compunction. Finally, as a last desperate effort, he said he would add the three hundred rupees he had saved to the funds of the expedition if we would only take him along. It was quite impossible, of course. He was far too old for one thing, and sorry though we were for him, there was no denying the fact that he talked incessantly and would have driven us all into a frenzy. And had he been young and suitable in other ways, as Lewa said later on, "The work that is done well by three men will be done ill by four."

From Masum Zup nearly as far as the frontier we were plagued by horseflies of two kinds. The less vicious is a rather nondescript brownish fly about half an inch long, which looks harmless and confiding. The other, a real devil, is the same length, but with a fat, striped, vicious-looking body, and huge green eyes. Both of them can bite easily and very painfully through a shirt, on which you cannot feel them settle, and they are very trying to the temper; but they do at least stay put while in action, until you can kill them, and it gives one a gloomy sort of satisfaction to know that the biter has been very thoroughly bit.

It may be that the weather had had something to do with their scarcity before this, for up till now it had been remarkably cool for that time of year, and very little hotter than a heat wave in England. The day we left Masum Zup, however, it was exactly like being in a greenhouse for tropical plants. There was the same close smell of vegetation and stagnant water ; the same damp oppressive heat ; the same utter lack of movement in the air. Even the birds and animals seemed to find it rather too warm for comfort, and, apart from the insects, the only creatures which were really enjoying life were lizards, of which large numbers were basking in the sun. Insects of all kinds were very active, and thousands of cicadas on the trees kept up a continuous noise like so many knife-grinders.

By now, my leg was much better, and on April the 27th, John and I hurried over the twelve and a half miles from Hkamho to Nawng Hkai, going as fast as we could in order to have time to fish there in the afternoon. To my mind the mahseer-fishing just below Nawng Hkai is the finest in Burma, even though there may be a few individually bigger fish at the well-known confluence above Myitkyina. Be that as it may, we were anxious to try our luck, and we set off some time before the mules were ready. After about two miles we turned a corner into a positive fog of corruption and flies. John has a cast-iron stomach, but I was as near to being sick as I could be and still hold my own. I thought disconsolately that there must be a very dead cow somewhere close at hand, and was for pushing through to clearer air at all costs when he called me back. By the path was a little bamboo shelter, put up by a party of Kachins who had



camped there fairly recently, and John said the flies were thickest in the hut. We approached from windward, and there in the shadow was the body of a man, lying stretched out on his back with hands clenched on his chest, and his long black hair flowing behind him on the ground. He was not a pretty sight, for the flies had been busy for two very hot days, but we investigated as well as we could to see if there was any sign of murder. We found none, and it seemed quite probable that he had died a more or less natural death, perhaps from fever. There was nothing else we could do and we hastened away.

I had had a feeling that it was rash to hurry so much, and after eleven miles the tendon gave way again, so that I finished the march supported half on a stick and half on John's shoulder. That put fishing out of the question for me, but he went off and even though it was a bad day, with very little water and that gin-clear, he managed to bring back a seven-pounder which did excellently for breakfast.

From Nawng Hkai we made a march of thirteen miles to Fort Hertz, over a grassy plain with forest all round, and fringed on the north by a semi-circle of mountains, some of which were still snow-capped. It was a hot day and the road was dusty and hideously flat, stretching on interminably with nothing to break the dullness. By the time we arrived we had both developed powerful thirsts, but luck was with us when, without wasting time, we went straight round to pay our respects to Captain A. J. Power, the Assistant Commandant. He made us free of his beer at once, for which kind deed, if he has his deserts, he will doubtless find that he has been awarded treasure in Heaven. The Assistant Superintendent was away.

Fort Hertz is the most northerly outpost in Burma. with a garrison of about seventy Military Police, mostly Gurkhas. Its name is misleading, as there is nothing approaching a fort in the place, which consists only of three houses for the Assistant Superintendent, the Assistant Commandant, and the doctor ; an excellent little hospital ; huts for the Military Police, clerks, and sub-assistant surgeons ; a dak bungalow, a Court House, a Post Office, and two or three small villages near-by with a permanent population of Shans and Kachins. Although the mail-bullocks arrive once a week from Myitkyina with letters, papers, and small parcels, the delivery of heavy goods is a yearly event which takes place about the middle of November. In other words, you must order a year's supply of stores at once (everything except meat, vegetables, and soda-water), and woe betide the man who under-estimates his capacity. Then shall be the wailing and gnashing of teeth. This little matter of the stores is undoubtedly a handicap, but it is great compensation that the fishing and shooting are both superb.

There was a lot of work to be done in Fort Hertz, more especially as we were only waiting there one day. The mules were paid off, and arrangements made for coolies to go as far as Nogmung, four days' journey to the north. We had to change the whole of our money into silver rupees (which, like Chinese dollars, are current all over Tibet), and pack these in boxes of two thousand, carefully counted. We had to buy stores of rice, flour, potatoes, onions, and dal, as there are practically no supplies to be had between Fort Hertz and Shikathang, the first village in Tibet ; and John, by skilful repacking, was able to dispense with

one or two of the stores boxes altogether. The evening before we left, Captain Power and Rai Bahadur Dr. Nihal Chand, who had just come in from a tour, had dinner with us. I knew the doctor well, and would have been very upset if we had been obliged to go before he arrived back. He was kind enough to run over the list of medicines and instruments we were taking with us (a hundred and eighty pounds weight), and he supplied us with several drugs we had not brought, but which might be useful. Nyima Dorje excelled himself over this meal. We had lentil soup, sardine fish-cakes, roast chicken with fried potatoes and beans, hot sandwich cake, and lukewarm melon.

We left Fort Hertz the following morning, April the 30th, with a mixed bunch of Kachins, Khanungs, and one Lissu from the Chinese border : sixty-five of them, each carrying about sixty pounds of baggage on his back, hanging partly from a head-strap of plaited bamboo and partly from a wooden yoke on the shoulders and neck. Upper Burma is the one district where I have seen such yokes used by coolies. Most of the hill tribes in India and beyond use the head-strap alone, while the Tibetans usually have a thong round each shoulder. In addition to the coolies, we took with us an escort of two civil (as opposed to military) policemen, to keep an eye on the bullion. They were quite unnecessary as watch-dogs, for the Khanungs in the Nam Tamai area are as honest as they are mild, but we felt they would be useful for bringing back any letters we might write before we reached the frontier, and they gave a certain air of distinction to our progress. They were both Kachins, with a uniform which began with grubby white shirts,

khaki shorts, and gym shoes ; and finished with carbines, umbrellas, and an unshakable determination to salute at every opportunity. They brought the party up to a total of seventy-two, and this must be approaching the maximum which could be taken with any ease on this route. Coolies are changed four times between Fort Hertz and Shikathang, and although, at the first three of these places, by sending word ahead we had no trouble in obtaining the numbers we wanted, with a larger expedition there would, I think, be very considerable difficulties over transport.

It is four stages from Fort Hertz to Nogmung, on the banks of the Tisang River, and nearly all through forest. Gibbons, langurs, and macaques kept pace with us ; crossed backwards and forwards in the branches over the path a little way in front of the procession ; or sat and made faces. We saw many jungle-fowl, and we were beginning to find a few leeches, though the track was so good and wide (about three yards across), that we rarely brushed against the grass and bushes at the sides, and so were not greatly worried by them. The real pests were the horseflies (which were as bad as ever), blister-flies and bees. Blister-flies are perhaps an eighth of an inch long, with a marked taste for human blood. Their bites do not hurt much at the time, and often not enough to be noticed, but they raise small blood blisters which irritate desperately, and two or three dozen of them can be very trying indeed. The bees were even more of a nuisance, for they lusted after the salt in our sweat, and in their search for it would either stray into our shirts or wander up our shorts, licking greedily and stinging if we showed signs of

resentment. John and I were always several hours in advance of the coolies by the end of the march, and there was generally nothing much to do but to sit in the rest-house waiting for our boxes to arrive. It was the horseflies which were most active on the road, but in the huts the bees and blister-flies came into their own, and just sitting inactive on the floor laid us very open to attack. So much so, that heat or no heat, we had to build a smoky fire as soon as we arrived, and kipper ourselves until we could put on our pyjamas and defy the enemy.

The rest-houses on this part of our route were a sad come-down after those glorious erections on the Fort Hertz-Myitkyina road. They were small and primitive, with one bed-sitting room, a tiny wash room at the back, a verandah, and no furniture of any kind, except perhaps a string bedstead ; and, instead of the imposing flight of stairs we had grown to expect, there was nothing but a paltry notched log leading up to our abode. Baths, as such, were a thing of the past, and washing was reduced to piece-work, never very satisfactory, and always highly uncomfortable once we ventured below neck-level. The only reason there are any rest-houses there at all is that once a year the Assistant Superintendent goes that way on a tour of inspection, and with unlimited bamboo in the jungle, the houses are so cheap to build and so easy to keep up, that it is worth having them made, even though they are used so seldom.

The first march from Fort Hertz was of eleven miles over the plain to Hkangkiu, with pouring rain the whole way, and at the finish we crossed the Mali Hka in a dug-out canoe thirty feet long. The river was about fifty yards wide, but luckily there was very

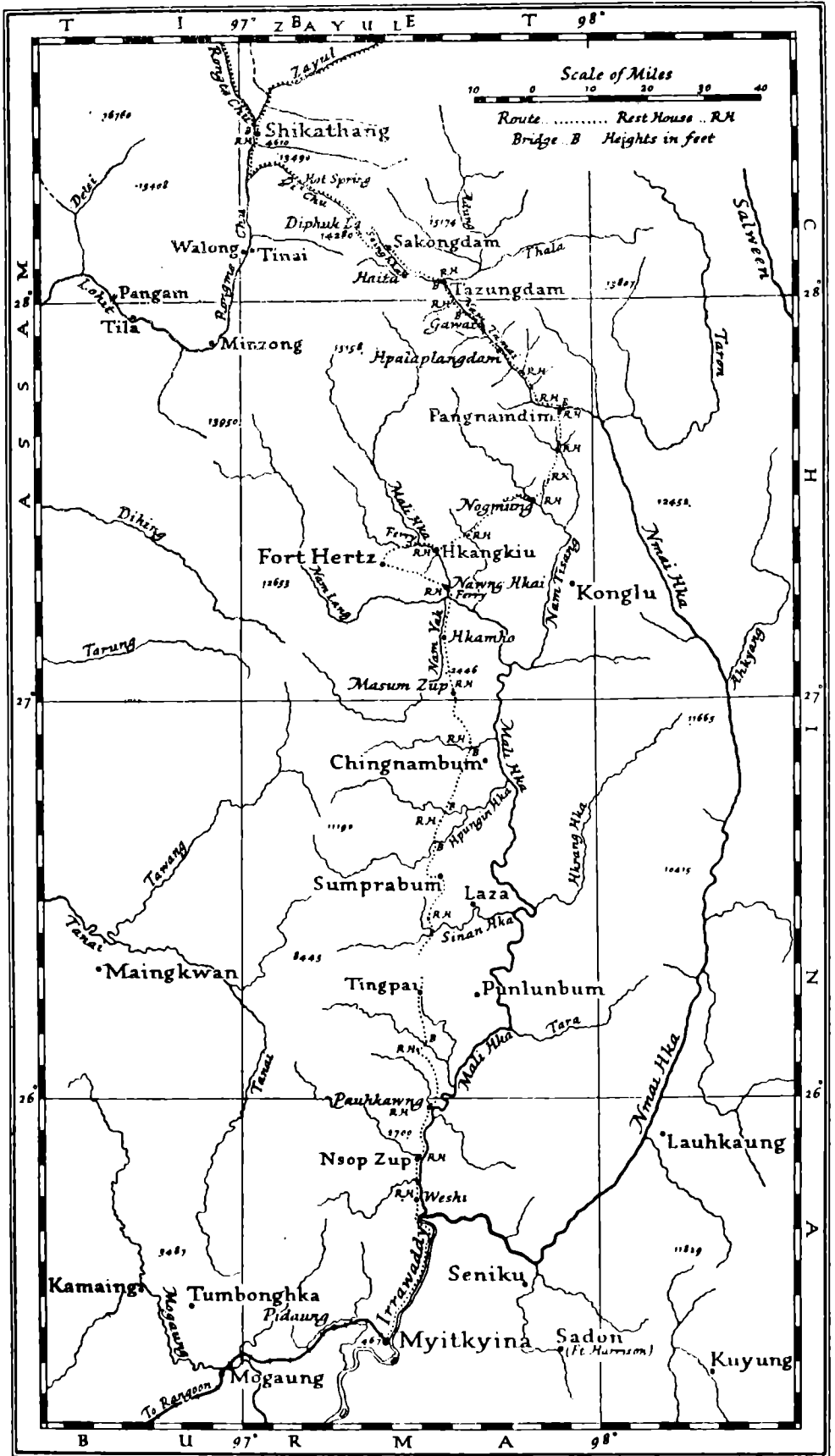
little current, as the two ferrymen had nothing but a half-bamboo each to use as a paddle, and the canoe was heavy. Our bungalow was in the middle of a small scattered village of four or five thatched bamboo huts. We arrived apparently well ahead of schedule, for when we climbed in we found that the place was still being used as a drying house for the local tobacco crop, which both looked and smelt vaguely like rotting cabbage. Even when we had had it cleared out a rich aroma hung around for a long time, quite unlike the usual smell of tobacco. Notwithstanding, we bought some of the finished crop before we left, and to our surprise found that it made quite a good smoke, the one drawback being that the pipe had to be cleaned out after every filling, and a heavy deposit of tar cleared away.

We now began serious reptile-collecting, and it was Lewa who was the first to bring in a snake ; a young pit-viper, and not very exciting, but a good start. I congratulated him on the capture, and he replied that he knew it would not bite him, because it had crossed his path from the right. If it had come from the other side it would have been a different matter, and a sure sign that the serpent was evilly inclined. Another Nepali theory to which the servants clung—until we disproved it, by demonstration, for the good of their souls—is that a snake “stings” with its forked tongue, and rubs in poison from its eyes. Once the natives realized that lizards and snakes were a sure source of income to them, they became keen collectors themselves and brought in specimens nearly every day, alive though generally much disgruntled. There are no poisonous lizards in Asia, so these could all be captured by hand, but the

snakes had to be caught round the neck with a running noose of bamboo on the end of a stick. Unfortunately it was still rather early in the year for snakes (the best time is during and just after the monsoon) ; but, if there was no great variety to be seen, many of those we found did their best to make up for this by being very rare in collections.

We reached Nogmung on May the 3rd, and paid off our first batch of coolies, most of whom turned straight back to Fort Hertz. Nogmung is a large village with a total population of about a hundred, but half the men were up in the hills where they were grazing the cattle and goats on account of the flies, and we had to wait there for one day before enough coolies could be found to take us the four stages to Pangnamdim. We enjoyed our short stay. The fifteen or twenty thatched huts are built on piles close to the left bank of the Nam Tisang, which flows softly by as calm and quiet as a lake ; and all day long the damp sandy bank was covered with hundreds of lovely butterflies. I cut John's hair in the afternoon, as close to his head as I could, but hairdressing is an art I have never mastered. I began with an old pair of clippers (the same with which Brooks Carrington had mutilated me in 1933), and after a brief trial of these John declared violently that it would have to be scissors or nothing. The result was much the same, if rather more moth-eaten in appearance, and combined with five days' growth of bristle to make him look positively criminal. The latter crop was destined to become what was probably the finest beard ever seen in Tibet, but at this time it showed little promise of beauty to be.

As far as Nogmung the coolies had been distress-



The route from Myitkyina to Shikathang.





ingly slow, and by the end of twelve miles John and I had invariably been four hours ahead of them at least. On the way to Pangnamdim, however, the speed of the new batch was quite extraordinary, and at the finish of the first march, on May the 5th, we were astounded to see them straggling in only about an hour behind us. The person who was most delighted by this sudden change for the better was Lewa, who always remained at the tail of the column in Burma (having a rooted distrust of coolies' honesty), and who had been driven nearly frantic with impatience since Fort Hertz. That day we passed the fresh grave of a Khanung hunter by the side of the path, roughly fenced in with trellis work and covered with a little roof. At one side a dozen monkey skulls and one of a jungle pig were slung from a pole, and at the other, the melancholy body of a fowl waved and twisted in the breeze from the top of a long bamboo.

The next day brought us to Gole Tutap, beyond the first of the three ridges which lie between Nongmung and the Nam Tamai. There was a steep climb of rather more than a thousand feet, followed by an equally abrupt descent of nearly twice that distance to the hut. We sat in a small clearing at the top of the climb, and smoked a cigarette each, looking out to the east over five distinct ridges, each higher than the last, and four of them densely wooded. The fifth, which was bare and sprinkled with snow, must have been the Taron-Salween Divide. In the centre of the picture was a saddle between two hills, with a bank of clouds pouring over it like a waterfall, and, in a deep valley far below, one solitary hut, the very essence of loneliness. The only sounds were the voice of a bird monotonously calling behind us and the faint rustle of the

wind in the branches ; but presently the shouts and laughter of the coolies disturbed us, and we turned down the hill.

Gole Tutap is in a narrow valley at the junction of three streams. The rest-house is a mile or more from the village and would be most attractive if it were not in a ghastly state of decay. That is the worst of huts built on poles. When they are in good condition they are very comfortable and dry, but once the floor has become rotten there is much further to fall than there would be otherwise. As a matter of fact, the only one of us actually to crash through was Nyima Töndrup, who vanished from sight with magical speed the moment he climbed inside ; but we all had to walk delicately, wondering, like guests of the Borgias, if the next step would see the last of us. We spent a whole day in that treacherous hovel, because the evening we arrived it began to rain in torrents, and by the time we were due to start the steep path over the next ridge was too slippery for loaded men.

Two days later, on May the 9th, we dropped three thousand feet from the top of the last ridge to the Nam Tamai, and crossed the river (a torrent of pale green and white snow-water) by a superb cane suspension bridge, sixty yards long. When I had last seen it the main supports had been a pair of old steel cables, but these had either broken or been put to better use by the local Khanungs, and now the whole thing was cane from end to end, a first-class piece of work, and quite strong enough to bear animals. We stopped the night in a small Rest House a couple of hundred yards from the bridge, and about half a mile from the village of Pangnamdim,

which is built up on the side of the valley. Again we changed coolies, but the new ones were ready and waiting and there was no delay. From Myitkyina onwards we had been very gradually acclimatized to the change from luxury to the simple life. On the first stretch of the road we had slept in mansions, with fresh meat and vegetables whenever we wanted them ; between Fort Hertz and Pangnamdim the houses had been a good deal less pretentious, and supplies limited to a few chickens and eggs ; while in the Nam Tamai Valley we were almost entirely reduced to living on our stores, and our habitations had sunk very low. In fact there was now nothing to them but one small room which became steadily smaller as we pushed up the valley ; until, having shrunk till there was hardly space for the two of us to lie down at the same time, it vanished away altogether, and we were reduced to working in tents—far less convenient than even the tiniest and most poky of rooms.

The headman of Pangnamdim, who had a series of huge sores on his legs, brought us a present of seven eggs and a basket of finely plaited bamboo, which we countered with a knife and one rupee. The latter was enough to pay his year's hut-tax, and when we set to work to deal with the ulcers on his legs he was speechless with gratitude. He showed such faith in our medical powers that he came with us for the next six marches, and was very much better when he finally left us.

It had been steamily hot all day, and after dinner a heavy rainstorm began, swishing down on the trees and long grass, and drumming on the banana leaves. The night was full of fireflies like small green comets ;

frogs were croaking all around ; we were only eleven stages south of Tibet, with a straight run up the valley to the pass ; and altogether life was quite perfect.



འཇམ་ཐེན་ལྷ་ས།

*Vaishravana, guardian of the North*

## CHAPTER TWO

“ There is frequently more pleasure in giving a thing than in receiving it. This applies more especially to Medicine, Advice, and Kicks.”

*Punch. June 9th, 1849.*

THE Nam Tamai Valley has very steep sides running straight down to the river, and for the greater part of its length these are densely forested from top to bottom—so densely that, once off a track or game path, it is hardly possible to force one’s way through. There is a good road above Pangnamdim, four or five feet wide, which climbs up and down over spurs

and shoulders, and through alternate stretches of jungle and cleared ground planted with maize, mountain rice, tobacco, or buckwheat. All these clearings are somewhere near villages, but we saw remarkably few settlements, on the whole, for most of them are built well away from the path, on ridges buried in the jungle, in memory of the bands of slavers who used to come over every winter from China and Tibet, and who perhaps still do so occasionally. It was very muggy and close in the mornings before the sun came out, and we poured with sweat without being especially hot; but when the sun appeared over the top of the valley, and the entire place became filled with a haze of steam, we began to drip in real earnest. A stinging trickle of perspiration ran down into our eyes every minute or so, blinding us for a few seconds and recurring with maddening regularity like the Chinese torture of the water-drops.

We met a few Darus on our way up—queer, stunted, simian beings from the headwaters of the Adung, with scarcely any clothes, an unsavoury smell, and great mops of curly black hair. Several of them were carrying seven-foot spears, and, like all the other tribes in this corner of Asia, they had heavy, square-tipped chopping-knives, or daos, at their waists. These Darus were always a little shy at first, but friendly and inquisitive, and ready to burst into strident cackles of delighted laughter at the least excuse. A day or two after leaving Pangnamdim, Lewa handed a kerosine tin to one of three to fetch water for our dinner. When he found that it rang if beaten, he trotted off as happy as could be, banging lustily and looking back with triumph at his less

fortunate brethren, who, tinless, were left behind.

At this time, John and I went through a phase of acute anxiety about the amount of baggage we had with us, and the consequent cost of transport, which looked as though it were going to swallow the whole of our funds in less than a year. Apart from our personal belongings, there was little we could cut down, but we weeded out our clothes with such ruthlessness that we were able to pack most of the books and instruments in their place, and so reduce the total loads from sixty-four to sixty. All the jettison was given to the servants, to barter with the natives or do with as they liked. Now comes the miracle, for when we left the next morning no box seemed to be much overweight, and the staff were not wearing more than one shirt and sweater extra per man ; yet everything we had thrown out had been stowed away somewhere to be sold back to us by its new owners as required during the next year.

None of the marches up the Nam Tamai are longer than eight or nine miles, so that we had plenty of time for doctoring before we started ; collecting on the way ; and packing specimens in the evenings, without having to make special halts anywhere to catch up with our labours. The medical work we were expected to do was fortunately very simple. The usual complaints were scabies, malaria, rheumatism, sores, abscesses, and conjunctivitis. Now and again we hurt our patients a good deal, either from necessity or through lack of knowledge, but they never flinched and were always grateful. One girl in particular had a deep-seated abscess in her finger. When I told her I was going to hurt, she just nodded, wrapped her head in her blanket, and held her hand



without a tremor until I had finished cutting into it and cleaning it out. The only ones who made a fuss were the children, most of whom had scabies on their heads, and who howled and screamed, on the principle of the White Queen, even when we were only rubbing in ointment. They more than balanced the stoicism of their elders and betters.

Three days out from Pangnamdim we changed coolies at Hpalaplangdam (most of the names in this valley are good ones), a village of eight huts with a large amount of maize sprouting in the clearings. The villagers had just finished putting up a complicated, but labour-saving, bird-and-monkey scarer. Essentially this consisted of a long strip of knotted bamboo, supported from poles and branches, which ran from the centre of the village, over a ravine, to the nearest field. There it divided up into half-a-dozen subsidiary strings, which branched off to other plots of land; and at intervals bamboo clappers were fastened on, wherever they seemed likely to be most useful. The natives could then make a glorious racket in exactly the right place and without leaving their homes, simply by pulling the alarm. To be fair to the Khanungs, this was probably devised not so much from a spirit of indolence, as because life is so hard for them that, if they are to live at all, there is no time to sit about in the crops shouting at birds. The fields must be within a short distance of the villages to be successfully guarded against pig, deer, and monkeys; and as a result of this the amount of land under cultivation is so limited that it is only just sufficient, in a good year, to provide for the population. This has led to intensive hunting and the disappearance of the

larger animals such as bison, sambur, and bear ; but, in that very heavy forest, the smaller ones, like barking deer, langurs, macaques, and jungle pig, can still exist in comparative safety, to be a constant danger to the crops. Panthers, too, are quite common, and further complicate matters for the Khanung in the Tamai Valley by preying as much on his pitifully small herds of cattle as on the wild animals in the jungle.

On May the 13th, from five miles above Hpalaplangdam, we saw the snow-covered mountains of the Tibetan frontier, about forty miles away. It was hard to see how far down the snow extended, but it looked as if it was as low as 12,000 feet at least, and possibly even lower. We could only hope we were wrong, because if the snow was down as far as that, we would probably not be able to cross the pass for some time, the Khanungs having no boots, and being in any case unused to cold. I did my best to get a photograph, but, by the time I had found a spot clear enough from trees and creepers, clouds had swept over and there was no more to be seen.

John was somewhere in front at the time (we invariably walked by ourselves, like the cat), but my disappointment at missing a picture was soothed a short way further on, when I came upon a woman and two men waiting hopefully by the side of the path with a large smoked fish of repellent aspect, and a bamboo jug full of a kind of buckwheat beer, which they called Tsa. By the end of the year I would have bought that fish eagerly, but at the time I spurned it, and gave three annas for the beer, thinking it would be a grateful drink later on. It was incredibly difficult to carry the bamboo without spilling the

liquor, but I persevered, and presently sat down at the top of a high cliff to enjoy it. What was my misery to find I had been robbed! The beverage was the dregs from the very bottom of the brew, and almost as thick as porridge, with a bare half inch of liquid washing drearily about on top. However, in my dejection, the headman of Pangnamdim caught me up and produced some really good stuff from his monkey-skin bag. Much cheered, I went on my way.

On May the 14th we crossed to the right bank of the Nam Tamai by a narrow cane suspension bridge, seventy yards long. It swayed badly in the middle, where the hand-rails were not more than two feet high. This bridge was not so good as it had been in 1933, when it would take three or four men at once, and it was now almost ready to be superannuated. I fell through it up to my knees in the first two yards, but that was the only accident, and every one else came over quite safely, although they were cautious enough to go one at a time.

The valley was now becoming steeper and much narrower, and for the last two days the river had been an almost unbroken rapid, roaring down in a welter of foam under a fine layer of mist, twenty feet thick. This day we had a short change from forest, because, for a considerable distance on both sides of the path, the ground had been cleared at one time or another. A good deal of it had reverted to scrub or tall reeds, but it was still very open, and John made a big haul of wild strawberries and raspberries, which we had for dinner.

The next day we reached the last rest-house, at Tazungdam, after a march of about eight and a half miles, mostly through jungle. It was strange to see

how fond the natives were of short cuts. There was one place, for example, where they had cut off fifty yards of perfectly good path by climbing uncertainly down a sand cliff in which they had dug footholds. It must have been very difficult to negotiate with loads, and yet all the coolies chose it in preference to the easier route.

Tzungdam is close to the right bank of the river, in a small meadow two hundred yards below the junction of the Adung Wang and the Seinghku, which together make up the Nam Tamai. Our hut was very small, perhaps ten feet by twelve, and its one room looked impossibly overcrowded when both John and I and our two bedding-rolls were inside. A few yards off was the cook-house, of much the same size as our abode, but not built on piles and even more ramshackle. The local inhabitants found the kitchen a tremendous attraction, and squatted round the door in groups, peering at Nyima Dorje's cooking with awed amazement and ready to dash rapturously away with any old tins that might be thrown out.

A fair number of the women there had adopted an approximation to Tibetan fashions, through contact with the Tibetan settlements up the Seinghku, and possibly with those in the Adung Valley. They were wearing cotton skirts almost to their ankles; long-sleeved jackets, cut very full, down as far as their waists; and their hair long and braided round their heads. Some of the men were in Chinese jackets and trousers. It was a pity, for their own clothes, even if scanty, are attractive to look at and far more suited to the country. Normally a Khanung wears an apron, four inches by nine, and a piece of

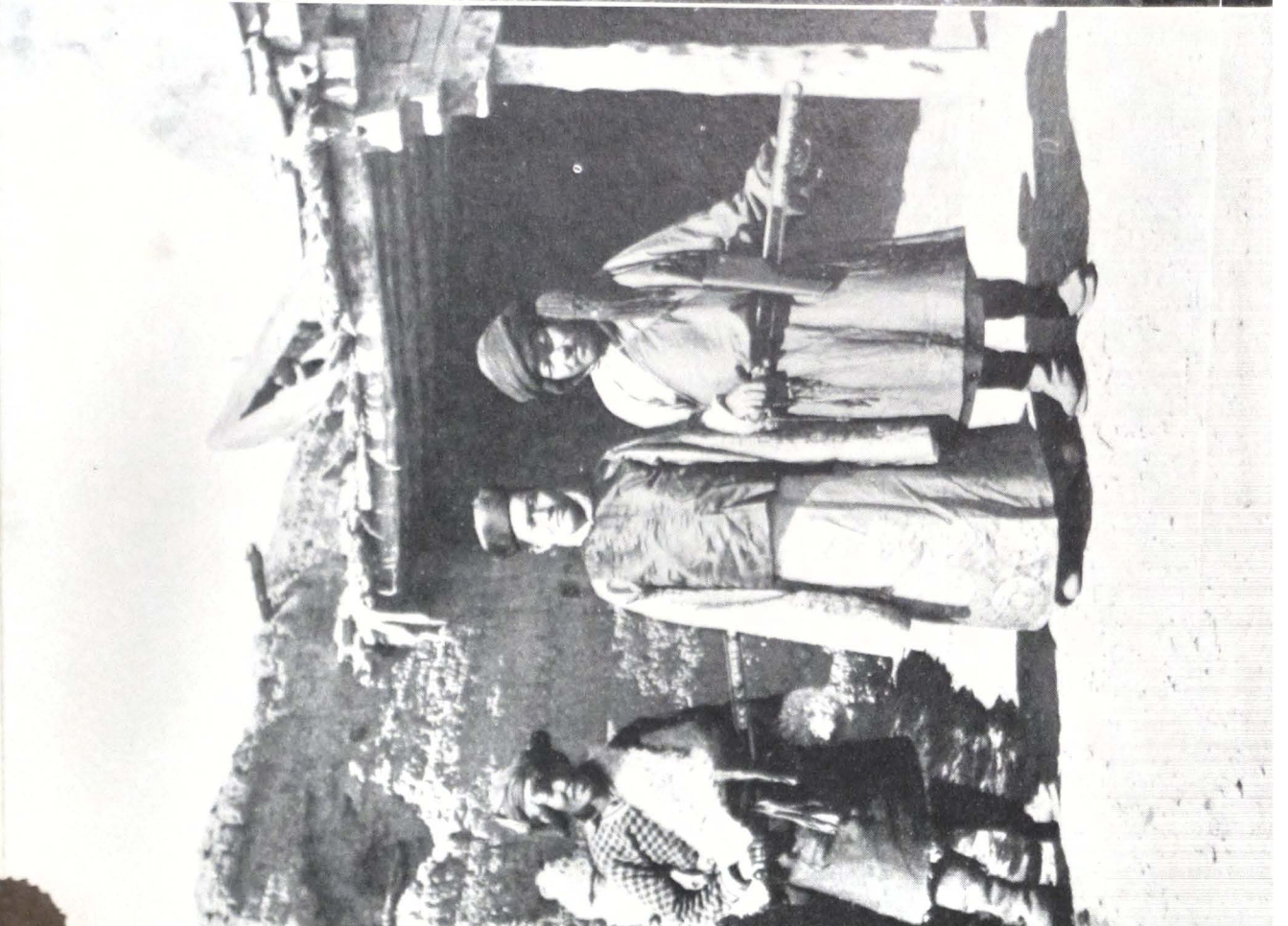
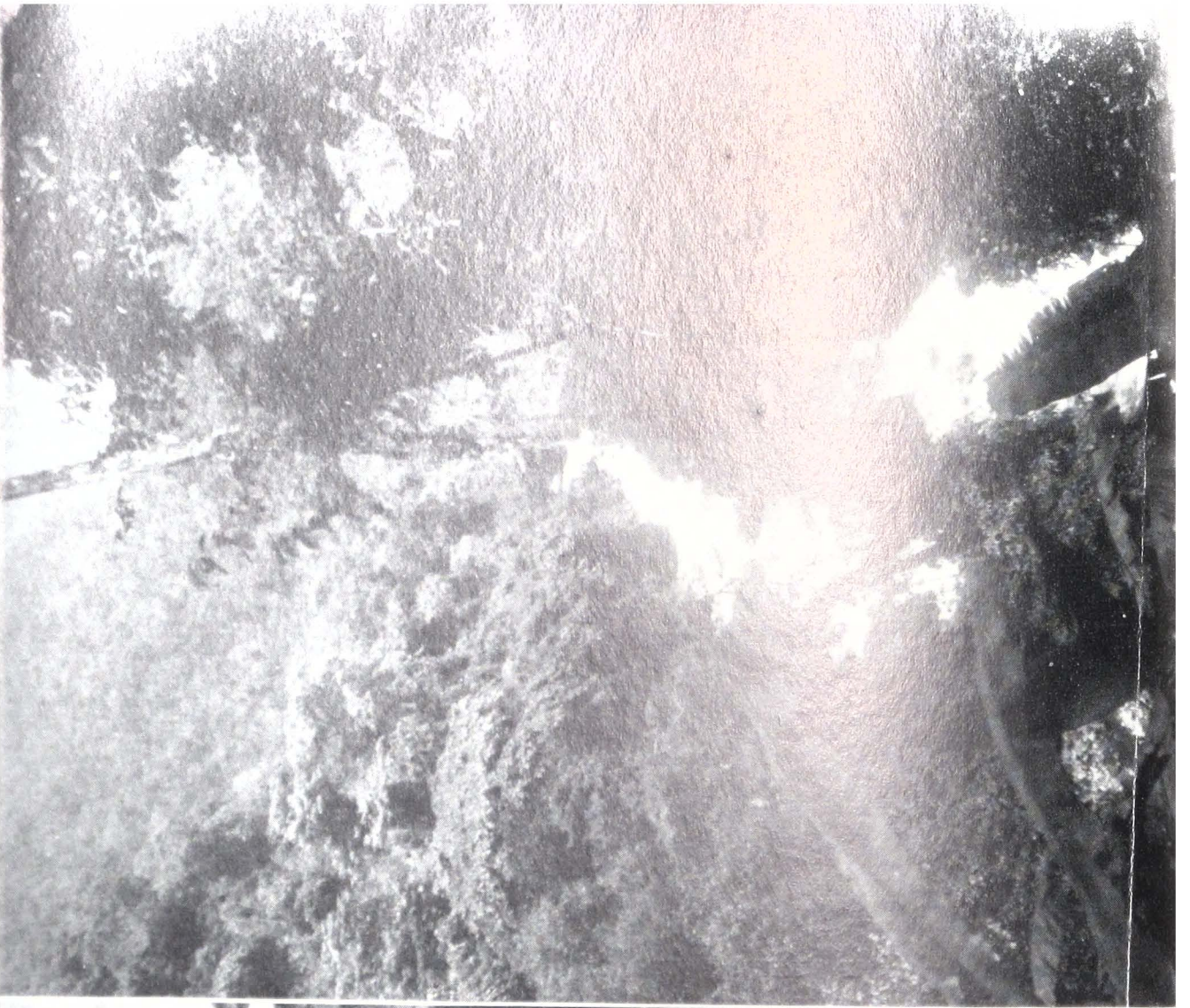
coarse homespun cotton (made, I think, from the cotton tree, and about the size of a small blanket) over his back from his shoulders to below his hips, and with all four corners knotted in the middle of his chest. A strip of cloth round his waist helps to hold the blanket in position, and supports a dao in a half-sheath on his right side. A gibbon- or langur-skin bag hangs on his left ; a quiver across his chest ; and he carries a powerful crossbow, and sometimes a long spear, in his hands. The women have a cotton cloth wound round their waists like a skirt, and hanging to their knees ; and the blanket is passed under one arm and knotted over the other shoulder, so that it covers them, back and front, like a cape to within a few inches of their ankles. A necklace of buttons or beads, and a narrow bamboo bracelet give the finishing touches ; and both men and women have thick, bobbed hair, cut straight all round. They are a charming people, simple, friendly, and willing ; and it is a pleasure to deal with them.

We paid off our coolies at Tazungdam, and had a little trouble in finding others to take us over the Diphuk La into Tibet, and down to Shikathang, nine stages away. The Diphuk La is 14,280 feet high, and, as we had feared, it was still deep in snow. There was nothing for it but to wait until we could collect enough people who were willing to face the cold ; and we were prepared to stop there for some time, but as luck would have it we were able to arrange the whole affair the next day. It was worth halting for those twenty-four hours, if only for the joy of being able to eat our breakfast without coolies trying to rush in half-way through to carry out our

...clipped from the trees,  
...tangling and looping  
...from every bush, as we  
...through the rain-soaked  
... the Seinghku Valley.  
(p. 3.)

Our three servants dressed in  
Tibetan clothes. From left to  
right: Nyima Dorje, Lewa, Nyima  
Töndrup. (p. 3.)





belongings, or the servants waiting to snatch away plates and cups the instant we had finished.

We began our day of rest by developing films, but presently a couple of headmen from the Adung Valley arrived with twenty or thirty coolies, and a present of four hens, twenty eggs, and four pounds of butter from the Tibetan villages beyond their own. These men were a branch of the Khanungs, calling themselves Talangs, and they were a fine jungly-looking lot, much cleaner and stronger than their cousins from down the Nam Tamai. We gave the headmen an empty stores box and a large looking-glass each (delighting them hugely), as we wanted their good offices in persuading coolies to go with us before the snow had melted. That would not have been for another month at least.

Shortly after that in came the headman of Meting, the largest of the four small Tibetan settlements in the Seinghku Valley, which are collectively called Haita. He, too, brought a gift of butter, and was a most excellent little man, and very helpful, by the name of Mik Shi. I had known him two years before, and, partly for auld lang syne, we gave him a knife and a mirror. We told him our needs in the way of transport, and he went into conference with the Talang spokesmen, at the end of which the latter said, very handsomely, that their men would go all the way to Shikathang with us, provided only we would wait at the last camp south of the pass if there were bad weather. And, furthermore, that they would send at once for another twenty-odd coolies to make up the fifty-four we now needed, so that we could start in the morning. Mik Shi volunteered to come with us as interpreter--an ideal suggestion,



even though his Tibetan was difficult to understand, as the man we had brought with us from Nogmung spoke no word of the Talang dialect and was panic-stricken at the thought of going any further out of the district he knew. We dismissed the latter, therefore, and sent him back to Fort Hertz with our mail and guns, all of which he eventually handed over to Captain Power. It is forbidden to take firearms into Tibet owing to the religious ban on hunting ; but even had guns been allowed for the sake of self-defence we would not have taken them. One is generally far safer without arms than with, although there are still two or three parts of the world where this probably does not hold good. Up to Tazungdam we had always been hoping to go out and shoot for the pot ; but in point of fact we had never had more than half an hour to spare at any one time, and our total combined bag had been a single dove.

From Tazungdam onwards the path was frankly bad ; through thick jungle for the first two days, up and down cliffs, and over boulders in the river bed. It was tiring work for the coolies, and, on their account, the marches shrank to less than five miles a day.

We crossed to the left bank of the Seinghku by cane suspension bridge immediately above the confluence with the Adung Wang, and camped in a little patch of grass, close to the water. The river was only eighteen or twenty yards wide, but thundering down in one enormous cataract the whole way from the Diphuk La to the Nam Tamai. John and I were a long way in front of the baggage when we reached our camping ground, and waiting there, we were eaten alive by hundreds of sandflies. As their name

suggests, these are very little bigger than grains of sand, but the irritation they cause is out of all proportion to their size, and quite infuriating. All the wood was wet and a fire seemed to be beyond our powers, but, while we were slapping and cursing, Mik Shi arrived on the scene. He hurried further along the path and presently came back with a burning brand and his wife, who was tending a small herd of cattle nearby. In a few minutes he had a blaze going, to discomfort the sandflies ; some milk heating over the flames, and a fine black bear-skin spread on the ground for a seat. The bear he had killed himself with a cross-bow.

We drank the milk, and shared his lunch, which was simply a thick, dark-brown chapatti, resembling a coarse and doughy whole-meal bread, made from a jungle root (not unlike that of a lily) called *pindalu* in Nepali. The roots are mashed up and left to ferment for fifteen days, before being made into chapattis and cooked. They are then quite good ; solid and satisfying, even if rather tasteless.

We were under canvas for the first time at that camp ; and in spite of the inconvenience of having to work in a tent, there is a gleeful satisfaction in sleeping in one when heavy rain is beating on the roof and filling the inside with a tight, angry, chattering noise, so that one's blankets seem almost incredibly snug.

It rained hard all that night and until half-past eight in the morning, and since, even in dry weather, there are great numbers of leeches on the next two stages, we defended ourselves as well as we could with two pairs of socks, boots, ski-ing trousers and ankle puttees. It being the end of the dry season,

the path was not so appallingly overgrown with tall bushes as it had been in the autumn of 1933, and we knew that, provided we could take care of our legs, our chests could take care of themselves. The Talangs, on the other hand (among whom were almost as many women as men), prepared for the fray by removing all but the barest minimum of their clothes, so that there would be nothing to hamper them from scraping the leeches off with their daos. It is a dreadful thing to be tied by convention. Their method was both cooler and easier than ours, yet neither John nor I are nudists, and to strip down to it like the Talangs was unthinkable.

Before we left, Mik Shi's wife fell on her knees, weeping, and begged us to be personally responsible for her man's safe return from Shikathang. The Tibetans in the Adung and Seinghku Valleys all deserted originally into British territory to avoid paying the high taxation in their own country; and although the exodus took place more than thirty years ago, since when few or none seem to have joined the colonists—at least in the Seinghku Valley; I do not know about that of the Adung—they still fear that any of them who wander back will be seized and maltreated. We comforted the woman by promising that her husband should have the official position of Mail Runner to bring him back over the pass, and then set off for Meting.

John and I led the procession; but I was a yard or two in advance of him, and naturally had the very cream of leechery for my own; so that while his bag only just passed a hundred and thirty, mine rose to a grand total of a hundred and ninety-one. If he had depended on our hands being idle, Satan

would have found extremely little mischief for us to do that day ; for leech-picking from our ever fruitful trousers kept us innocently occupied from beginning to end of the march. For the first half mile we kept close to the Seinghku, and then climbed up about two thousand feet through thick forest. At the top there was the cheering sight of a few pines showing that we would soon be above the jungle and into clearer country, and there were numbers of rhododendron trees and bushes, now all over, and clusters of diminutive white orchids. The path continued more or less level, and high above the river, for about a mile more, and then dropped down to the small Tibetan settlement of Meting at 6,500 feet—a prosperous little place with big crops of wheat and barley, and a herd of twenty or thirty mountain cattle. The houses were good, solid wooden affairs, built on low piles, and very different from the flimsy bamboo shacks of the Khanungs. When we arrived they were still busy putting up a temporary hut for us in a meadow close to the river, but it looked so fragile that after a little thought, we turned it into a cook-house and slept in tents. The entire village came down that evening to be doctored, complaining of toothache, rheumatism, and worms. We dosed every sufferer with two ounces of castor oil as a general preliminary before deciding on any specific treatment, and left them much pleased and impressed. One earnest soul was so keen to receive the fullest benefit from the medicine that he cunningly crept to the tail end of the queue again, and was only saved from taking a second dose by a miracle. There was still oil on his chin from the first helping, and so his plot was ruined.

Our Khanung coolies asked us if we would leave

as many of them behind as possible and go up first to the Diphuk La to see when the path would be clear enough of snow for them to cross. They had few clothes, and, of course, no boots at all, and were not anxious to spend more than one night at the head of the valley if it could be avoided. In any case there was going to be a slight delay because there are no villages and no food on the seven marches between Meting and Shikathang, and four more coolies were needed to carry rations. It would take three days to collect these men from the Adung Valley, so we left Lewa in Meting with the bulk of the baggage, telling him not to move until he heard from us, and continued up the valley at once with Nyima Töndrup, Nyima Dorje, and thirteen of the most warmly dressed porters, while a runner went back for the extra men. We offered up the thirteen as a sacrifice to the Gods of the Jungle by giving them pride of place and following behind ourselves, on the theory that the early bird catches the worm. It worked most brilliantly and, although the leeches were very bad for the whole way, the coolies collected them so effectively (if unwillingly) that we in the rear had no cause for complaint. We soothed our consciences with the thought that it was we who had borne the burden and heat of the day on the previous march, and that it was now only fair to give them a chance of being unselfish too. It is true that salt is a sure defence against leeches, but in wet jungle this is not really a practical proposition, because in the first place any you apply to your stockings or trousers washes off in a few yards, and in the second your supply of it soon gets wet and melts away to nothing. Besides which, in a country where your entire stock of

salt has to be carried along with you (for there is none to be found in Upper Burma), it is a valuable article and not to be squandered on the ungrateful beasts of the field.

From Meting to the grazing ground Sakongdam it is a short march of some five miles, but the path is bad, climbing rather more than three thousand feet through dense trees and undergrowth, and it took the coolies five and a quarter hours to cover the distance. Shortly after the start we went through an eerie stretch of swamp, like an enchanted forest in a fairy tale. A narrow, muddy path wound in and out between dripping, moss-covered bamboos; there was a grim dull green light; strange scuttlings and ploppings in the pools; and over all a dead evil smell of bad water and decay. It was a depressing spot (the more so because it was pouring with rain, which fell all that day with a monotonous swish and never a moment's pause), and apparently too loathly even for leeches, for the only ones there were those we had imported ourselves. Except in this swamp they were plentiful enough to drive all the animals out of the jungle for the whole of the rainy season; either up into the pine forest at 10,000 feet and over, or right above the tree line. The pines mark the limit of the leech country, and among them is sanctuary.

The following morning a steady climb, alternating through stretches of pine and rhododendron forest and over bare, grassy slopes, brought us to Lungphuk, the last camp south of the Diphuk La and Tibet. The sides of the valley were a glorious sight, alive with colour. We were just in time to catch the flowers in bloom, and everywhere were rhododendrons

in scarlet, crimson, pink, cream, and white (including scarlet dwarfs, like rubies in the grass) ; blue, pink, and yellow primulas ; masses of dark blue gentians ; and here and there a white, furry-leaved anemone looking almost drab beside the beauty of the others. On the way up, at about 12,000 feet, we saw a pair of ibis-bills among the pebbles in the bed of the stream. Previously they had never been found breeding in Burma at all, and we spent some time in looking for their nest, while they fluttered distracted, above our heads, in rather the same way as plovers. We had no success, however, and at last to their great relief, we stopped the search ; but I am quite convinced that the nest was there, hidden among the stones, or the birds would have flown away as soon as we approached.

During the summer Lungphuk, at 13,000 feet, is used as a grazing ground for the cattle from Meting, so that they can be free of leeches and the worst of the flies ; and there are two diminutive huts there—the walls built of stones piled on top of each other, and the roofs of rough pine boards. One of these was hopelessly decrepit, but the other we turned into the cook-house, while John and I had tents close at hand. There was still a little snow in the camp and it did not seem as though the pass would be open for several days. Accordingly all but two of the coolies went back a couple of miles down the valley to where it was warmer ; and these two (whom we needed as char-gentlemen) we fitted out with some of the clothes we had cast away at Hpalaplangdam and with spare pairs of boots. They were delighted, and took off the garments every time they did any work, to preserve their magnificence.

John had a septic and very painful heel as a legacy from the leeches, and wanted to rest it as much as possible while we were in camp, so that afternoon I started off by myself for the pass to see what the snow was like up there. I had crossed the Diphuk La in August 1933, when coming back from Tibet, and there was no earthly excuse for not knowing the way up ; but—worse even than remembering nothing about it whatever—I had a mistaken idea that the pass was immediately west of Lungphuk and visible from the camp, instead of being three miles to the north-west and out of sight, as it actually is. Strong in this lunatic conviction, I set out and began to climb through the snow where I thought the path ought to be. I was perhaps two thousand feet above the camp when a thick mist swept up the valley ; and a scant five minutes after the tents had been swallowed I could see only ten or twelve yards. For the whole afternoon I groped about in what seemed like a maze of precipices, with no more hope of finding the pass and anxious only to get safely home. Twice I slipped on the hard snow and hurtled towards a cliff, and twice I stopped with my feet actually over the edge and a hideous emptiness in my stomach. I reached camp at 7.30, a sadder but not a wiser man ; for the next morning, immediately after breakfast, I began the same performance, and repeated it almost in detail, even to the mist. This time I was out for thirteen hours, completely lost, and my face became so deplorably burnt that, not content with cracking, it oozed all over like a roasting joint—a trial not only to me but to all who had to look at it.

I had expected to be back by noon at the latest, and at five o'clock, dithering on a lamentably loose



rock-face, I heard Nyima Töndrup shouting far below in the murk. He had come out as a search party when I was so long overdue, accompanied by one of the Khanungs, and bearing rum and gloves from John. His mournful bellowing seemed most beautiful to me and acted like a fog-horn, luring me on to scramble feverishly down five hundred feet of chimneys and screes to the top of a high cliff. I then had to clamber all the way back to where I had started, and by the time I finally reached the siren, my views on his voice had suffered a radical change. That was the last of my attempts to find the Diphuk La by myself, although I was still certain I knew where it was and that it was only the mist alone which had prevented me from reaching it. It was the only time I have ever been really misled by my memory for places, and I paid dearly in agony of mind and body.

I, too, had developed leech-sores on my feet by this time, and during the next four days, or until we broke camp, John and I did little except dress our wounds and overhaul the theodolite and range-finder, which we had last looked at in England. Lewa arrived with the bulk of the baggage on May the 24th, overjoyed to be on the move again ; and our Talangs, as soon as they had put down their loads, made a camp well up on the steep sides of the valley, building small, horizontal platforms of pine branches to sleep on. They squatted on these in little groups, eating and chattering, and looking from a short distance almost uncannily like a collection of orang-outangs on their nests of twigs. On the 25th Mik Shi, who had come up with the coolies, went as far as the Diphuk La himself to make certain that

it was clear enough of snow ; and while he was away the Talangs scattered up the slopes with their cross-bows in the hopes of shooting a takin. There are usually large numbers of these beasts in the neighbourhood of the pass, looking so cumbrous and yet so active in reality, but this day none were seen, and the only bag was a fine orange-coloured stoat which was brought in to me in the evening. The coolies had been relying on getting fresh meat at Lungphuk to carry them through to Shikathang, for, although we had given them money in Meting to buy rations, most of them had decided to keep the coin and trust to hunting. It was a grievous disappointment that the game had moved, but there were the fresh tracks of snow leopards which seemed to show that it had not gone far, and the general opinion was that we would find it in the valley north of the pass. If that were so the Talangs said they would reach Shikathang in four marches from Lungphuk ; and when Mik Shi came back with word that the path was clear at last, we gave orders for an early start and rolled up in our blankets, feeling very like small boys on the last night of term.



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*Virupaksha, guardian of the West*

### CHAPTER THREE

“A nice little boy held a golden ewer,  
Embossed and filled with water as pure  
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur.”

Thomas Ingoldsby : *The Jackdaw of Rheims.*

No matter how many times it may have happened before, there is always a thrill at the beginning of a march. As the last few stars are fading there is a stir in the camp, and one by one the fires are poked into flame. A few sleepy figures struggle out of their blankets to fetch water, and by the time it is light everyone is wide awake and eating a hurried meal. Then, even before the tents are struck, the file of coolies is under way—each one sitting on the ground to fasten his load into place, and painfully struggling

to his feet with a grunt and a helping hand from a friend—and soon nothing is left to mark the camp but some heaps of smoking ashes and unused firewood. There is a subdued excitement about the whole thing, because each day means a fresh start into the unknown, with the chance of an adventure round every turn of the path.

The route from Lungphuk to the Diphuk La is so obvious that, as I followed the long line of men from the camp, I walked in a kind of a daze, stupefied at the thought of having spent two fruitless days in looking for it. Half a mile above the camp we came to snow, which grew steadily deeper, but the bare-footed coolies plodded on uncomplainingly with Mik Shi at their head and Lewa behind. John, Nyima Töndrup, and I made up a separate party far in the rear, because, being now busy with the map, we travelled even more slowly than the transport, making frequent halts for survey stations and adding, on an average, five hours to the normal time for a march. We had an easy climb up to the pass (14,280 feet), on the top of which the snow had been beaten quite hard by the wind, and there we found Mik Shi waiting for us. He can only have been there out of politeness, for, although he knew how I had strayed before in my search, he cannot have imagined that I was going to be lost again. The most wretched imbecile could not have missed the coolies' trail in the snow ; and in any case, at least from the Diphuk La, I could vividly remember the path to Shikathang—as indeed I ought, having travelled over it less than two years before. The north side of the pass drops very steeply a thousand feet to a small lake, which in the summer is clear and green as an emerald ; but it

was still frozen, and over it was moving a series of dark specks—the Talangs—heading for the steep, narrow valley of the Di Chu towards the pines and a place where their aching feet would find rest from the snow.

The international frontier between Burma and Tibet is considerably north of the Diphuk La, and a little above the junction of the Di Chu with the Lohit River ; but a purely artificial line like this, arranged at a conference some hundreds of miles away, can have little value on the spot—more especially if no one there has ever heard of it. *De facto*, at least, the frontier runs from the Diphuk La eastwards along the crest of the range, and westwards to a point a short distance south of Tinai in the Lohit Valley ; and this is taken for granted by Tibetans, Khanungs, and Mishmis alike, who are, after all, the only people at present directly concerned. Standing on top of the pass, with ridge after ridge of snowy mountains before us, the legal frontier meant as little to us as it did to the natives, and we knew that our next step was really taking us into Tibet.

On the north side of the pass the snow was four feet deep and soft, and the coolies had had a difficult time ploughing through it, staggering and falling until they had left a track as full of craters as the moon. John, Mik Shi, and I saved a lot of hard work by sitting down and glissading almost the whole way to the lake ; but Nyima Töndrup, always a staid soul, looked on us as so many children, and plodded along behind us in good, old-fashioned style, smiling benevolently and declining to be hurried. Never handsome, he was looking weirder than usual this day, having had his moustache

trimmed to Charlie Chaplin shape at Lungphuk. He was proud of the result, but with his bovine, if pleasant face, nothing can ever have suited him less. Four miles below the Diphuk La, with the snow a mile or more behind us, we halted for the night. It was a perfect place for a camp, on a small flat stretch of ground carpeted with two-foot rhododendron bushes, the Di Chu at one side and the pine forest at the other. We were afraid that there might be some cases of frost-bite among the coolies, but although they nearly all complained of sore feet and said they might have to go slowly the next day, there was nothing seriously wrong with any of them.

Leaving that camp, we made a long march of nine and a half hours over an unspeakable path and halted in the trees on the right bank of the Di Chu, immediately opposite the hot springs. The way had led through pine forest and rhododendron scrub, and we had seen the remains of a musk deer, and traces of wild pig, as well as catching a glimpse of a small grey monkey darting off among the branches, so that everyone was optimistic when a dozen hunters left in the late afternoon. The Di Chu is a torrent from above this camp right down to the Lohit, but it was spanned by a fallen tree, and the Talangs were able to cross, though with difficulty. Neither of us went with them, for John's foot was still troubling him, and I felt that the party would have a better chance of success if I stayed behind. So far as the hot springs themselves were concerned I had seen them in 1933. They are small and uninteresting to look at, with a powerful smell of sulphur, and are as hot as a very hot bath, but in July and August all the takin for miles gather there to drink the waters, and we were hoping

that there might be one or two still taking the cure. Nothing smaller than a takin would have been of much use to forty-eight sturdy men and women, each clamouring for a share. However, long after dark the hunters came back, dispirited and empty-handed, and the coolies, who were already on very short rations, became gravely perturbed. Mik Shi was the only one besides myself who had been along this valley, but when he said, happily enough, that lower down there was not the slightest hope of finding any game whatever, a good deal of their dismay seemed to vanish now that they knew the worst, and they resigned themselves to several days of hunger without another thought. Mik Shi had every cause for being cheerful, for he had taken no more risks with his supplies than the wise virgins, and complacently ate a meal of rice morning and evening, using chop-sticks with surprising delicacy. And this was odd, because as a rule Tibetan peasants use their fingers alone. The failure of the hunt was the worst of bad luck. In the morning we found the fresh tracks of a big takin on the path within half a mile of the camp, and closer still was the carcass of a pig killed by a leopard.

So far we had had fine weather since leaving Burma, which was rather surprising at that time of year, but the day we left the hot springs was both wet and misty. The coolies started at six, and John and I, with Nyima Töndrup and Mik Shi, had to wait a full hour more in the rain before the clouds began to rise enough to let us see anything. Even then work on the map was almost impossible, for the path ran through a dense forest of pines, rhododendrons, and bamboos, and on the few occasions when we







Shödung Kharndempa, Governor  
of Zayul, was an old friend of mine  
and gave us a great welcome.  
(p. 55.)

did come to a gap there was no sort of view except for a dark mass of trees covering the precipitous sides of the valley, and blotting out any details which might have been of use. Owing to this we took eleven hours over the march, but were cheered at the end to find that the Talangs had discovered a number of edible roots which they were assiduously boiling. They had dug up nearly half an acre of ground in the search, and had plenty for two more meals. This was excellent news, but our delight was rather damped the following morning when nine of them became frightfully ill and confessed that they had been so hungry that they had eaten the first roots they unearthed raw. Their distress was cataclysmic, and a bare five miles was all that they could manage, broken by frequent convulsive halts. This very short march meant adding another day to the journey, but the great thing was that by the very same evening the sufferers were in high spirits and eating enormously of more roots to make up for their losses.

We climbed down a steep spur into the broad, flat Rima Valley about mid-day on May the 30th. After the Di Chu Valley it was like a furnace and the coolies cheered up tremendously, while Nyima Töndrup became visibly more lethargic every minute. At this period we were still inclined to misjudge him, and it makes my heart bleed to think of the number of times we cursed him for intolerable laziness between April and October of 1935. He had worked well at Lungphuk and on the way down the Di Chu, but that had not given us a chance to form any theory about him, and for the rest of the journey he had seemed almost to have sleeping sickness. At last it

was John who realized in the winter that our faithful servant was built on the lines of a sensitive thermometer. At any temperature above 50° F. his mind gummed up altogether, and it was not till well below freezing point that he became at his most active. Once we had proved the truth of this we were able to make allowances for any shortcomings according to the weather. Even at his worst he was a most delightful character, and we never had a moment's regret at having brought him with us.

We camped on the left bank of the Rongme Chu (called Lohit by the Mishmis further down) at the base of a big tree, perhaps four miles south of Shikathang. Not far away, though out of sight on a ridge, was the small village of Lating, and presently a couple of men came down to see who we were. They told us that the previous Governor (whom I had known in 1933) had just been relieved ; that his successor was already in Shikathang, and that he himself was leaving for Lhasa the following morning ; so when we sent off a message to announce our coming we begged him to put off his departure for a few days so that we could meet again and have a talk. We also advanced ten rupees to our coolies to buy better food than roots immediately, but as their envoys did not come back that night at all, this was a failure.

May the 31st was a day of days, and most exhausting. Some two miles from Shikathang we reached a large stream over which there is usually nothing but an indifferent rope bridge. However, a gang of men had just finished building a tottery erection of pine saplings in our honour, over which we could advance one at a time in comparative comfort ; and there, on the opposite bank, was the official deputation of

welcome. It consisted of the Governor's A.D.C.—a very stout monk in a long crimson robe, with a shaven head and a wispy beard, which he had plaited into a little pigtail in the middle of his chin—two or three junior officers, and ponies for us and the servants. The A.D.C. presented us with ceremonial scarves of thin white cotton and made a brief speech in a hurried undertone. We thanked him for his kind words, mounted our steeds, and moved off in slow time. Unlike the English, the Tibetans do not look upon riding as a sport, but purely as an alternative to going on foot; and people of rank, having once placed themselves in the saddle, are saved all further trouble by a man who leads the pony at a walk. So it was with us on our entry into Shikathang, even the servants (to their joy) being provided with conductors. As before, the top of the sand-hill on which Shikathang is built was crowded with figures, mostly in grey wool, all eager to see the spectacle of our arrival; and, as before, there was no room for us in any of the few miserable hovels, which, apart from the Governor's house and that of the headman, make up the village. We gave orders for our tents to be pitched in the courtyard between these two buildings, and then were taken to the A.D.C.'s rooms, *chez* the headman, for entertainment till everything should be ready.

In this extreme south-eastern corner of Tibet the houses are all of pine wood, and, with the exception of those in Shikathang, are built on piles eight or ten feet high on account of the very heavy rainfall—the space underneath being used as stables for the cattle and pigs. Shikathang, however, is not a normal village. As the name implies, it is a country estate,

and the Governor of the district makes it his winter home when he comes down from his headquarters in Sangachö Dzong to collect the taxes. He lives in one of the houses from January to June, while the remainder are filled to overflowing by his staff and retinue. The buildings in Shikathang are raised just far enough off the ground to keep them dry, and are a good deal more dilapidated than anywhere else, but since the whole place is looked upon as a camp rather than as a village, and is almost deserted when the Governor is not there, this does not matter. The Talangs at least were struck dumb by its wonders. They clustered together like a flock of bewildered sheep, just gazing, with wide open eyes, and scarcely saying a word. They had never imagined such houses or cultivation, and were all storing up memories against the years to come. They stayed until the morning, and then, with Mik Shi proudly carrying our few letters, disappeared down the valley on their way back to Burma.

The A.D.C. plied us with buttered tea, chang (a barley beer), and several bowls of boiled rice heartened with crude sugar. It was good to taste real buttered tea again, and we drank so much that our host was delighted and we ourselves were awash by the time the tents were up. He escorted us over to our abode, and sat down with us expectantly; so, as we had no tea ready, we returned his hospitality with chang and whiskey. I think he despised the former, but he poured himself out a mugful of neat whiskey, took a couple of gulps and very nearly exploded. When he had found his breath again Lewa told him tactfully that it was wonderful stuff for worms or other ills of the stomach; and at that

he manfully struggled through the rest of it (though with every sign of distaste), thanked us pallidly and stumbled away. We had warned him that it was stronger than chang when he was helping himself, but he said he knew all about it and deliberately rushed on his fate.

Hardly had he gone when presents arrived from Shödung Kharndempa (my friend), Shödung Tasong Tsang (the new Governor), Kharndempa's secretary, his predecessor's widow, and three of the neighbouring villages, so that we were well provided with rice, crushed rice, walnuts, chang, butter, brick-tea, soda, and eggs. The latter were given merely as tokens of esteem, for presently Nyima Dorje hurried up, on fire with indignation, to demonstrate that if you dropped one it detonated with a loud report and a fearful stench. We had heard a series of strange bangs going on from the direction of the cookhouse, and the mystery was now solved. Things were not so bad as they might have been, though, for out of more than a hundred eggs about twenty were quite good enough to eat.

Later in the afternoon, numbers of old acquaintances turned up to pay their respects (including the faithless Chimi who had deserted me on my previous journey at Sole); but at length it grew dark, our visitors wandered off, and we were left in peace. That night it was just as it had been two years before when I arrived at Shikathang with Kingdon Ward—horsebells jingling; the howl of a dog; a voice in the distance singing a mournful song; and over everything the smell of wood smoke and grease.

By the time we were up in the morning Lewa was already being kept busy driving off the hordes of sightseers whose one ambition was to wander about in

our courtyard, gazing and discussing. After a little he took to using a club, and then trespass became almost unknown, the curious having to content themselves with looking over the fence from a safe distance. At ten o'clock we were to call on Tasong Tsang, so we sent round our present by the hand of Nyima Töndrup and followed on with Lewa a few minutes later. He came to the door of his room to meet us, and we all sat down to tea, chang, arrack, and walnuts. He was a very small, thin old man, with only one visible tooth and a most infectious laugh. The front half of his head was shaved, and the hair on the back was plaited into a long pigtail which was wound round his skull. We stayed a couple of hours, with Lewa as interpreter, exchanging compliments and talking about the vicissitudes of travel; and then it was time to go round to Kharndempa. When we returned to our tents to collect his present there were two young men there (one with a pair of fearful yellow boots from Calcutta displayed beneath his robe), who said they had been sent to show us the way. Tasong Tsang had been in the Governor's house, and when we were led past that without stopping we imagined that Kharndempa must have vacated the place in favour of his successor. Presently we reached a small shack where we were met by a good-looking woman whom I had seen many times with Kharndempa in 1933. She ushered us into a small room, where we sat on a lovely bearskin rug, and fed us with sweet cakes (almost like shortbread) and chang. She was full of fun, but when we had been there the best part of an hour I asked her if the Governor was coming. She said gloomily that he had died some time ago, and that she was his widow.

A grisly moment ! In the circumstances we did not like to ask too many questions, but could only think that in some queer way she had inherited his title, and that whenever we had enquired about him everyone had been referring to her. Eventually we went home, slightly baffled, and it was not until the next morning that we discovered, to our joy, that Kharndempa was alive after all. It turned out that the good-looking woman (hereinafter called the Cham Kusho, or Official's Wife) was the widow of Lobsang Tsering, the Governor whom he had relieved some years before. It must have been malice aforethought, and no accident, which provided us with those two guides, for by enticing us to her house she had collected a very much bigger present than she would otherwise have had ; but in any case, once we were there, she naturally thought we were talking about her husband when we spoke of " the Governor," and anyway the whole business had become so complicated that it is no wonder we were confused.

Not only was Kharndempa alive, but it now appeared that he was still very much in charge of the district. That meant that we ought to have called on him even before seeing Tasong Tsang, instead of thoroughly putting our foot into it by leaving him over till the second day as a kind of remnant. A lot depended on whether he forgave us our trespasses or cast us into outer darkness, and we sent Lewa round post-haste with our humblest apologies and a present of nearly everything we could think of. We gave him ten minutes' start and followed on ourselves, knowing only too well that in Tibet any offence against etiquette, intentional or not, is a very serious matter. Fortunately, however,



our misunderstandings with the Cham Kusho had put Kharndempa in high good humour, and I think he was genuinely pleased to see us. We dined with him that night. It was John's first Tibetan dinner, and a reason for celebration ; but although I enjoyed everything except the arrack (a nauseous rice-spirit like dirty petrol), I was unable to rejoice with him. The change of the previous day had given birth to a weakness of the stomach, and it was with difficulty that I sat through the meal, growing paler and more green every moment. Two minutes after reaching the open I was so devastatingly sick that my joints became as water and it was all I could do to drag myself to bed. That night Lewa crept along twice to my tent to see if I was sleeping properly, and he prayed very hard to a certain abbot of his acquaintance for healing on my behalf. He was convinced that in sleep his spirit had gone to that holy man and put the facts of the case before him ; and when next morning I was able to report that I was better, though much afflicted by fleas, he claimed half the credit himself and went about with a beaming smile of triumph and happiness for the rest of the day.

It was as well that my internal affairs were now more or less settled, because that afternoon we had arranged to give a banquet to the gentry. Kharndempa had specially asked for an English meal when we had invited him to honour us, and all arrangements had been left to John (as Comptroller of the Household), and Nyima Dorje, who produced the bill of fare between them. The guests were Kharndempa, his secretary, and the A.D.C., Tasong Tsang, the Cham Kusho and her son ; and we sat in strict order of precedence with the three lesser lights together at a

separate table. Like the Chinese, Tibetans eat with chop-sticks out of small bowls, so that everything was strange to them at our luncheon party—not only the food and drink, but plates, knives and forks as well—and it was interesting to watch their different reactions. Kharndempa and Tasong Tsang, of course, were completely at their ease; the former pleasantly dignified, and the latter bubbling with laughter and jokes. Knives and forks were difficult to use (Kharndempa being the only one who made a good showing with them), and the little old man frankly gave up the struggle and asked John to cut up his meat for him. The Cham Kusho was very subdued and shy, and we hoped, though without much conviction, that this was owing to a guilty conscience. The A.D.C. (we never knew his name), looked haughty and tried to pretend that nothing was new to him; peeping at us out of the corners of his eyes to see how things ought to be done, and perspiring gently with anxiety. The other two giggled and whispered almost without a pause, red and embarrassed but making a brave effort to hide the same. We had no sherry, and a tot of whiskey was served all round as a substitute at the start of the feast. The next item was soup, and this was followed by an immense dish of roast pork, bacon, sausages, mushrooms, peas and beans, improved by the guests (who wanted to try everything), with liberal additions of pepper, mustard, Worcestershire Sauce and tomato ketchup. After that we all felt in need of a rest, and there was an interval for cigarettes and relaxation before the sweet appeared. Nyima Dorje had somehow gone astray over this, and instead of serving a Christmas pudding and a cake, had ingeniously

combined the two into a strange, stodgy creation of his own, which nevertheless was very popular. Mince pies, washed down with draughts of very sweet tea took the place of a savoury and coffee, although by now even Tasong Tsang had fallen silent, and the room was filled with heavy breathings. Lewa had lamented the fact that there were no finger-bowls, but we had forgotten all about his grief until, as a finishing touch, Nyima Töndrup (far more than half seas over, glassy eyed, and very erect), was ushered in with a cracked enamel basin of hot water, a cake of carbolic soap and a grimy towel. His stately, if uncertain, progress was marred by a devastating hiccup which burst forth as a sort of irrepressible greeting to each of us in turn, whenever he bent to offer the bowl.

The day of our visit to the Cham Kusho had been the last of the fine weather, and from June the 2nd to the 8th inclusive, we had almost continual rain. We stayed in Shikathang until the morning of the 10th, waiting in vain for a chance to take a latitude observation, as a check upon the position I had worked out in 1933. The worst day of all was June the 7th, when there was such a downpour that our camping ground was flooded, and we had to dig an intricate system of canals round the tents to keep anything dry at all. The servants were living in a handsome little marquee borrowed from Kharndempa and made in white cotton decorated with good-luck symbols in blue felt. They were soaking wet the whole time—for the rain splashed through apparently unchecked—but with a fire they were quite happy and showed no inclination to move. We had given them a tent of the same kind as our own at the beginning of the journey, but I can only remember

them using it once in two years, and then there was no rain.

Quite apart from the weather, we would have had to have spent a few days in Shikathang in any event, while a new rope bridge was being built across the river at our expense, the old one having worn perilously thin. This particular bridge was a single rope of cane and twisted strips of bamboo, some seventy yards long, sloping down from the left to the right bank of the river. A few yards upstream was a similar bridge sloping the other way, but that was none of our business. It seemed serious enough to have to pay for even one rope, when there were half a dozen men working on it for three days, and we considered what the final bill for materials and work was likely to be. It was presented the morning we left, and we were charged ten silver trangkas, or about one shilling and ninepence. In south-eastern Tibet this is a common type of bridge over the broader streams, and, as a result, one of the standard articles of equipment among the natives is a small wooden slider, some nine inches long, shaped rather like the half of a thick drain pipe. If a man wants to cross a river he puts his slider on the rope, ties himself to it with a leather strap round his seat, and lets go, shooting down to the bottom of the sag. Unless the slope continues right across, which is rare, he has to pull himself up the other side hand over hand. The great disadvantage of a rope bridge is that even a moderate-sized party can spend two or three hours in the crossing, since the baggage has to be fastened on and pulled over in small quantities ; then untied, the sliders taken back to be used over again, and the whole proceeding repeated time after time. In the extreme south of the country,

cane and bamboo are used for the ropes, which are not very expensive ; but further north they have to be made of plaited leather and may cost up to twenty pounds, although even that is not ruinous, as the leather bridges are reckoned to last twelve or fifteen years.

Even when the rain stopped there were no stars to be seen, and the barometer remained so consistently pessimistic that we decided to leave on June the 10th, whether we had been able to get a latitude or not, rather than settle down to what might prove a lengthy stay. On the 9th, we went round to say good-bye to Kharndempa, and sat with him for some time, drinking buttered tea. The soul of courtesy, he congratulated us both on our comparative slimness, and bemoaned his own stout figure as dolefully as he had when I first met him. Plumpness being highly esteemed in Tibet, we were able to reverse the compliment with perfect safety. It would have been amazing if he had not been fat, because buttered tea (or tea churned up with butter, salt, and soda) is as rich as it is excellent ; and because, like other Tibetans of rank, he never took any exercise to work it off. We were drinking nothing else ourselves by now, but not in such vast quantities, and happily not with the same dismal effect.

That afternoon we were invited to watch a trial. The case was one in which a man had gone out for a stroll with a woman along the bank of the river, since when she had not been seen again ; and that, in a country where everyone is known personally for miles around, meant that she was certainly dead. Kharndempa sat cross-legged on the balcony in front of his house, with Tasong Tsang on one side

and the two of us on the other. Officials were scattered in small groups all round the edge of the courtyard, and the gate was packed with villagers of both sexes and all ages, as though most of the neighbourhood had gathered to watch events. In the middle knelt the dejected figure of a young man, with haggard face and dusty, tangled hair, near whom stood the headman of his village, uncomfortably crumpling his hat and shifting from one foot to the other. Except for the voice of Kharndempa and the prisoner's low replies, there was dead silence ; but the latter contradicted himself time and again, and was presently ordered a hundred lashes. At once a man sat on the ground, holding the prisoner's head and shoulders with all his strength, while another put a noose round his feet and stretched him out face downwards. His robe was pulled up and trousers down, and then two brawny executioners delivered the strokes, one from each side, with long leather whips. The unfortunate moaned loudly at each blow, praying and crying out that he was innocent ; and, though no blood was drawn, the weals stood out in sharp blue-white ridges until gradually they merged into one livid patch. At fifty strokes he was questioned again but with no better result ; so the full hundred was delivered and he was taken away to be locked up till the following morning. Then if he still appeared to be lying he would get two hundred lashes, with a threat of three hundred the day after ; and if finally proved guilty he would be sent to Lhasa to be sentenced. In that case, Kharndempa said, it meant that he would possibly have his hands cut off. In many respects, present-day conditions of life and administration in Tibet are not unlike those in England

during the Middle Ages, and judged from that standpoint the laws are not severe. In any case, they seem justified by the fact that there is remarkably little crime in all but one district—the Great Plateau, which is infested with bandits—but as most of that is unadministered territory, it is unfair to compare it with the rest of the country.

In the evening Kharndempa sent us a farewell gift of a seven-pound brick of tea and two maple-wood drinking bowls ; and the Cham Kusho came round in person to present a third bowl lined with silver. For the last three or four days we had been a source of amazement, not only to her, but to Kharn-dempa, Tasong Tsang, and the A.D.C., who had asked earnestly one by one, whether we would not like temporary wives to share our travels with us ; generously offering to provide them gratis if required. They had all been astounded when we said we were quite happy single, but none so much as the Cham Kusho ; and her real object in coming herself to give the bowl, instead of sending a servant, was undoubtedly to make a last tremendous effort to change our minds. Female pride, I imagine, in the belief that her sex was indispensable made her strive with us ; but we emerged from under the bludgeonings of her argument still unspotted from the world.



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*Rashtrapala, guardian of the East*

## CHAPTER FOUR

“ Upon Saint Crispin’s day  
Fought was this noble fray,  
Which fame did not delay  
To England to carry ;”

M. Drayton : *The Ballad of Agincourt.*

FROM Shikathang there are three possible routes north to Shugden Gompa, but two of these had already been done—up the Zayul River by Colonel Bailey in 1911 ; and up the Rongtö Chu and over the Ata Kang La by Kingdon Ward in 1933—so that only the third was going to be of any use to us from the point of view of exploration. This was the path from Lepa which I had found two years before without having had time to follow it. After we left Shikathang,



Kharndempa took charge of our mail, promising to send it to the Political Officer in Sadiya, as soon as he could. The Lohit Valley is impossible during the rains, but in the winter a runner went through and our letters reached England quite safely in January 1936.

On June the 10th, we crossed our rope bridge and turned up the Rongtö Chu. Travelling in great comfort, mainly through pine forest, with very short marches and a halt of two days on the way, we reached Dri on the 13th. That is to say, I reached Dri, with Lewa, Nyima Dorje, and the baggage. John was deep in thought, however, and Nyima Töndrup was slumbering as they came along together, so that they passed a critical fork in the path and plodded on another six miles or so to a small and filthy village surrounded by rice fields. There they spent the night in flea-ridden blankets, and when they returned in the morning they looked distressed and measled. John's legs in especial were beyond compare and should have been on exhibition.

There were Mishmis in the Rongtö Valley, both men and women, with a distinctive acrid smell which was noticeable at quite a number of yards and hideously unlike the comfortable, homely odour of the Tibetans. Most of them had been there since the winter, earning their living by making baskets, and they were now moving homewards on account of their crops. The Lohit Valley is pleasant in the cold weather and perfectly foul in the summer, and it seemed hard that the miserable Mishmi should be forced by circumstances to spend the worst time of the year there, though free to leave in the best. Several of them were old acquaintances, and two in

particular made our lives a burden, like a pair of importunate widows, until we had given them what they wanted. These were Da Thamong and his wife, who had discovered the body of a courier of ours, murdered in this valley on the previous journey. Da Thamong brought eight eggs as a present and talked for hours, while three interpreters struggled to cope with the flow. One of them translated Mishmi into bastard Zayuli; the second put that into respectable Tibetan; and the third (Lewa) produced a final version in Hindustani. After some time it appeared that the supplicants were still afraid of being taken as witnesses and beaten, even after two years, and they wanted a safe conduct, so we wrote out a kind of testimonial to get rid of them. It was quite valueless, of course, but as nothing would happen to them in any case, that did not matter and it gave them great peace of mind.

The Rongtö and part of the Zayul Valleys, and the district round about Shikathang, are together called Dzayu, which has been conventionalized on English maps as Zayul. Dzayü means the Country of the Dzaya, or the country where big, round excrescences are sometimes found growing as diseases on the trees. The wood of these is very closely figured, and is used for turning the most expensive tea-bowls, which may cost up to five or six pounds each. These *dzaya* must be very rare, for no one was ever able to show us one, but later we saw several small bowls of the wood, which is certainly very lovely; and rare or not they are supposed to be more numerous in this district than anywhere else. Apart from this, Zayul is famous for rice (which grows up to about 7,000 feet) and wheat; and before climbing out of the Rongtö Valley we

bought a supply of the former (enough to last us for several months), as it is expensive in most other parts of the country.

On June the 15th, we crossed to the left bank of the Rongtö Chu by rope bridge, and made a very short march of about three miles to Traba. We had sent twenty-one loads over the day before to save time, but even so, with a mere twenty-four boxes, the crossing took three hours. Traba, at 6,450 feet, is a delightful place built on a small plateau nine hundred feet above the river. Close by is Latsa, which belongs to a man who originally came from near Chamdo, the capital of the great province of Kham. It was given to him by the Tibetan Government for services rendered, as part of a policy they have been slowly carrying out for the last sixty years or more. Religion in Zayul has become so mixed with animism that the Government is seriously concerned, and accordingly from time to time they give grants of land to deserving characters, tax- and services-free, on condition they build a village and promote the true Buddhism by all means in their power. A secondary idea is that they represent so much good new blood introduced into the country, which, it is hoped, may counteract to a certain extent the traces of Mishmi, Khanung, Lissu, Chinese, and dwarf aboriginal, which with a Khampa foundation go to make up the Zayuli. Among other similar settlements are Medrong and Purtsang, but the owners do not find them altogether an unmixed blessing, for to most Tibetans Zayul has an appalling climate, hot, wet, and a sad change from the arid valleys to which they are accustomed. Nyima Dorje went down to Latsa to visit the squire, an aged man of eighty-eight, who was overjoyed to see him.

The old gentleman said that until that moment he had heard no decent Tibetan spoken since he settled in the Rongtö Valley fifty years ago ; and in all that time he had never really succeeded in understanding the Zayuli dialect. He was rather worried as to why we had come—especially since he had heard that some white men had been in the valley a year or two before—because he well remembered that, in his youth, Europeans were not welcome, and he was afraid we might be up to no good. On being assured that Tibet and England were now friends, he was much relieved and hoped that if we came back that way we would stop at his house.

We had to wait four days in Traba owing to lack of transport ; but at last by sending down the valley for eight ponies and four men to add to the twenty-five coolies collected already, we had enough and were able to push on. We had bad luck at the start, when one of the ponies became possessed of a devil and bucked till it broke a precious bottle of rum ; and on the march itself two stores boxes were badly crushed from having been beaten against rocks. Lewa was sure that this was due more to carelessness than anything else, so we issued an ultimatum that if anything were broken in future the man responsible would lose his pay for the day. It worked like a charm and nothing was hurt again, or indeed more than scratched, between there and Lepa.

We had been hoping against hope that the fair weather would continue until we were over the Dzogu La, but we hoped in vain. The rain came down in sheets from the moment we turned away from the Rongtö Chu, and as we squelched through thick forest, much of the time with mud or water well over

our boots, and with low clouds making visibility even worse, it was only by some extraordinary strokes of luck that we were able to carry on with the map. We camped that night at a little over 9,000 feet, bitten to a state of fury by sandflies. The following day it was pouring as steadily as ever, and the ponies found the path so difficult that we had to make camp in a narrow rocky gully some 1,500 feet below the pass, instead of in a meadow on the other side of the mountains.

John was coming along slowly with the baggage, but I went ahead and, having nothing to carry, reached the camp about half an hour in front of anyone else. I had meant to make a fire with rhododendron scrub and to sit in moderate comfort, perhaps having a smoke, but every bit of wood was soaked and I could not raise so much as a glimmer. An icy wind was whistling up the gully, and although I was wearing what had once been a windproof jacket over my shirt, it had seen service and the rain drove straight through it. If I was cold by the time the advance party arrived under Nyima Dorje, it was nothing to what I was feeling by the end of the two hours it took even them to make any sort of a flame, and as luck would have it my personal boxes were almost at the end of the line ; but the joy of putting on thick dry clothes at last, having a hot drink, and feeling the blood moving again almost made the wait worth while. John had appeared long before the fire was anything more than a fervent wish, but his jacket was new and watertight, and until I was warm and in my right mind I looked at him with loathing and bitter envy.

It was an abominable camp, with hardly any room or grazing for the ponies, and by the time our tents

were up and the servants had made themselves a shelter out of a spare fly (still disdaining their own tent), most of the coolies had gone down the slopes again for five or six hundred feet to where there were some small overhanging rocks. Our gully must have been a main drain for the melting snow from the pass, however, and rivulets everywhere made us glad to leave in the morning, though the weather was still worse than before. We came to snow a short way below the Dzogu La (13,730 feet), but not enough to cause any trouble ; and then from the top we looked down through the rain on to banks of mist filling the Lepa Valley almost to the brim. By moving very slowly and waiting for breaks in the cloud we managed to work to a thousand feet below the pass, but that was the finish, for we could only see three hundred yards and any map was out of the question. After some time John wisely went on to Lepa, nearly 4,500 feet below the Dzogu La, to see about accommodation. There was so little chance of the day improving that there was no point in his staying, and though I actually spent another hour and a half up there myself with Nyima Töndrup, it was only out of stubbornness and because I should have felt such a fool if I had got half-way down before the mist cleared. It was sandflies tormenting my legs that drove me away in the end, and I cursed the man who invented shorts, and myself for putting them on. Nyima Töndrup was decently covered except for his face and hands, and they seemed impervious to attack.

I had found Lepa to be full of snobs before, but it was not until John arrived on the scene that they showed to what lengths they could go. We were the first people to have reached the place from any

direction since December (the passes being closed by snow during the winter and spring), and so no word of our coming had gone ahead, or even of our presence in the country. By the time John reached the village he was a long way in front of everyone but Nyima Dorje and one coolie, and when the inhabitants saw only the three dripping figures they shouted rudely that there was no room and that they had better camp somewhere by themselves. Not unnaturally they argued the point, all the more fiercely because of the water trickling down their backs, and at length they were given a wood-shed, ten feet square and full of sandflies, as being good enough for the likes of them. Then six more coolies appeared, and it turned out that there was a rather better room in a near-by house, though this also was very small, very dirty, and windowless. Finally, when the ponies and the rest of the men were espied, a good room was hurriedly prepared ; tea was made, and things were just beginning to be put straight as I came in. For the rest of our stay the villagers were as attentive as if we had been lords, and all because we had forty-five loads of baggage. If John had not been first on the scene it would have been nightfall before we were settled, as Lewa was at the tail-end of the procession and Nyima Dorje was incapable of exerting himself against opposition.

It was nine days before we were able to bring on the map from the Dzogu La ; but we were told that the second pass on the way to Sangachö Dzong (the La Sar) would certainly not be open for another fortnight, and so we did not feel that we were wasting valuable time by staying in Lepa. On two occasions the weather seemed a little better and we climbed up

to the pass, but each time the mist closed in before we could do anything useful. On our way back the first time I suddenly heard a slight crackle above my head, and, thinking it might be an animal of sorts, I looked up to see half a big tree toppling down. A loud yell and we both leaped for our lives as it thundered to the ground not three yards away and right along the path. The wood was riddled with ants, all much disconcerted at the fall, but there was no breath of wind and the crash was probably caused by vibration as we came stumping downhill. It was a depressing thought that we had to go back yet again to the very top (three and a half hours up, and two down, with sandflies most of the way), but the second time we were brightened by finding three beautiful pale-mauve orchids growing in the moss on a huge boulder. These were real treasures, for previously they had only been known from the Adung Valley in Upper Burma, where they had been discovered by Kingdon Ward in 1930.

For a wonder, July the 1st was clear and sunny, and John climbed up the east side of the valley to try to reach the crest while Nyima Töndrup came up to the pass again with me. We had grown to hate that climb, but being able to see about us made all the difference, and once we were above the forest we found ourselves in a very lovely garden. Dwarf rhododendrons covered the sides of the valley in glowing sheets of scarlet ; pink, purple, apricot, crimson, and white filled the hollows and flanked the path ; and in every clear space there were sweet-smelling yellow primulas, dark blue gentians, and white anemones. A swarm of bees crossed the pass while we were resting on top, making us take cover hastily, and interrupting some



rather blurred thoughts on colour-combinations which can look so magnificent in nature and so monstrous in art. The weather held all day, and we were able to finish the work without the slightest difficulty, astounded but very gratified.

One of the coolies who had gone with me to Pipa in 1933, came in with a present of a bottle of milk and one of chang to announce that he was coming with us to Sangachö Dzong. He had already made four trips away from the village, and was looked upon as a great traveller. The fact is there is scarcely ever any need for the people of Lepa to venture away from their homes, and for nearly half a year it is an impossibility to do so, for the Dzogu La is blocked from the beginning of January to the middle of June ; the La Sar from October to July ; and there is no path at all down the Lepa Chu to the Zayul River. In the summer men come in from the Rongtö bringing rice in exchange for butter, and from Sangachö Dzong with knives, jewellery and salt to trade for butter and wheat ; and these are almost the only contacts which are ever made with strangers, except when occasionally a girl is brought in from outside as a wife. As in most other villages in Zayul, hunting is carried on as a regular occupation (there are black bear, goral, serow, musk deer, and pig in the valley), and this in spite of the prohibition which is in force over the rest of inhabited Tibet. Kharndempa said that the Zayulis are so much more independent and spirited than the peasants in other parts of the country, that it would be as much as his life was worth to attempt to curtail their liberties, law or no law. The only thing to do was to turn a blind eye to the practice and accept the skins as part of the taxes in official ignorance of how

they had been obtained. Lepa pays a tax of butter and barley, the equivalent of only seven rupees a year for the whole place, because the authorities have never visited it and have been given the idea that it is a wild and jungly spot unable to produce more than the barest minimum. Everywhere else in Zayul houses are taxed from two to ten rupees each a year, according to the number of inmates and their possessions, and all land is rented from the State.

On July the 4th, we moved off again for Sangachö Dzong, with our baggage on dzos (a cross between yaks and common cattle). Mapping in Zayul is difficult as a rule because of the forests, which sometimes limit visibility almost to nothing, but following up the bank of the river on the first day out from Lepa there were frequent long stretches of open marshland with good visibility, and there the only trouble was that we had to spend our time wading through water of any depth from a few inches to two feet. After six miles the valley floor widened out, however, to about half a mile and here, though still swampy, it was not nearly so wet and was used as a grazing ground for large numbers of dzos and ponies. Life improved in consequence, and by the time we made camp some two miles further on we were feeling much less embittered. Two hundred yards above the camp was a small hot spring, but though animals drink the water, human beings only use it to wash in as a cure for rheumatics and sores. After one easy day, it was the second that was so frightful from the point of view of the map. The going was quite good, but the path ran through bamboo forest for the first nine miles, and finished with a mile of thick pines and rhododendrons; and by the time we crawled into our

tents, pitched on the shore of a tiny lake at about 10,800 feet, we reckoned that we had already worked off any purgatory we might be liable for up till then, with a considerable balance in hand.

The Lepa Chu was running white and milky, and on the fourth march we came to the foot of a large glacier, seven and half miles long and 1,200 yards across, flowing from a line of snow peaks to the west. It was in rapid retreat, with a gently sloping foot covered with rocks, and the surface was very smooth ; but there were one or two small crevasses here and there which might well have given trouble to our dzos, and the baggage-train picked its way among the huge limestone boulders of the lateral moraine for a mile and a half before risking the ice. Not even on the moraine did we have any real trouble, however, and the coolies said that never before in the history of man had the first caravan of the year been able to cross this stretch without spending at least one day in rolling boulders out of the way to make a path. We crossed over the ice and climbed up to the Duk La at 13,990 feet, over a slope which was brilliant with stunted rhododendrons. There were small hanging glaciers on both sides of the pass, and the whole of that district had obviously been intensely glaciated at one time. Formerly the ice extended to five miles below Lepa, but after this had receded there seems to have been a second and much more recent advance to some six miles above the village.

We dropped steeply down from the Duk La and camped in a small grazing ground almost within sight of the Zayul River. There were two men there from Sangachö Dzong, looking after a herd of fifteen dzos, and they brought us some fresh milk, very dirty curds,

and the unpleasant news that the La Sar was not yet open, although they admitted that they had not been up to see. None the less they were right, for when we reached the top the next morning, after a stiff climb of three thousand feet, we found that it was completely blocked by a large cornice of snow which had been packed so hard by the wind that it had almost the consistency of ice. The La Sar (14,930 feet) is simply a cleft in a knife-edged ridge not two yards across at the top and precipitous for a few hundred feet on both sides. The snow overhung to the north for perhaps twenty feet, and, with no possibility of climbing round it, there did not seem to be much chance of our getting any further for a while. We were still wondering what to do when the coolies sent a spokesman to say that the march of the day before had shown them that we were clearly the favoured of the gods, and that if we gave the word they would advance against the cornice in all faith. It looked a hopeless business, but not to be outdone we told them to attack it with their knives and our one ice-axe. After more than an hour we had made no appreciable progress and even their stout hearts were beginning to falter when suddenly the greater part of the snow fell away into the valley, the men yelling and screaming with triumph. We took the animals down unloaded, with one man leading each (in a sweat of terror in case his dzo should slip and fall on him, as seemed only too probable), and two behind hanging madly on to the ropes tied to the saddle. The loads were then brought over by hand, and it was with a feeling of enormous satisfaction that we reached Sangachö Dzong late in the afternoon. We were by no means the first Europeans to get there, for Colonel Bailey had arrived from

Drowa Gompa in 1911 on his great journey from Peking to Assam ; and Kingdon Ward had visited the place from Shugden Gompa in 1933.

The path from the La Sar runs in a steep narrow gully, and Sangachö Dzong is quite invisible up to the last five hundred yards. It is not a big place, with only the square, three-storied dzong, or fort, and a monastery of a hundred and eight monks ; but, built along the crest of a narrow ridge which rises eight hundred feet straight off the floor of the valley, the white walls and dark red roofs are very impressive and somehow reminiscent of " Dr. Nikola." We were given a suite on the top floor of the dzong, of a large bedroom and a kitchen, connected by a box-room passage ; and, after the comparatively uncivilized parts we had been in ever since we reached Shikathang, the indoor sanitation was luxury indeed. The fort is Kharn-dempa's headquarters, although he is seldom there for more than two or three weeks at a time, and that only twice a year, once in July and once in November or December. From January to June he is in Shikathang, and the remaining months he spends on tour through his district, which includes the right bank of the Salween as far up as Po, and down almost to the Burmese frontier. The six villages nearest to Sangachö Dzong take it in turns of three days each to supply the monastery and fort with wood and water.

One interesting thing about travel in Tibet is that the place-names are always full of meaning, though some are in dialect and impossible to understand without long explanations. For example, a free translation of " Sangachö " is " Magical Religion," and the name originally belonged to the monastery alone, before it was tacked on to the dzong. But it

is when they are descriptive that the names really become worth while, because they help you to build up pictures in your mind before arriving at the places, and it is always fun to see how near these are to the actual thing. Some (like Shugden Gompa, the Monastery among the Junipers) are easy ; some need a little imagination, such as the Chatö La, or Upper Iron Pass—a grand name, which conjures up visions of a high, bleak, stony and difficult crossing at once. And there are others which call for special knowledge of some kind. The Yidak La is one of these. From running along the side of a broad valley, the approach to the pass finishes through a narrow, winding cleft ; and altogether it bears a strong resemblance to a Yidak, who is an unhappy being condemned to perpetual hunger and thirst, with a huge belly and a long, thin, hopelessly inadequate throat.

Our first morning in Sangachö Dzong we were invited to the monastery for breakfast. We were escorted by a party of monks, and regaled with buttered tea and the usual ceremonial bowls of sweetened rice until the Abbot appeared, fresh from prayers. Of all the many charming people we met on this journey Sera Geshe, the Priest \* of Sera, was easily the most delightful. He was an old man, with a long white beard, chubby face and bald head ; full of humour, except when we took his photograph (that made him shy) ; and immensely kind and generous. He had been brought up in the great monastery of Sera, near Lhasa, in which there are

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\* “ Geshe ” is really much more than “ priest.” It is a high academic degree, obtainable only after about twenty years of study, and something like Doctor of Divinity.

seven thousand seven hundred monks, and he had lived there since he was a small boy till the day he was sent to Sangachö Dzong. That was many years ago, and he had never been back to visit Sera, although he said his heart was truly there. In the old days he had had no time to go, and now he feared he was too brittle for the road. Later we grew to know him well ; but that morning, after exchanging khatas, there was little talk apart from the conventional courtesies.

These finished, we were taken into the temple, in the main hall of which the monks were praying, squatting in long rows and chanting very musically. There were many square pillars in the hall, and the walls were lined with huge cupboards for the fifteen hundred sacred books of the monastery. An open door led into the main chapel, and here, save for a dim light coming through the door, the only illumination was from hundreds of tiny butter lamps, which are kept burning day and night. The air was heavy with incense, and above us towered the great idol, with two or three lesser figures to the sides. Up to this point our guide had seemed a little suspicious of us, but we showed our respect by bowing low in proper form to the image which to him meant so much, and by laying a khata at its feet ; and after that all was well. There were many other chapels in the temple, all quite little and all with their twinkling butter lamps. In some of them there were statues of Buddhas and teachers of the Law ; in others devils, and in one or two there were model shrines made in silver or brass and containing the bones of the particularly holy lamas who had died in the monastery. Sacred pictures, painted on cloth

edged with brocade, hung from the beams and pillars, and on the altars were arranged many vases of tall yellow primulas—some of the vases, pathetically enough, being made from old bottles. We were shown the books, the cymbals, clarinets and trumpets, the devil-dance masks (home-made of *papier mâché*, and horrible to behold); and our pilgrimage was accompanied from beginning to end by the chanting of the monks, the ringing of prayer bells, and the deep throbbing of a gong. It was half-past eleven before we were given the breakfast we had been longing to eat at nine, but the boiled chopped pork and noodles, the cabbage and tea were gloriously filling, and we were soon comforted.

During our stay in Sangachö Dzong we spent a good deal of the time indoors, working on the map, developing films, or packing insects and flowers; but even when at home like this we had many opportunities of seeing life. One afternoon Lewa went two miles down the valley to Gochen, and came back joyfully with thirty eggs, saying that he thought it would be better to buy our food from that village because prices seemed cheaper there than anywhere else. John was really in charge of stores, but as he was out I called to Nyima Dorje and told him not to get more supplies from the monks until he had compared costs. The little fool took this to mean that he had been deprived of the business of buying rations in favour of Lewa, and in five minutes they were at each other's throats like tigers. I dashed out of the room, hurled them apart, and sent each to a corner of the kitchen in deep disgrace, but it was amusing to see the reactions of the fight on various others. Nyima Töndrup, that man of peace,



hurried into our room and began fiddling with John's blankets as though it were a matter of life and death to get the bed straight; and the scullery coolies were frankly terrified. They fled on to the roof, and huddled together like hens, gazing with affrighted eyes at the struggle. The warriors were reconciled to each other by the next morning and both were zealous in trying to atone for their bad behaviour. Lewa made a cake of tsamba and chang decorated with butter, for our delight, and Nyima Dorje must have come in every ten minutes to offer tea. Roast-barley flour and beer made a quaint cake, though strange to say it was quite pleasant. It was not Lewa's own invention, but a crib from the monasteries where cakes like this are made for the gods in large numbers on special occasions; and where later, by then slightly shop-soiled, they are thankfully polished off by the community.

We were very keen to make a trip over the Podung La to Sukhu, and as no one seemed to know whether the pass was open or not, or much about the road, John went off with Nyima Töndrup and three coolies on July the 12th to investigate. He had hardly left the dzong before Sera Geshe came to call, arriving very blown at the top of the stairs. He stayed for more than two hours, discussing everything from the chances of war with China to chills on the stomach, with which, he said, he was much afflicted during the winters. I recommended hot rum and milk, but he refused to take the rum until I could assure him that it was made neither from corn nor rice, as liquors from these were forbidden to him by the rules of his Order. Once he knew that it was only sugar, and more of a medicine than a drink,

Kim's description of the Abbot of Sangachö  
is a very good example of the image of Kim's  
writing style (p. 74.)

Crossing the glacier, south of the  
Duk La, we found both sides of the  
pass covered with masses of rhodo-  
dendrons, anemones, and pale blue  
gentians. (p. 74.)





he was much relieved, and promised to take a nip whenever he was assailed by the complaint. Before he left he taught me three Tibetan prayers which he begged me to say night and morning as a precaution against the dangers of the road, and declared that he himself would pray for our well-being daily ; then wandered off contentedly with two slabs of chocolate (for which he had a passion), a stick of Chinese ink, a pencil, and the precious bottle of rum.

That same afternoon the Cham Kusho was seen riding up the hill with her retinue. She had left Shikathang with Kharndempa, but he was not expected for several days, and she had only come so soon because she had heard that we were there and she wanted to see that we were well looked after. As the older inhabitant by three days, I met her at the gate of the dzong and had tea ready for her in her quarters, where I sat talking for half an hour or so, before leaving to give her a chance to unpack. She left this to her servants, however, for she returned the call in a few minutes, with a five-pound brick of tea as a present. She was so thrilled with some photographs we had taken in England (especially those which showed women's dress) that she stayed for hours, and I began to have the darkest fears for our supply of chocolate. Because of a possible shortage of transport we had brought the minimum of stores from England, and our chocolate ration was only a quarter of a pound each per week. We made up for this wretched allowance by the fact that it was "Supex," which is twice as good and apparently goes twice as far as any other, but there was one drawback about this—our visitors often ate a week's

supply at a sitting, and presently we had to give up offering any at all. Tuesday morning was chocolate morning, and by Tuesday afternoon we were already waiting impatiently for next week.

I had not expected John for about three days, and was surprised when he arrived back on the 13th, having found the path up to the Podung La to be moderately easy. When close to the top he had been turned back by mist, but as far as he could see the pass was open and not very difficult. Where we now were was so infinitely drier than Zayul that it was rather a shock to hear of mist, although if I had paused to think I might have realized that the one place where we could be almost certain of finding it during the monsoon was on the Podung La ; for the rainfall in the Sukhu Valley is high, and the range crossed by that pass is the barrier which condenses the last surviving drops. We were eleven days in Sangachö Dzong, of which six were dry and sunny and the remainder with nothing worse than a few showers ; and this although it was the middle of the wet season. The difference in climate was best shown by the entire lack of the rich vegetation which is so typical of the Rongtö Valley. There were pines and, higher up, a few firs and junipers, but never a deciduous tree to be seen.

The day after John came home the Cham Kusho put on her finest clothes, spent an hour arranging her hair, and paid us another visit to have her photograph taken. While posing for five pictures outside the kitchen window she told us that some of Kharndempa's servants had already turned up and were preparing for his arrival ; and when we went to bed they were hard at work fumigating his rooms with burning

juniper twigs. They were spoiling no ship, for great clouds of smoke came rolling out of the windows and drifted into ours immediately above. John was asleep so that I had to bear the brunt of this alone, and though quite a good smell I soon had enough of it. Kharndempa arrived in the morning with a large and imposing bodyguard of armed men carrying a strange assortment of weapons, from Lewa's ice-axe (which he had traded in Shikathang) and an ancient prong-gun, to a modern '375 Mannlicher. Behind him rode Tasong Tsang, looking rather depressed we thought; and behind him again an attractive lady who was temporarily attached to the household, the "girl-friend" of 1933 being no longer in evidence. The Governor had come just in time for the ceremony of Mölam Chenmo (the Great Invocation), and all night long there was blowing of conches and trumpets in the temple, and the clash of cymbals.

The day started with the orchestra serenading Kharndempa from the roof of the dzong, close to our window, and at eleven o'clock we all walked down to the temple in a body—all except Tasong Tsang, that is, and he was confined to bed with a poisoned foot. The entire male population for miles around and many pilgrims were standing on the right side of the main hall near the door, and on the left was a small group made up of the orchestra, the choir, and the various notables, such as the Governor, the headmen of the district, a couple of wealthy traders, ourselves, and the servants, both his and our own. On a low platform in the centre of the hall was a wooden throne with a high back, over the top of which was draped a silk khata.\* As soon as we arrived

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\* Ceremonial scarf.

an ascetic-looking monk aged about thirty was helped into highly decorated boots and rich brocade vestments, and led up to the throne. A heavy silver headdress like an inverted bowl, decorated with flowing banners of thin rainbow-coloured silk, high plumes and small silver skulls, was placed on his head and fastened under his chin ; and a circular disc of brass, nine inches across, was hung on his chest. There was some sort of inscription on this, but I could not see what it was, and afterwards I forgot to ask. When fully arrayed he sat back in the throne and stretched out his arms to each side, taking a trident in his right hand and a large bow in his left. Up to this moment there had been an almost complete silence in the temple, broken only by the rustling of clothes and an occasional whisper from the congregation ; but now the music began, and from behind us the booming of the immense prayer trumpets, the cymbals, gongs, clarinets, and the deep bass chanting of the choir combined to fill the whole building with pulsing waves of sound. In about five minutes, closely watched by the Abbot and the more important monks, the chief performer began to go into a trance, gasping and twitching, while (so Sera Geshe told us later) a spirit called Nechung Chökyong took possession of him. After another five minutes he made an effort to stand, failed, sank back into the throne—and then suddenly he was on his feet on the thick felt cushion in front of the dais, standing very rigid and erect, with eyes open but turned up so far that nothing but the whites was visible. A few seconds later, with almost incredible agility in view of the massive garments and helmet he had on, and the fact that he was

standing on a soft pad, he leaped nine or ten feet out into the middle of the floor ; stood motionless as a statue for a little with arms outspread like a cross and weapons in his hands ; and then began a whirling, frenzied dance in and out of the pillars, the crowd scattering to give him room. Followed by half the band he vanished into the main chapel, where we lost sight of him, but a few minutes later he reappeared wildly gyrating, with the skirts of his robe flying out and the banners on his helmet fluttering like birds' wings. He halted abruptly and dropped into the throne, his eyes still twisted back till I felt they might never come straight again. At once a monk darted up, carefully wiped his face, which was streaming with sweat, and offered him tea out of a silver chalice, while another stood near swinging a censer.

Kharndempa now approached and, kneeling, placed a khata round the entranced monk's neck, leaning forward to touch the brass disc with his forehead. The monk laid his hands on the Governor's head in blessing and gave him a small wisp of scarf, which he took from the Abbot who was standing beside him. John and I came next and did the same, followed by the servants, the headmen, and the villagers ; and while people of any standing had the piece of khata put round their necks, the others were simply touched on the shoulder with a short iron sceptre. During all this the monk moved jerkily like a robot, his head straight to the front, without a trace of expression on his face ; and as soon as the blessings were over Sera Geshe went up to him, presented a scarf, and asked questions about the coming year in a whisper. Replies were given in a



hoarse undertone and a scribe took down everything that was said on a slate. This went on for five or six minutes, and then, while the drumming and blowing rose to a crescendo, the monk was shaken with a convulsive shudder and Nechung Chökyong left him. At the moment of his going the people gave him farewell in a long wailing cry.

The monk looked very exhausted when he came round. He was refreshed with tea from the chalice, and the weighty silver headdress was taken off, and replaced by a tall yellow silk one, also ornamented with banners and silver skulls. His left hand still held the bow, but in his right was put a long heavy sword. The music struck up again, and in a couple of minutes, with the spasmodic twitchings, he was in a second trance, possessed (I was told) by a being called Karmathrinle. As before, his eyes turned hideously back, but this time his mouth was contorted and the muscles of his throat stood out like wires. Presently he rose unsteadily to his feet, rocked backwards and forwards from the hips for perhaps a quarter of a minute, and hurled the sword with great strength through the open door of the temple. The position of the sword, as it falls, shows the trend of events, and there was great anxiety on the part of all concerned to see what had happened. The monk sat down and the trident was hurriedly put into his empty right hand. Once more Sera Geshe enquired the future, each question being accompanied by a fresh khata, and once more the scribe took the words down on the slate. A dish of barley was then held before the man, who first dropped a little in the hats of the élite before scattering handfuls among the crowd. This barley is in the nature of a talisman

like the Catholic holy medals, and everyone held out his gown to catch as much as he could. That was the end of the show, for almost immediately the monk collapsed altogether and we realized that Karmathrinle too had departed.

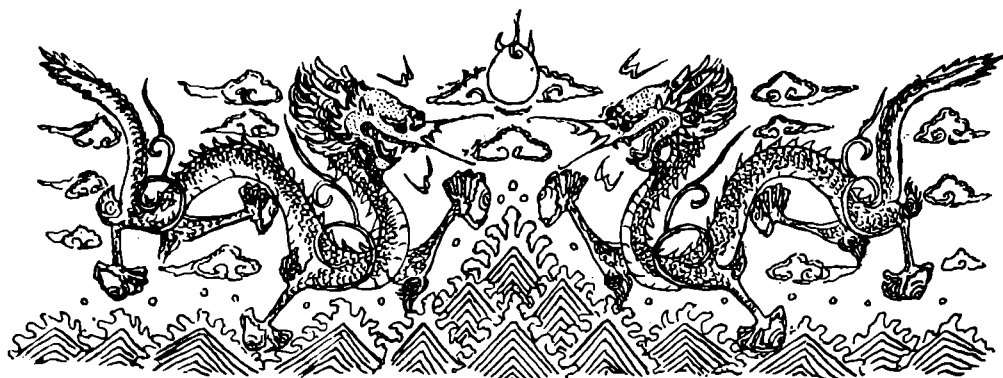
The people dispersed quietly and we followed the Governor into the various chapels to pay our respects to Buddha and the saints with scarves. Finally we all trooped into the reception room and had tea and sweetened rice, while Kharndempa wrote down the prophecies from dictation and sent them off that evening to Lhasa. It was the most impressive ceremony I had ever seen, and I would not have missed it for worlds. There was no possibility of taking a photograph, but even had there been light enough instead of the dimness of the temple, there was such a spirit of reverence and faith about the whole proceeding that I could not have done it. It would have felt like sacrilege. Later, when Sera Geshe was talking to us about it he said that Nechung Chökyong and Karmathrinle come three times a year to the monastery ; that their mouthpiece prepares himself by a full year's silent meditation in cave or cell, eating once a day a small meal of tea and tsamba ; and that he is chosen as being the most spiritual monk in the place, going through the ordeal only once in his life.

The next morning Kharndempa sent us a noble present (which we did a poor best to repay in kind) of ten pounds of crude sugar cakes, forty pounds of rice and five hundred cigarettes, with a request that we should not try to reach Sukhu via the Podung La, because the south side of the pass was so difficult that loaded coolies would be sure to have accidents

and might easily be killed. That was the side which John had not been able to see on account of the mist. It was a disappointment in a way, but Kharndempa was so much against the idea that we told him we would go directly to Shugden Gompa by the main summer route, and would leave Sangachö Dzong on July the 19th. This turned out to be an inauspicious date, however, and word came from the monastery begging us not to start then whatever happened, as it had been foreseen that if we did John, I, and three others would be stricken with some dire sickness. We thanked them kindly for the warninn and put off our departure for one day. Others tried different methods of delaying us before it was definitely known that we had decided not to go. Kharndempa said that he had been hoping for us to dine with him on the 19th, and had already had a dzo killed for the purpose ; and the two foremen of coolies came together, with a khata, to say would we forgive them, they had been unable to collect enough transport in time and the full complement could not be ready until the morning of the 20th. In fact, what with one thing and another, we would have been pretty well stymied.

We said good-bye to everybody in one day and were exhausted by the end. Sera Geshe was first on our list, and we were taken round to his private room, which was very bare and spotlessly clean, with a small altar hidden behind a screen, a low plank bedstead, a cupboard for books, and a fire-dish. The old man produced a meal of thick chapattis, tea, and cold pork (all the more touching as he himself was a strict vegetarian and lived very humbly) ; and when we left he gave us a coloured clay plaque of

Chenrezi to protect us, and six pounds of butter, asking if we would be kind enough to buy some coloured cloth for the decoration of the temple and some paints for the sacred pictures the next time we came up from India. Then to the monastery proper, where we were given another meal by the monks, to whom we handed a donation of a hundred trangkas for expenses. They retaliated with fifty pounds of flour, some rice, four pounds of butter, and two little packets of noodles from China. We took a rest of an hour, had a third and rather heavier meal with Kharndempa, and finished up with a short visit to Tasong Tsang, who was being treated by a Tibetan doctor for what now looked like blood poisoning. After that we cancelled our own dinner and sat in our room, motionless, bloated, and almost speechless till bed-time. We had not brought nearly enough clothes with us, and it was becoming very much of a problem to know what to wear on state occasions. This day I dressed like a Tibetan, but John was a glorious figure in multi-coloured felt boots, green pyjama trousers, a yellow jacket, and a Tibetan hat bound with an emerald sash. Our hosts were filled with admiration.



གནམ་འབྲུག་མོ་བྱ།

*The heavenly-dragon jewel*

## CHAPTER FIVE

“ His faithful dog shall bear him company.”

Pope : *Essay on Man*.

FROM Sangachö Dzong to Shugden Gompa we followed the route over the Dzo La (15,830 feet), which had been taken by Colonel Bailey and by Kingdon Ward. It was a main road in the sense that pack animals could use it, and as good as any in the country, so that we were able to cover the distance in two marches of fifteen and a half and sixteen miles, crossing the pass on the first day ; but in a land where stretches of the best available paths frequently consist of flimsy wooden galleries pegged to the face of precipices, the cost of building real roads in the English sense is prohibitive, and it is not surprising that in the whole of eastern Tibet there is not a single wheeled vehicle of any kind—not even a wheel-barrow. Journeys are spoken of not in miles, but in days, weeks, or months ; and, apart from the

written reports of officials, all news is dependent on word of mouth.

Close to the bridge, some four miles from the start, we came upon a man busily inscribing a stone with the mystical Buddhist formula "Om mani peme hum." He held us up most cheerfully for alms, that being the custom when such mani-stones are being made, and the villain had obviously chosen that time and place because he had heard that we were expected to pass by at any moment. Until we crossed the river we made very little height, but from then on we climbed fairly steadily to the Dzo La, through pine forest (where we saw a troop of brown and grey macaques scampering away through the trees), and over bare open meadows bright with mauve asters, yellow and blue primulas, brown and yellow anemones, and purple rhododendrons. The higher we climbed the gayer the country became, up to a couple of hundred feet below the pass, where we met with small patches of snow and the flowers abruptly vanished. It is a pity that there is no path straight up the river from Sangachö Dzong, because the Dzo La is so flat on top and has such a gentle slope on each side that the snow on it is very deep in winter, and it cannot be crossed before the end of June or after October. From October to June the only way from Sangachö Dzong to Shugden Gompa is over the Dama La, which is open all the year ; but this adds a whole day to the journey.

Work in the pine forest had given us a lot of trouble, and, although the transport reached the camp at six o'clock, it was after half-past nine and pitch dark before we came in, having only been able to bring the map down to a little below the pass before

the light went. The tents were close to a small grazing ground, and in the morning John and I borrowed ponies and went back to the Dzo La to finish that which we ought to have done the day before. We started off in good heart at a trot, but the saddles were designed for Tibetan anatomies and were unsuited to our more tender forms, so that presently the pace dropped to an uneasy walk, and after a mile we forsook our mounts altogether and completed the job on foot. We got back to camp at eleven o'clock ; were sustained with hot milk, fried (and very raw) gobbets of pork, and cubes of fresh, rubbery cheese doled out to us by the herdsman and his wife ; and set off in pursuit of the baggage-dzos which had left four hours before.

The ground was so flat that when we crossed the watershed between the Ngagong and Zayul Rivers it took us some minutes to decide exactly where the divide was, and in the next eleven miles we descended less than 1,600 feet. South of the path there were several hanging glaciers, draining into the Ngagong Chu, and on the broad, treeless floor of the valley we passed about a dozen cattle camps of black yak-hair tents, each with eight or ten guy-ropes, propped up in the middle with long sticks. Someone has described these tents as looking like fat spiders with very spindly legs, but they are warm and fairly weatherproof and, greatest advantage of all, one can have a fire inside with perfect comfort, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. We counted between four and five hundred head of cattle (nearly all yaks) near the encampments, and as many sheep. The yaks were the first we had seen in their own country, and with their low-hung heads, wide-spread-

ing horns, magnificently bushy tails and rich tufts of hair hanging from their flanks almost to the ground, they all looked interesting if much the same to us at first ; for the cows seldom give as much as a quart of milk a day, and their udders are so small as to be invisible in the fur. The cows are called *dri*, and for a long time we caused our servants shame and suffering by speaking of both sexes indiscriminately as yaks in front of coolies and other small fry ; but at length we developed a “ yak eye ” to their great relief, and could spot which was which unfailingly even from a distance. It was not so much a question of size, some bulls being small and cows big ; the secret was in the shape, for gradually the females seemed to us to be more and more delicate and graceful until at last they stood out as clearly as ballet dancers beside policemen.

Shugden Gompa (12,990 feet) is built on a bluff five hundred feet above the east bank of a large lake, and consists, like Sangachö Dzong, of a fort and a monastery with several villages below, almost on a level with the water. We were met three miles out by ponies sent by the magistrate, and in spite of the saddles, after the extra seven miles we had walked in the morning up to the Dzo La and back, we were glad to ride. Climbing up to the dzong we passed six hares by the side of the path, sitting within ten yards of us, and not in the least alarmed. The baggage won the race by a short head, and as we dismounted in the courtyard boxes were being unloaded all round and carried upstairs to our quarters. Our last lodgings had been light and airy with a superb view up the valley, but the room we now had was badly lit even at mid-day and looked on to nothing



better than a partly built house belonging to the monastery. None the less, it was the best room in the building, the whole of which was dark and gloomy, though much bigger than that at Sangachö Dzong.

Once we had crossed the Dzo La we were beyond Kharndempa's jurisdiction and in the sub-district of Ngagong, which takes its name from the presiding spirit of a prominent sugar-loaf limestone peak. This towers above the south-west end of the lake and is certainly visible from the Ata Kang La and the Dzo La, and, it was said, from the Dokha La as well, although when we crossed the latter pass in 1936 there was a good deal of cloud and we could not see nearly far enough to tell. A group of five high peaks to the west of the lake, of which Ngagong is one, are together called Dorjetsenga, the five-peak thunder-bolt, and are looked upon as being very holy and the home of gods. The country was much drier than at Sangachö Dzong, for there were no woods, nor anything thicker than some patches of small fir trees, junipers, and scrubby bushes, mostly in the hollows out of the tearing wind which swept down the valley all day long from eight o'clock in the morning till dusk. Even on the most exposed slopes, however, there were flowers in millions, primulas, anemones, blue poppies, what looked like blue vetch, asters, and many others, including a few gentians out before their time. In the early morning, while there was still no wind to ruffle the water, the reflection of the clouds and mountains in the lake to the south was almost as clear as the originals themselves; and beyond was the foot of a large glacier, a cliff of ice, white, green, and glittering. At one time it extended

right down to where the western end of the lake now is, scooping out for itself a deep trough, the sides of which rise high above the present floor of the valley. As the ice receded, this trough filled with water, and to-day the lake is about seventeen and a half miles long. Years ago it must have been much larger than this, for it is becoming smaller and smaller, choked with silt—some of which comes from the glacier, but most from the Tsengo Chu, which has already make a delta nearly one and a half miles wide, stretching over to within a hundred yards of the far bank.

In 1934 Kingdon Ward had suggested that the range forming the south side of the Ngagong Chu Valley was possibly a continuation of the great Himalaya Range, and, although it would take a party of trained geologists (which we were not) really to decide whether this were so, we intended to explore what we could of it purely from a geographical standpoint. To do this we decided that John should take Nyima Töndrup and go down the Ngagong Chu to explore the north side of the range and as much as possible of the country north of the river ; while I went round over the Ata Kang La, the Kangri Karpo La, and the Chindru La to join him again at Dashing Gompa. Colonel Bailey had also wanted to explore the Ngagong Chu, but when he had reached Shugden Gompa he had been sternly refused permission to travel any further to the west. Coming twenty-four years later, we had no difficulty, and the worst the magistrate did was to warn us solemnly that the Pobas, who live further down that valley, were robbers and murderers

and that we were ill-advised to go near them. We hoped he was wrong about this, and as, in any case, there was certain to be a shortage of coolies to cross the Kangri Karpo La, John arranged to take the bulk of the baggage with him and risk theft on the road.

John left Shugden Gomba on July the 24th, the day after my birthday, when we were both feeling so replete that the very thought of moving was agony. This was due more to kindness of heart than to gluttony, for the servants had got wind of what day it was, and were so anxious to do me honour by providing a feast that we could not have disappointed them by refusing to eat as much as was humanly possible. We started rashly by opening a carefully sealed tin of delicacies (a present from my mother) in the early morning, and eating freely of the contents, for at eleven o'clock the servants trooped in with a khata each and a big tsamba cake of solid dough ; and shortly after that the magistrate, having been warned of the event, arrived with a mysterious dish of fried fungi, swimming in butter. Nyima Dorje had made a sandwich cake filled with a chocolate-and-butter paste, covered with pure chocolate, and pathetically decorated with squiggles of butter as a substitute for icing, and this was rich enough for a meal in itself ; but not content with that they had killed a sheep and prepared a royal feast of mutton broth, huge mutton sausages, mutton-and-kidney pie, sweet omelette, and Christmas pudding (brought in blazing with whiskey) at one and the same time. Altogether it was a great day, though wearing, and by the time John pushed off in the morning neither of us had really recovered. A bilious figure shuffling





We crossed the river at La in bright sunshine. Scarcely had we turned down the shore, than we were enveloped in thick mist. This picture shows the hound, with cooler. (p. 77.)

The Cham Kusho put on her loveliest gown, and posed most willingly for five pictures. (p. 82.)

down the valley was the last I saw of him for nearly seven weeks, and I was in no better case myself.

Two days later I too set off with my diminished company, and it was not until half-way through the march that we discovered we were not so few as we had thought, being adopted by a stray hound of amiable disposition, which shared my lunch and thereafter decided to throw in its lot with ours. He was a Khampa hunting-dog, black, and rather like a chow, and the servants christened him Balu, the bear, so Balu he remained. As we passed by the lake we could see dozens of fish in the water looking like trout, a pound or a pound and a half each, but being near a monastery they are never caught. We spent that night in a grimy hovel close to the foot of the big glacier and on the bank of a small lake, and Balu insisted on a place in my room, which was already so full of fleas that a few more made no difference. Once again Lewa, Nyima Dorje, and I had been condemned to ride—though to be sure it was no penance to anyone but me—because the magistrate had pressed ponies on us with such fervour that it would have been churlish to refuse; but we improved matters to some degree by lengthening my stirrups with string. We rode on the following day as well, and this nearly brought my career to a sudden close, for there were two bad patches of path on the face of a cliff several hundred feet above the torrent, and, though I negotiated the first with some skill, on the second of these my beast incautiously trod on a sloping piece of slate. Its feet shot away, and we all thought my last hour had come, but as it fell from the path I was thrown clear into a small bush and fished out by the coolies. Strangely the pony was also safe. It



had landed astride a projecting rock six feet down and was none the worse when we pulled it up with ropes. We had no more rides after this until September, for from our camp, three and a half miles north of the pass, there was no more than a footpath for practically the entire way to Shugden Gompa.

I felt a particular thrill when we climbed up the glacier and crossed the Ata Kang La on July the 28th, as that was the furthest point I had reached in 1933 when I had come up the Rongtö with Kingdon Ward and Brooks Carrington, and it was satisfying to know that it could not stop me this time. On the way up there was just enough snow on the ice to make the going tricky, for it covered most of the crevasses with a thin, treacherous layer, and though they were small ones almost without exception, it would have been no joke to have fallen in, and we had to probe every yard with sticks. The Ata Kang La at 15,110 feet is a three-fold glacier saddle, the ice flowing down to it from both north and south and dividing on the pass so that one branch runs north-west towards Shugden Gompa, one south-east into the Sukhu Valley, and one nearly due west towards the valley of the Ata Chun. Up to this point we had been moving in bright sunshine, but soon after we had turned down the third and smallest glacier a dense mist swept up the valley and blotted everything out for minutes at a time. At first we were not greatly handicapped, for we left the ice and followed a narrow path which ran along the cliffs ; it was when we had to cross over to the other side to reach the Cheti La that we got into difficulties. The whole glacier was split up by deep crevasses, many of them a hundred

to a hundred and fifty feet deep and ten or twelve yards wide, and our path often ran along narrow necks between fissures, where we hardly dared move except during those brief intervals when the mist lifted enough to let us see where we were. There were only four hundred yards of ice to cross, but Lewa and I took nearly an hour and a half to get over with the first of the coolies, and some of the men must have taken a great deal longer, for five of them spent eleven and a half hours over what was little more than eight miles in all.

It was a fairly steep climb of about two thousand feet from the glacier to the narrow Cheti La (13,990 feet). We had a rest at the top and then turned down the slope towards Chutung; but long before we reached that camp we were beginning to meet small parties of travellers from Ata, Medrong, and even from the Rongtö Valley, on their way to Shugden Gompa for Mölam Chenmo, and we knew there would be no room at Chutung for us. I knew most of the pilgrims and they all knew me, so our march from the Cheti La was in the nature of a triumph, with people bowing right and left as we passed and stepping up to ask about my health. The headman of Ata seized the opportunity to sell me half a pound of toffee, made from butter and honey, and to exchange the news of the road. Having only just left Ata, he could not produce very much of interest himself, except for the tragic announcement that my friend the headman of Medrong (which I used to call "Modung") was very ill with some malignant disease which had defied all the efforts of the monks. I could only trust that things were not so bad as they sounded. The hut Kingdon Ward had built



at Chutung was still in existence as a roof and four corner posts, though the sides had long since been used as firewood, but every available foot of space around it was already taken up, so we went on for another thousand feet down the hill and camped on the bank of a small glacier torrent. The ground was at an angle of at least twenty degrees, and we all kept slipping out of our blankets and wearily pulling ourselves up again the whole night long. Balu alone was comfortable, and he remained motionless near the fire.

We reached Ata on July the 29th, and there I paid off my coolies, who were all immediately snapped up by a merchant on his way to Shugden Gompa. This was a piece of good luck for them, as they had never expected a return fare. One of them, old and rather feeble, had at one time been a wealthy man, but had gambled away his money and now had to work as a porter to live. Not having been able to cross the Podung La from Sangachö Dzong, I had to go up to it from this side to see what it was like, but before that I spent two days surveying the glaciers near Ata, which were all in evident retreat. South of the Ata Kang La the wet, heavily forested country begins again, which stretches right through to Assam, and the glaciers themselves would have proved this at once, even if all the trees and bushes had somehow been cleared away. Near Ata, the foot of the main glacier is at about 8,000 feet, while at Shugden Gompa, on account of the far higher rate of evaporation in the dry atmosphere, the ice ends at no less than 12,500 feet. I returned to the village each night, and was relieved to find that it was less filthy than when I had last stayed there. On August the 1st

Nyima Dorje took all the baggage, apart from the bedding and cook-box, to Medrong to wait for us there, while Lewa and I set out with three coolies for Sukhu and beyond, taking five days over the whole trip. On the third day we reached the foot of the pass, from where we could see the top, and we went no further. The path had been bad for the whole of the last march, getting steadily worse and worse, and the final stretch was purely a question of mountaineering. It climbed straight up a steep, badly crevassed, hanging glacier for a matter of two thousand feet, looking not only difficult but dangerous, and after Lewa had studied it for some time he said it was a good thing we had not tried to come down it with coolies. I thoroughly agreed and called blessings on Kharndempa's head for having dissuaded us. Our men told us that it was very seldom used at all and then only by young, active men without loads. Six miles below the Podung La there is a high tooth-like rock standing a little out from the west side of the valley. It is a place of pilgrimage, and when we reached it the coolies stopped, prostrated themselves six times each and lit a small fire on which they poured several handfuls of tsamba as a burnt offering to the spirit who lives there. This inspired them to such an extent that they collected five different kinds of toadstools for my dinner, which all looked equally vile and tasted equally good. Apart from that the journey was uneventful, and we reached Medrong on August the 5th without regrets.

I had hoped to have been able to do something for the headman who had done so much for me in 1933, but I could not make out what was wrong with him. He had a recurrent fever with considerable

pain in his stomach and it was sad to see how he had wasted away. I did everything I could think of to help him, but apparently without avail, and it was with real sorrow that I heard a year later that he was dead. It took us two days to find the twenty-two men we needed to take us over the Kangri Karpo La to Shingke Gompa, mainly because it was eighteen stages out and ten to eleven back, at a time when there was work to be done on their own crops ; but at last all were ready, and, with a large sheep which we gruesomely took along with us as reserve rations, we left Medrong and turned down the Ata Chu.

The march down to the Rongtö was only of perhaps three and a half or four miles, but it seemed twice as long. From a short way below Medrong the Ata Chu runs in a deep, extremely narrow gorge (seemingly very little wider than the river itself), with sheer granite walls towering up to fifteen hundred feet above the water ; and the path gradually climbs up the side, degenerating until it is nothing but a series of ladders, made from single notched logs, connecting rough wooden bridges two feet across and ten or twelve yards long, which stretch from ledge to ledge, nine hundred feet above the rapids. Even after so short an acquaintance we were already fond of our sheep, it was such a sporting beast. It made desperate attempts to climb the first ladder on its own in Balu's footsteps, and might possibly have succeeded ; but it was in such imminent danger of slipping and crashing into the river that we had to interfere. We tied a rope round its horns and pulled it up behind us, and if uncomfortable it never complained. A steep descent, down more ladders, took us to where the suspension bridge had been, but it

was there no more, for ten days previously an unfortunate individual had lost his way and had tried to cross it with his pony, both meeting with a miserable death in the icy water. A temporary rope bridge had been put up close beside the wreck. We trickled over this, clambered along the bank of the river and then up two hundred feet to a cave, which was small but cosy. The drawback was that there was no water nearer than the Ata Chu.

This rope bridge business was annoying, for the next morning we had to cross back again to the far side by another which had a steep gradient in the wrong direction. It ran from a large rock to a small gallery of planks on the opposite cliff, and took us three and a half hours of hard work to get over, Balu and the sheep travelling mournfully together. But that was our last rope bridge for almost exactly twelve months, and three and a half hours in a year is not excessive. This was just above the confluence of the Ata Chu with the Zayul Ngü Chu, up which we turned towards Purtsang, and now, once again, as far as I was concerned, it was all new ground, though Kingdon Ward had been up the valley for some distance. The most ardent explorer in the whole of our party was Lewa, who carried his enthusiasm to such a pitch that no road was worth anything to him unless we could say that we were the only Europeans ever to have travelled along it. As we started up the river he asked hopefully whether anyone had been there before, and when I confessed the truth his face fell and he said not another word till late in the afternoon. Apart from a patch of virulent nettles, nearly ten feet high, it was a pleasant march through pine forest, and we saw

many tracks of bears and two pit-vipers on the way.

Purtsang has always been an unhappy memory to me, for the eight days there were filled with disappointments. Our stay began badly because when we arrived on August the 10th, in the middle of a baking hot afternoon, the village was empty of all but a dumb lunatic, the rest of the population having gone to some feast at Drowa Gompa, a mile up the valley. Not knowing which house we were to lodge in, we sat for four hours under a tree, tormented to madness by flies, until the villagers returned. Most of them were dead drunk and Nyima, the headman, deader than most, so that there was still another hour of aimless discussion before we were shown to our rooms ; and though once we found them they were very good (in Nyima's new house), it was some time before I recovered the temper the flies had ruined. One of the sights pointed out to us during our session was the nunnery on the hillside, but it turned out that there was only one nun and that the convent was no more than her late parents' house. Quite apart from that, Purtsang was well worth studying as a whole, for in the first place it was a freehold settlement of Babas, from the Chinese border, who, as I have mentioned before, had migrated by order of the Government, and in the second almost every man in the village was a trader, some of them very wealthy. In the winter they take musk down to Sadiya, or even as far as Calcutta, and they come back with cloth, cigarettes, matches, knives, trilby hats, and other popular goods, which they either sell in Shikathang to merchants from the north or carry up themselves as far as Chamdo. In place of paying

taxes they are responsible for the upkeep of the buildings and the forty monks of Drowa Gompa.

The first set-back was when the coolies we had brought from Medrong decamped and left us in the lurch, because the people of Purtsang, still feeling jovial, told them such horrible stories of the path over the Kangri Karpo La that they forfeited their pay rather than face the remainder of the journey ; and following that troubles came thick and fast. First there were only twelve men in the village who were willing to go, and I had visions of having to do the whole distance in relays—a march ; a halt of two days while the coolies went back for the other half of the baggage and brought that along ; and another march. The twelve good men and true soon dwindled to eight, upon which I sent Nyima back to Medrong to collect fourteen more at all costs, and waited impatiently for his return, thanking Heaven that John had most of the boxes. We remained in suspense for three more days, but then Nyima returned to say that the men were coming, and our hearts leapt up ; to fall with a sickening thud when it proved to be a false alarm. Instead, a beggarly party of three turned up from Rongyü, and the only bright spot in an otherwise sunless week was when word drifted in that John had been held up too in the Ngagong Valley by a broken bridge. I hoped that meant that he would be late for our rendezvous and not have to wait there day after day wondering if I were ever going to appear.

On August the 17th Nyima declared that he had found fifteen men from Purtsang who would go after all, four from Medrong, and the three from Rongyü ; in fact we could start in the morning as early as we

liked. Morning came but no coolies, and we drearily unpacked our boxes once more with a vow that in future we would never so much as hope until we were actually on the move. When later that day he came in again to say that the men were actually getting rations together and that we would be off on the morrow without fail, I showed so little interest that he quickly had a bowl of boiled pork and noodles made ready as a treat. I was aware of it coming down the passage before ever my door was opened, and the discovery that the meat was nearly all maggot did little to cheer me. Moreover, our sheep had gone to its fathers, and life seemed very black indeed. All the same his words were true, for the following afternoon we did leave Purtsang, and, though we only reached Drowa Gompa, by this time we were so humbled in spirit that we were grateful for even one short mile.



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*The fifth Dalai Lama*

## CHAPTER SIX

“ The songs I sing here ; which his voice  
Shall pause in, hushed and slow.”

D. G. Rossetti : *The Blessed Damozel.*

Up to the very moment we left Drowa Gompa I had a feeling that something would be bound to happen to hold us up, and it was not until we were out of sight of the buildings on August the 20th that peace came to me, for after that there were no more villages and no more transport-changes until we reached Shingke Gompa. Almost at once we plunged into forest so thick that it was quite impossible to make anything better than the simplest form of



compass traverse, but I had been prepared for that from Kingdon Ward's description of the valley, and in any case it was far better than nothing. The Zayul Ngü Chu has cut a deep trench for itself, almost a gorge, and as the path runs close to the river at the bottom of it, visibility is still further limited, and it is only by climbing high up the sides that one can get a view of more than a few hundred yards at once. There is no regular route from Purtsang over the Kangri Karpo La, the pass being seldom used by any but hunters and a few pilgrims; and since no one had crossed it at all in 1934, it meant that the path had very largely disappeared. It took us eleven days to reach the pass, and during that time the longest march we made was only a little more than five miles.

On the second day we passed the spot where, in the dry weather, a log bridge crosses the shrunken river. From it a track runs to the Tsang Kang La, and thence into the Dri Valley and the country of the Bebejiya Mishmis, but on account of the hostility between them and the Tibetans, the pass is not used any longer except as a hunting boundary. Musk-hunters go up to it every year from both sides, but the last person who actually crossed over (certainly from the Zayul side) was a Chinaman who went to spy out the land in 1910. For long before that Tibet had been nominally Chinese, but in that year it was decided to bring it under full administration as a province, and not only officials but troops were sent in in large numbers. As a result the Tibetans revolted, drove out their overlords in 1912, and made themselves completely independent, although even now this eastern frontier varies almost from

month to month, and there is frequent bickering—as a rule between comparatively small forces of irregulars. One of my Purtsang coolies had taken sides with the pro-Tibetans some eight years ago, and had been captured by the enemy. At that time his village happened to be on the Chinese side of the line, and his captors showed their disapproval of what they called his treachery by cutting a huge V-shaped wedge out of his upper lip right up to the nose, and by lopping off his right hand. Loads are carried by straps over the shoulders in Tibet, and often with a forehead-band as well to take most of the weight, so that the loss of his hand did not affect his carrying capacities, and he was one of the best coolies I had.

For the first three days the path was moderate, but after that it became so heavily overgrown, mainly with bamboos, bushes, and the same ten-foot nettles we had met on the way from Medrong, as to be quite invisible in places, and it was made still worse by the many big trees which had fallen across it since it was last used. It was difficult going, and the ticks which swarmed in the bushes made life a burden. One of the worst stretches of all, though it was quite clear of vegetation, was where we had to sidle across a crumbling cliff face along a ledge a bare eight inches wide. The coolies said that two rival parties of hunters once met half-way and neither wanted to turn back. They began to fight, and in the end five were killed by falling into the river. There were numerous streams to cross on the way up to the pass, most of them obviously from glaciers, and soon after leaving that cliff behind we came to one which was roaring through a very narrow cleft and bridged

by a single log. Lewa and I went over first, and were followed by four of the men, but the fifth had scarcely touched it with his foot when it turned over and crashed into the torrent to vanish in a flash. The coolies thought it was a good joke, and as a matter of fact the look of horror and stupefaction which flashed into the face of No. 5 was so ludicrous that I laughed as much as they did ; but then I remembered how the log had been instantly sucked under, and had a queer feeling inside at the slightness of his escape—though probably not half so queer as he had.

Short marches do not necessarily mean short hours, and we were all working hard ; but when the coolies sent a deputation early one morning to state that they were being worked to death, I felt that that was making rather too much of things. They said they had decided to halve the marches in future for the same amount of money per day, and gave as a reason that one of them had only one arm, which made things difficult for him. We countered this by producing Lewa, who, having no toes, was far worse off for marching than anyone, but who did not complain ; and eventually things passed off peacefully, after some shouting. They admitted later that they had only been trying to see whether they could collect double wages, and that it was a fair defeat, which the ringleader acknowledged by appointing himself my deputy-valet, taking off my boots and stockings at the end of every march, and filling my bowl with tea as often as I took a drink.

On August the 25th, seven miles below the camping ground of Chilongke, we passed the stream from which Kingdon Ward had turned back in November

1933. It flowed from the north into a deep gorge, hardly ten feet wide, spanned by a natural rock bridge which was formed by the wedging of a great boulder between the walls. When Kingdon Ward had seen it the water was about a hundred feet down, but now, owing to the combination of rain and melting snow, it was less than twenty feet below the bridge, and swirling by in tremendous eddies. A hunter's track runs up this stream and over into the Ngagong Valley, and I was tempted to follow it and find out how John was getting on, until I realized that he must by this time be far away, and possibly even waiting for me already. As soon as we crossed the stream I told Lewa that we were really exploring again, and from that moment he developed the high spirits of a boy. Every night my Purtsang coolies used to chant prayers together in lugubrious chorus for about half an hour at a time, and from now on Lewa attended the services. Like the other servants, he was a Buddhist himself, though sometimes not a very pious one, and he would listen with a faint grin for a few minutes and then break out into a loud wailing parody of the choir until his breath failed, twiddling the piston of our tea-churn in place of a prayer-wheel. After the first evening I had to remove as soon as the coolies began their service, because I fell into such a fit of laughing that I was afraid of hurting their feelings, but in spite of everything he was accepted each night, and though the old die-hards refused to be shaken, he usually managed to convulse the younger members of the congregation. I think Purtsang was the only village we came across the inhabitants of which held regular prayer-meetings, and the men of Medrong and Rongyü made no attempt

to compete. That day we were caught up by a solitary nun, who arrived in our camp in time to share the evening meal. She said she was on her way to Lhasa, and even though we had left a fairly respectable path behind us, I felt it was a stout effort on her part to have come up the valley alone. She was an unattractive crop-headed female, dressed in coarse red cloth like a monk and a goral-skin jacket with the hair inside; and carrying a pack with a blanket, a cooking pot, and a small bag of tsamba. A strange silent person, the coolies begged her to join our party and so bring us luck, showing her an exaggerated respect, building her fire and fetching her water and making life as easy for her as they could.

The stage to Chilongke was by far the most arduous we had struck up till then, and we took close on nine hours to cover two and a half miles, cutting nearly every step of the way. There were no more ticks, however, and bamboos came to an end after the first mile, but best of all was that we emerged from the forest at the very end of the march and camped in the open on the bank of the river. We had a clear view of seven miles westward to a line of snow peaks and hanging glaciers, and indeed the snowy mountains formed a horseshoe with Chilongke between the points. The scanty pine woods which stretched on up the valley died out well below the pass, and it was obvious that I could start more detailed survey again.

A very real drawback, on the other hand, was the number of fierce horseflies like those we had had in Burma, which infested this more open country up to 13,000 feet or so. Some of the coolies must

The venerable Abbot of Shingke  
said his monks are of the  
Tibetan sect. Their belief  
in the merit worship which for-  
mally held sway over all the  
country. (p. 137.)

The Governor of Chumdo was  
kindness itself and presented me  
with a pair of beautiful boots.  
(p. 137.)







have had hides like rubber, for several of them were sitting near me stripped to the waist in the evening sun, with perhaps a dozen of the brutes flying around with that irritating soft buzz and settling on their backs. Occasionally one of the men would put up a languid hand to brush them off, but there was none of the frenzied slapping to which I was driven. After sunset the flies disappeared and Lewa took to plaguing the nun. Besides my deputy valet I had engaged one of the coolies, called Trakba, as my personal servant, a most respectable middle-aged merchant from Purtsang, who had volunteered to carry a box because I was paying high rates for this particular route and he needed some extra capital for a trading venture he had in mind. He was a well-educated man and was soon promoted to the rank of secretary-cum-tailor to the establishment, both of which jobs he carried out admirably. Lewa pretended to believe that the nun had joined us solely on account of Trakba's charms, and his dialogues with her (or him) were so highly flavoured that the coolies, scandalized at his levity, became hysterical with laughter as he solemnly questioned one or other of his victims, misunderstanding whenever possible, and reasoning with her on the grounds that Trakba already had a wife and six children, and that it was too bad to take advantage of his spouse's absence. His remarks were given point by the fact that the previous night six of the coolies had put up my tent fly as a shelter, Trakba among them, and when it had begun to rain the nun had crept in and slept beside him.

It was some time since we had eaten any meat, and we decided to take a day off for hunting before



we crossed the pass; so when we left Chilongke we moved only three-quarters of a mile up the river to the confluence with a glacier stream from the north-west, and there we made camp in the forest. Just before we started the coolies begged me for some medicine for the nun who apparently had a pain in her tummy. I gave her a soothing draught and a promise of speedy relief, hoping at the same time that she had not got appendicitis or anything else of a serious kind. At the finish of the march I went up the stream with Trakba, Balu, and three hunters, one of whom had an ancient prong-gun, to try for a takin. The valley branched about a mile up, with a glacier in each arm, and a short way below the more easterly of these was a salt spring where we hoped to find game. We had no luck, however, for though we scoured both branches of the valley until late in the afternoon, and there were tracks of takin, musk deer, goral, and bear, we saw nothing but a small flock of what I am sure were burhel, crossing a ridge a mile and a half away. On the way back to camp I climbed two thousand feet to a point of vantage and was rewarded with an amazing view almost as far down as Shikathang.

When we reached the camp we were met by Lewa, who gravely congratulated Trakba on the birth of a fine strapping boy to the nun at mid-day. Trakba was overcome with merriment at what he took to be a continuation of the fun, and only slightly less amused when it turned out to be a literal fact. It was my deputy-valet who had made the discovery, when taking a cup of tea to her lair in some bushes not far away, and Lewa said he had dropped the tea and come tearing back like a maniac just when

she could have done with it. The new arrival died in the night, I think to everyone's relief, but the whole affair was a tremendous shock to the coolies, who now took to spitting whenever they saw or spoke of her. To some extent I sympathized with their point of view (after all, if a woman becomes a nun the least she can do is to be one), but none the less I had the greatest admiration for her, and this was still further increased when she appeared in the morning, pale, but ready to continue the march. However much they disapproved, the coolies did their duty by her, and insisted on her taking at least one day's rest. They gave her a supply of food and matches, and promised to leave firewood ready cut for her at each camp, so that she would have no difficulty in following. She was perfectly unconcerned at being left, and caught us up again just as we crossed the pass on the third day from then, looking as good as new.

There was only one more patch of path to clear east of the Kangri Karpo La, and that was nearly the end of Balu who walked into the line of fire of one of the coolies and accidentally had his head laid open to the bone with a knife, just below the eye. He gave a tragic howl, but bore up very well while I doctored the place, and he seemed none the worse afterwards. It would have needed more than a cut to have put our hound off his food. He must have had a lifetime of semi-starvation before falling in with us, and for weeks he ate as much as three ordinary dogs, growing visibly and developing a thick glossy coat. In his early days with us he was a confirmed thief, but we presently broke him of his bad habits, and soon we were proud to be seen in

his company. He never recovered from his fear of hunger, however, and would trot close behind the cook-box on the march as though afraid to let it out of his sight.

Our last camp before the pass was in a narrow, grassy valley at 13,600 feet, with half a dozen glaciers in full view and as many more just out of sight. We carried up wood from below, and there was a small stream within a few yards, so that in spite of a bitter wind we were very comfortably off. After all our efforts we found meat waiting for us when we arrived, in the shape of the greater part of a musk deer which was sold to us by three hunters from Shingke, and for which we paid the equivalent of sixpence. With mushrooms and wild garlic it made a delicious stew, and put us into form for our climb the following day. In some ways, and even in height (for it is only 15,460 feet high) the Kangri Karpo La is very like the Ata Kang La, as each is a glacier saddle and in both cases the approach from either side runs up the ice; but the climb up to it is far more severe, and most difficult for loaded coolies. A bad path climbs steeply up the lateral moraine of a hanging glacier, and continues over deeply crevassed ice to the pass which is about a quarter of a mile wide and quite flat. It then drops very abruptly into the Chindru Valley, partly over smooth ice, partly down fresh moraine of loose rubble, and partly through dense thickets of rhododendrons to a camping ground in the scrub. Except between July and September the route is entirely blocked by snow, and this is one of the many reasons why it is so little used.

It is the custom in Tibet to put up prayer-flags and streamers on the passes as offerings to the spirits

of the mountains, or at the least to add a stone to the heap which is already there, and on this occasion my coolies were taking no risks. They knew that any flags which might have been put up before would certainly have been blown away by the storms of the last two winters, so they took the trouble to bring a pine sapling up from the valley, two full marches, and this they planted on the very top, digging a hole in the ice with their knives. Three-quarters of them had brought coloured rags stamped with prayers, and by the time these were all tied on it might almost have been a Christmas tree. They completed the business by shouting loudly to draw the attention of the spirits to their piety, and then, with easy minds, turned down the glacier to the west. It was a foul day and low clouds covered the tops of all the mountains, but we stayed on the pass for a while, Lewa, Trakba, and I, while Trakba pointed out to us all the things we might have seen had it been clear. He had taken service with Colonel Bailey when the latter had crossed into Pemakö with Morshead in 1913, and he lived over the journeys he had made with them while we stood and shivered in a stinging rain, ending up on the triumphant note that he had been tipped liberally at the finish. It was a relief to get down out of the wind, especially to me who had nothing on but a shirt and shorts, but we had another stop a short way below the pass to look at a lake some four miles away across the valley and at nearly the same height as we were. It was fed by a broad hanging glacier and was a very deep blue in colour, like a jewel in a dark matrix of rock. This lake is said to be the home of a powerful water-spirit, and the coolies declared that on clear nights flames

can be seen flickering over the surface. It was not visible from our camp, but pilgrims on their way into Zayul carry wood to a small flat space at the foot of the glacier we had just left and spend the night there to watch. Nearly all my coolies claimed to have seen the flames at one time or another, but I thought myself that it was probably an effect of moonlight on the thin layer of mist which would naturally condense above the icy water.

Now that we were in Pemakö (a long, thin strip of a district lying west of the Kangri Karpo La, and south of the Ngagong Valley) the country was very like that in the Mishmi Hills, and for the first week not a day went by without heavy rain. Almost at once, at about 13,000 feet, we ran into forest which became more and more heavy as we went on, until we were ploughing through bamboos and thorns with constant showers of water pouring off the trees and soaking even our bedding, protected though it was with ground-sheets and everything else we could find. Our gloom was increased when we met with ticks again, and still more when at the last camp before Shingke Gompa we were attacked by hordes of leeches. They were worse even than in Upper Burma, and it was most depressing to find them there, because I had previously gone through life in the happy belief that they did not exist in Tibet itself, but only in the less fortunate countries outside. We all suffered more or less, but Balu came off the worst, for they were quite new to him and he did not understand what they were. After a little he came up to me, the picture of misery, and stood patiently while I de-leached him, finding them in his ears and nostrils, under his armpits, on his lips and gums, between

his toes, and everywhere they could catch hold ; but no sooner was he rid of them than he bounded off into the long grass again in a frantic search for field-mice, and in two minutes he was as badly off as ever. Luckily, although they extend all the way down the Chindru Chu, we had only to face one day of them, for there were none between Shingke Gompa and the Chindra La, or beyond.

We had all cut our rations rather fine when leaving Purtsang, and dinner that night saw the last of them, so that when we reached Shingke Gompa the following afternoon we were ravenous, and a pea, if popped in, would have rattled forlornly in our stomachs. Everything seemed to grow in Shingke, however, and we made up for lost time with a high tea of grilled corn-cobs, chicken, rice, and peaches. This was as far as my coolies had undertaken to come, so I paid them all off (with the exception of Trakba who signed on as an extra servant for a couple of months), and the next day they said good-bye and left for home. It was interesting to see that even though they now had no loads to carry they all went back the long way round via Dashing Gompa and Shugden Gompa, rather than re-cross the Kangri Karpo La. I wondered whether they were doing this simply as an act of virtue, there being several holy peaks on the range besides Dorjetsenga, which it is a recognized pilgrimage to circumnavigate ; but they said no, it was not only several days shorter to go that way in view of the very much easier path, but it would give them a chance to do some trading with the capital they had earned from me. Just before they went, on September the 5th, a letter turned up from John to say that he had arrived in

Dashing Gompa on August the 25th, and I seized the opportunity to send an answer by my deputy-valet that things were going well and I would soon be with him. It was here, too, that we parted from the nun, who strode haughtily away without a word of farewell. Since she had caught us up on the pass she had been unwilling to face the scorn of the coolies, who were anything but diplomatic, and had followed a hundred yards behind during the day, only joining them in the evenings, when she made her fire close to theirs and was given the wood she needed. She spent two busy days in the village, paying many visits to the temple, where the monks regarded her with more tolerance than I had expected, and then pushed off again towards Lhasa. In fact, she might never have heard of the baby, for after that first day of rest she had been on the move the whole time with never a sign of fatigue.

At Shingke Gompa there is a monastery of twenty-one monks and a scattered village of sixty wooden houses. At least that was what we were told, but the houses must have been very scattered indeed, for although we waited there four days while new coolies were engaged, I only came across about a dozen of them and the rest I had to take on trust. The cooking was done in ponderous stone vessels, made from steatite in either the Mishmi or the Abor Hills and brought over in exchange for wool and salt. Both Mishmis and Abors are called *lopa* (savages) by the Tibetans without discrimination, which made it difficult to find out exactly where the pots came from, more especially as none of the inhabitants had ever been over the border into the tribal country. They said they would be killed if they tried. The

most noticeable thing about the place was the rich assortment of types which went to make up the population. There were Babas, Khampas from the Salween Valley, a sprinkling of Pöpas from the central provinces of Tibet, several who were clearly of Abor and Mishmi stock, one girl (and her presence was a mystery) who looked like a Bengali and indeed claimed that her father had come from the south ; and a good many of the Pobas who had owned the land for centuries. The explanation was that until very recently Poyü, consisting of the districts of Potö, Pome, and Pemakö, had been more or less independent, ruled by its own king from Shöwa, and far less efficiently than the remainder of Tibet. From time to time people who had got into trouble elsewhere fled into this part of the country as outlaws, and drifted down to Pemakö because it was practically isolated for six months of the year and so far beyond the pale as to be safe from pursuit.

The monks in Shingke are of the old, unreformed, or "Red Hat" sect which is still particularly strong in Poyü, and where, more than anywhere, it has adopted much of the Pönist devil worship which originally held sway all over the country before Buddhism was brought in. The temple stood in the court of the monastery, with the whitewash peeling off outside and a row of battered prayer-drums built into the wall where the devout could turn them as they passed. But the door was carved and painted, and within, glimmering between the rows of dark red pillars, the butter lamps on the altar lit up a magnificent reredos in coloured clay relief, carved with innumerable figures of every description—mountains, grottoes, dragons, gods, devils, birds,



animals, flowers, and many others. Compared with the one at Sangachö Dzung the temple was tiny, for it had only that one room, but the workmanship in it was the finest I saw on the whole of this journey. The main figure in the centre of the altar was Padma Sambhava, the Lotus Born, the Indian who was one of the earliest teachers of Buddhism to come into Tibet, and who founded the great monastery of Samye in A.D. 749.

One day a hermit passed through on a pilgrimage to Takpo, with five disciples and an old umbrella. He had a cunning face, narrow eyes, a permanent half smile, and a great mop of filthy hair bunched loosely on the top of his head and decorated with a silver thunderbolt ; but he was reputed to have great powers, including that of projecting his spirit into dead bodies, and he was received with every honour in the monastery. A special seat was made ready for him next to the Abbot, another was arranged for me facing them on the opposite side of the temple, and the monks, squatting in two rows down the middle, chanted loudly for close on three hours to the music of clarinets, prayer trumpets, gongs, and cymbals. There was a large congregation, including women, who sat or stood as they wished, and to my surprise, I was fed at intervals with tsamba, tea, and chang. During the ceremony a large bat flew wildly round and round between the pillars, disdainfully to nest on the hermit, and thus disproving the feminine theory that such creatures make a bee-line for long hair. Neither Abbot nor anchorite took any part in the service, but eventually I was asked whether I would like the holy man to prophesy on my behalf, so I told Trakba to write out various questions as to

how the journey would prosper and sent the paper up with a gift of money. Lewa suggested that one rupee was more than enough, but my secretary demurred, pointing out that in all probability the bigger the dole the better the reply, and that a good one might have a heartening effect on the coolies. Accordingly we increased the present to five, upon which the holy man shut his eyes for some minutes and then reported that nothing could possibly go wrong with the trip and that everyone who was with me would be under divine protection. At the finish the people put offerings on the ground in front of the altar, heaping dishes with vegetables and, of all amazing sights, pop-corn, which I had always thought to be exclusively American.

On September the 9th, the one fine day since we had crossed the Kangri Karpo La, we left Shingke Gompa and turned north for Dashing. Nyima Dorje and the coolies were soon a long way in front, for Lewa, Trakba, and I were stopped four times before leaving the village by deputations bearing chang and khatas, and on the outskirts an agent of Trakba's who insisted on us coming into his house and having a last cup of tea. It was some time before these social duties were over and we could turn up the valley leading to the Chindru La. We were now on the only mule track between Pemakö and Pome, an excellent road about three yards wide ; so that, although we went through thick forest with quantities of bamboo for most of that day, I understood why we had been told that there were no leeches on this route. One had only to step into the undergrowth to find them in plenty, but the broad path kept them at a respectful distance. On the

second day we began to climb moderately steeply in patches and the coolies needed frequent rests. Each time the leader gave the signal to stop they put short crutches under their loads, like shooting-sticks, to take the weight off their shoulders and stood in a line by the side of the path, comfortably propped and lighting their pipes. Five minutes halt and on they went again. Afterwards we found this to be a common way of resting, but I had not seen it before this. In Zayul coolies sit on the ground and generally take the boxes off altogether.

A few miles above our first camp we halted for refreshments at a grazing ground of one hut, and were given milk and curds by the middle-aged woman who kept the wretched herd of three dzos. We were there for half an hour, sitting by a smoky fire with the rain dripping on to us through the leaky roof, and Lewa amused himself by flirting heartlessly with our hostess, holding her hand whenever he could seize it and praising her charms with fervour. He was considerably disgusted when it turned out that she was a man—slightly demented, of course, but male none the less. We were told that, living there alone, he had become obsessed with the idea that thieves might break through and steal at any moment, not realizing that there was nothing in his hut to tempt the most miserable of malefactors. Full of these fears, he came to the conclusion years ago that if the robbers found only a solitary female in the place they would go away without doing any damage ; and, when we saw him, a woman he was to all intents and purposes, even managing to walk like one. We gave him a bead necklace to cheer him, and continued the march to a small open meadow at 11,500 feet.

There were two empty huts built close under the precipitous west wall of the valley, and we were just able to cram into them for the night. It was a tight enough squeeze in the one I was in, with the two servants, Trakba, and a couple of coolies, but I shudder to think what it must have been like in the other where there were twenty packed head to feet like bottles in a case. In any event, and quite apart from overcrowding, there was not much sleep for us, for it had been pouring with rain all day and in the very early hours Trakba woke us up with the grim news that an avalanche was starting close at hand. A deep rumbling, apparently just above our heads, rapidly increased to a roar in which we could pick out the heavy crashes of the bigger rocks bounding down the slope, any of which would have gone through the huts without a check. It was far too dark to see what was happening, however, so we stayed where we were, thinking that if we went out we would be as likely to walk into the path of the fall as away from it, for the echoes were so tremendous that we could not tell whether it was above or below us. The earth and boulders turned the course of a large stream, and for a few minutes it looked as though we were going to be swept away, with the water rising in sudden spurts and dashing against the wall of our shelter ; but presently it decided to flow two feet in front of the door, thereby becoming a benefactor by removing the evil-smelling dunghill which had its abode there. The coolies improved the shining hour by telling us that five years back seventeen men were killed in a few moments at the camp below by just such an avalanche, and that the year before, further down into Pemakö, an entire

cattle camp was wiped out, dzos and all. For sixty-two minutes we had to shout to be heard above the din, and when it was light we found that we had only missed being liquidated by a scant fifty yards.

The baggage crossed the Chindru La that afternoon, but the clouds had dropped right down to the floor of the valley and work was at a standstill, so I told Nyima Dorje to go straight through to Dashing Gompa while we spent the night with a herdsman some 1,200 feet below the pass, hoping for better things next day. Our hovel was built of loose boulders piled one on top of the other, and roofed with sods; it was not more than twenty feet by thirty, and perhaps six feet high, and though it had no windows it was otherwise well ventilated by the countless chinks in the walls through which a piercing draught whistled and moaned. It was an even more companionable night than the last, for in that dismal cabin there were our three selves, two other men, four women, a small girl of two, four calves, one cow, two pigs, a goat, a collection of dogs, and a large heap of wood stacked along one side. A fire took up valuable space, but we were at more than 13,000 feet, and those who were near enough had reason to bless it before the morning. Our food and bedding having gone ahead with the coolies, we bought milk, tsamba, butter, and brick-hard cheese (which Lewa attempted to turn into Welsh rarebit, without any striking success), and we borrowed a grimy and diminutive blanket apiece to keep off the breeze. The blankets were worse than I had feared, and, though Trakba seemed immune, Lewa and I suffered a lot during the night from the attacks of the ungodly, and when I got up I discovered twenty-eight lice and a

great number of fleas in my clothes, all of which (barring two fleas which escaped) died a frightful death. We had been having both almost constantly since Shikathang, but by constant endeavour and dispute we had managed to keep down their numbers to a reasonable level, and it was owing to all this practice that my tally was so complete. Before departing we gave an order for sixty pounds of butter to the good man of the house, to be delivered in Dashing, and we left him speechless with delight and almost bowing himself in half.

It was quite a steep climb to the Chindru La (14,390 feet), over grassy slopes studded with flowers, and among them a gigantic black toadstool which developed as we approached into the hermit resting under his umbrella. It was a popular day for travel, and we must have met or overtaken at least fifty people crossing from both sides, though oddly they were all carrying their own loads and there was not a pack animal on the road. If the ascent had been steep the north side of the pass was infinitely more so, falling two thousand feet into a deep gorge fringed with glaciers and snowy peaks, and it is because a very little snow on this face makes the path too dangerous to use that the Chindru La is closed from September to June. The only other ways from Pemakö into Pome are either over the Sü La, which is open from June to November, or through the Tsangpo Gorges, and the latter route was said to be so bad that it was hardly ever used. By the time we reached the bottom I felt that my knees might give way at any minute, but after a quick meal of tsamba they recovered and we hurried along through pines and rhododendrons by the bank of a small

river. By sheer bad luck we added six unnecessary miles to the march. When Trakba had last been that way the bridge across the stream had been close to the confluence with the Ngagong Chu, but since then a flood had destroyed it, and on reaching the spot we found nothing left but a few scattered logs. It was 9 p.m., and we were so weary that we very nearly tried to wade over rather than search for the new one. It was fortunate that we gave up the attempt, for we heard the next day that a man and his wife had also started to ford the stream at that point a week before, and that they had both been drowned. Instead, we turned back through the darkness of the forest for three miles to where we could cross, blundering into trees and bushes and growing more evil-tempered at every step; and it was not until midnight that we trudged into Dashing Gompa, after a march of about twenty-three miles. Nyima Töndrup's grinning face in the courtyard did much to revive me, but it was when I saw John that my spirits really came back with a bound.

I had a late dinner and we sat talking until a quarter-past three in the morning. I had told him to expect me sometime about August the 27th, having grossly under-estimated the time it would take to do the Sukhu trip and not having counted on the delays in Purtsang or Shingke. It was now September the 12th, which meant that he had been waiting for more than a fortnight with very little to do. In the month he had been on the move, however, he had done a great deal of valuable work, and it made me all the sorrier to think the reward for that and his punctuality had been sixteen days of utter boredom. From Shugden Gompa he had gone down the Ngagong Chu as far







Descriptions of John's beard were freely circulating, but not even the most inspired of these had prepared me for the glorious vision which met my eyes in Dashing.  
(p. 135.)

as Sum Dzong (a place he remembered with gloom as the one where the magistrate had given him a fine-looking fowl, which later proved to be so tough as to defeat the jaw) ; then up to Chö Dzong and over the Gotsa La and the Deu La to Rangbu Gompa ; and finally back via the Tsaphuk and Yoni Passes to Sum Dzong and Dashing Gompa.\* He said that the two most trying things about his journey were the flies and the fact that Nyima Töndrup, though excellent in every other way and faithful as ever, had been an indifferent cook, incapable of making much else besides curry, on which he had been forced to exist day after day. His inwards yearned for a change, and I think he forgave me for being so late when I produced the sack of corn-cobs we had brought with us from Shingke.

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\* A second-hand account of a journey is always inclined to be a mere recital of facts, and, since John Hanbury-Tracy has described it in his own book, *Black River of Tibet*, it is for this reason that I have here given no more than the briefest outline of his route.



མི་ལ་རྣམ་པ།

*Milarepa, a sage*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

“ Cleric before and Lay behind ;  
A lawless linsey-woolsey brother,  
Half of one order, half another.”

Samuel Butler : *Hudibras, Part 1, canto 3.*

IN central and western Tibet, the word “ dzong ” indicates a fort built in a strong position overlooking a valley ; but in the east it has lost this meaning to a large extent and is now used for the headquarters of any district official, even a minor magistrate, quite apart from whether it is also a fort or not. In Dashing Gompa they went still further by calling the place we were in the dzong, for it was no more than a fine rest-house of two storeys built round a square court, and the only times it was ever used by officials was when they passed through on their way along the valley. John and I had a big room looking

down two hundred feet to the Ngagong Chu, which is called Po Tsangpo further down. There were the usual bedsteads of planks raised a couple of feet off the floor on clumsy wooden frames ; bed-side tables about two feet long by a foot wide, with a cupboard underneath ; our own camp table in the middle of the room, covered with papers ; four stores boxes put together to make a dining table ; and yet a fifth of amazing construction, which was there when we arrived, and which we used for odds and ends. Two camp chairs, a few swords on the walls, hats hanging from rough pegs, survey instruments, personal boxes and a varied heap of skins made up the rest of the furniture and provided all we needed to live in luxury. And luxury it was, for besides all these comforts we were getting goat, flour, chickens, tsamba, garlic, onions, potatoes, turnips (and turnip tops), peaches, walnuts, honey, curds, butter, eggs, and tea. The four servants were in the kitchen next to us, with boxes stacked along the walls and a clay oven near one end, very thick and with several holes on top for cooking. At night they slept on the floor (it was no harder than our beds), and by day their bedding was rolled up out of the way. Outside our doors a balcony ran round the courtyard with other rooms opening off it, and from the south there was a wonderful view, on a clear day, of a dome-shaped snow-peak with short glaciers flowing down the side. It was nearly always covered with cloud, however, and we were never able to take a photograph of it.

One of John's many duties was to put in the hill-shading on the maps, and he volunteered to wait at Dashing to bring this up to date while I went down the river to Shōwa to join up with Morshead's and

Bailey's route of 1913. I took Lewa and Nyima Töndrup with me, leaving the cook to John, and we rode off on September the 16th. Most of the main roads in Tibet are good enough for ponies, and from now on it was almost compulsory for us to ride wherever we went; and until we could buy more comfortable saddles for ourselves in Shopando we suffered a good deal from cramp in the knees and thighs. Compulsory is perhaps too strong a word, but in a country where only the poorest of the peasants do not own at least one steed, and where it is usual to ride even for as little as half a mile, anyone who goes on foot is regarded as being of no account, with consequent added difficulties at every turn. For almost the whole of the three days to Shöwa the path ran through light forest of pines, birches, oaks, and hollies, and the trees were full of birds, including brilliant green parrakeets; but there were frequent villages in long clearings and herds of swine were rooting happily, grunting and squealing to themselves. Balu was with us, as frisky as a puppy with good feeding, and it was his great delight to chase the pigs at every opportunity, not biting but just for the fun of the thing. He was no hero, though, and when an old sow turned on him at last with gnashing teeth, he felt that the game was scarcely worth it and took to barking at squirrels and finches as being safer. On the way down the valley I heard that an Englishman with two servants was somewhere near the Yigrong Tso. It could only have been Kingdon Ward, and I was very sorry that I had not the time to pay him a visit. The news was a week old, and it was quite likely that he had moved further away, but even if he were still there I could not possibly

have left John to another weary vigil at Dashing while I paid calls on my friends.

We arrived in Shöwa after a march (or rather a ride) of fifteen miles through sheets of driving rain, and put up in the ruins of what had been a very large dzong. Up till 1931 Poyü, as I have said, had been ruled by its own king from this place, as a more or less independent state, but in that year it was taken under the direct administration of the Central Tibetan Government after three months of severe fighting, in the course of which many of the main buildings in the country had been burnt (this dzong among the first); and there were still two small garrisons at Chumdo and Chö Dzong to keep order. The king had fled south into Assam, dying later on of exposure in the Abor Hills when he tried to return; and his daughter was held in Shöwa as a hostage for the good behaviour of the Pobas. She was given a grant of land by the authorities and was otherwise extremely well treated, but I think she felt like a modern Mariana. At all events, she looked on me as a good knight come to rescue her and very embarrassing it was. I stopped there for two days in the vain hope of being able to take a latitude observation, and during that short period she came five times to find out when I was going to take her to India. She was a pretty girl of twenty or so, and it was bad enough to have to keep on disappointing her, but worse was the fear that in view of all her visits the magistrate might think there was something in it and send a report to his superiors. Mercifully he was a sensible man who had known her for two or three years, and he was satisfied that I was not trying to stir up trouble. Nyima Töndrup called all these junior

magistrates in charge of sub-districts "managers," pronounced "money-jars," that being the one English word he knew.

It appeared to rain nearly as much in the Po Tsangpo Valley as in Pemakö, but on the way back to Dashing there were some fine intervals and we enjoyed the journey. Everywhere rich crops of wheat, barley, and buckwheat were being reaped, and there were hundreds of peach and walnut trees, even growing wild along the path where travellers may have dropped a nut or a peach stone as they passed. We met several parties of traders from Pemakö driving ponies laden with stone pots, chillies, and madder, which is used for dying cloth. Some of them were on their way to the Salween to buy salt and wool, and would not reach their homes again until the passes opened the following year. They were mostly of Khampa stock, tall, with high-kilted gowns,\* and pigtails hanging down their backs or twisted round their heads, and they were a striking contrast to the small Pobas with their unbound hair hanging to their shoulders and cut straight in front—wiry little men wearing ponchos like the natives of Peru, except that here they were made of yak hair. Like almost everyone else whom we met, and in spite of their bad reputation, we found the Pobas to be willing and very friendly—altogether a delightful people. Apart from our meetings with the traders, the one adventure on the road was when I was adopted by Beowulf the Beetle. He flew heavily on to my finger as I was riding along, and sat there, large and brown, peering stolidly into my face. Satisfied that I was respectable, he folded his antennæ

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\* Called *chubas*.

and went to sleep. All went well until we were assailed by flies, some of which naturally tormented Beowulf. I had never realised that beetles were ticklish, but each time a fly touched him he jumped and kicked out wildly with whatever leg was most handy. At length, the flies departing, he fell into a torpor and off my finger, and I saw him no more.

John's beard, which had been sprouting since Fort Hertz, was magnificent by this time, and descriptions of it had actually been circulating as far off as Shingke when I arrived there. It was a relief to me that it was so, for at Shugden Gompa it had been miserably scrubby ; and from now on I think I took even more pride in it than he did. Among the Tibetans beards are found only on the aged and venerable, and they are scanty growths at the best, so that John's invariably led to him being taken either for my private chaplain or some ancient relative. For myself I eschewed beards, but at the cost of untold suffering. By an oversight I had packed only a single razor, which had already been widely used for shaving heads (mine included), and this had brought it to such a pass that I had to refuse to lend it any more for hair cutting. The servants were driven back on to a pocket knife instead, and although this entailed a fearful operation the results were quite adequate.

We left Dashing Gompa on October the 1st on our way to Chumdo, and it was very cheering to be on the move again with John. The bridge over the Po Tsangpo at the start of the march was fairly new (it had been destroyed during the fighting) and a really fine piece of work. It was a cantilever, as were all the big bridges we saw in eastern Tibet, about thirty yards long and put together, like the houses, without



nails or screws, simply by a system of interlocking logs. In every form of woodwork, whether carving or building, the Pobas were far in advance of the Khampas ; and the blades of their swords, too, which were marked by a peculiar wavy pattern in the steel, had a great reputation. In this connection we were told, both in Poyü and far into Kham, that there were still some swords, made long ago by the smiths in Pome, which were so sharp that logs as thick as a man's wrist could be thrown up in the air and cut into several pieces before they reached the ground. We tried hard to find one of these legendary weapons, but without success ; nor did we ever see or hear of a forge in the three months we spent between us in Poyü, so that where the blades were made has remained a mystery.

We spent the first night at a village immediately above the Po Tsangpo-Potö Chu confluence, and I felt very wretched with an attack of fever, picked up Heaven knows where. We had expected to get to Chumdo the next day, but when there was little more than a mile to go we found that a landslide had carried away thirty yards of the path, leaving a cliff straight down to the river. There was no hope of crossing then, so we made camp, collected a small army of men, and began repair work in the morning. It took two or three hours, but finally we were able to climb down some forty feet through the bushes, creep over the scar and clamber up a notched log to the regular path the other side. The ponies were left behind, and our labourers took on the job of coolies, pleased to be earning two wages in a day. There was a good view of Chumdo from the landslide, and it seemed to be an imposing place of something

like a hundred and twenty stone-built houses, a monastery and a high dzong, surrounded by a stone wall with gates, and towers at the corners. When we arrived we saw that almost everything except the monastery was in ruins, for it had been a Poba stronghold in the troubles and had been taken by storm. The caravanserai, however, was in good condition, and we had a comfortable room on the first floor.

The Governor (Dzongpön) lived in a dilapidated structure close to the monastery, but this was only a temporary home as he was making plans for the rebuilding of the entire town. He was a young monk from Sera Gompa (near Lhasa) with a thin moustache and an attractive face, looking remarkably like the late Tashi Lama in his youth. One of his many kindnesses was in having a pair of boots made for me, my own being on their last legs. His shoemaker took a tracing of my feet and a large number of measurements, and at the end of three days the Dzongpön presented them to me when he came to have lunch with us. They were of black, flexible leather, with gold thread stitched along the instep and silk brocade to half-way up the leg. They were beautiful, but at least an inch too short. To show my very real appreciation I wore them whenever we saw him, which was often, and the agonies I went through were beyond expression. But they were not wasted, for they fitted John well and he took them on as soon as we left Chumdo. I do not think it was inefficiency on the part of the shoemaker that they failed to suit me, for I had the same difficulty later at Shopando, by which time I was desperately in need of footgear. It was much more fundamental than

mere lack of skill. The Tibetans have very small hands and feet, and even a tall man only takes the equivalent of size seven or thereabouts. I had never considered that my feet were tremendous, but I take size ten-and-a-half, and I know that the cobblers, back in their workrooms, felt that this was impossible and that they must somehow have muddled the measurements. Furthermore, the smaller a man's feet the prouder he is, and so for both reasons (to hide their own mistake and to flatter my vanity) they took a good inch off all round and hoped for the best.

There was a garrison of a hundred sturdy Central Tibetan soldiers in Chumdo, mostly from Lhasa itself, who were said to be the pick of the army. Normally they had no uniform apart from a khaki shirt with breast pockets and wooden buttons, the rest of their outfits being left to individual choice ; but on state occasions, as, for instance, when we were invited to watch a parade, they turned out in bright yellow jackets with scarlet collars, cuffs and shoulder straps, black trousers with a broad yellow stripe, black munition boots, and grey felt hats with fur flaps. A belt, bayonet, and long Lee-Enfield rifle completed their equipment, and they marched to the parade ground in great style, preceded by two buglers. The drill consisted almost wholly of Swedish exercises, and, having once piled arms, tied pig-tails and removed hats and belts, they never touched their weapons again until they went back to barracks. The four officers took no part in the drill, but sat with us, while two very capable N.C.O.'s were left in charge. In contradiction of what I have already said about beards, many of the soldiers had them, but these had been artificially produced by much

shaving to make their owners look more terrible in war.

The parade was not the only excitement we had in Chumdo, for we arranged a command performance of the ballet one day, when we sat for two hours on our balcony watching a troop of nine Khampa dancers, male and female, in the courtyard below. Love of travel is inborn in the Tibetans, a legacy from the days when they were a nomadic people, and these were taking a holiday from their village and paying their way by dancing through the country. The men had bright, baggy trousers tucked into their boots and girdles of tassels round their waists ; and the women wore their best clothes, mostly blue, with two or three brilliant silk blouses one on top of the other, of which the sleeves reached a foot or more beyond their fingers, silver belts, striped embroidered aprons, massive turquoise earrings, and silver and turquoise charm-boxes round their necks. They had a fine repertoire, and some of the dances were very graceful, especially those in which the women acted alone, revolving slowly in a circle, bending and twisting, and each beating a drum like a large tambourine on the end of a stick. The men were less classical than their wives but more interesting, as their dances were clearly descended from the same ancestor as the Russian gopak, if indeed they were not themselves the original. They were a far wilder edition, however, and the performers flung themselves round the ring, twirling dizzily, stooping to sweep the ground with their hair, squatting and kicking out their legs. The most amazing of all was a kind of head dance, done by one man who took the part of some devil. He knelt on the ground on hands and

knees, and as the women beat their drums he jerked his head and neck like a striking snake, making fearful faces and working himself up into a frenzy until he finished by using his long hair as a flail to flog the earth. The edge of the courtyard was crowded with spectators, and it is one of the many good points about a feudal system that the people get all their shows free, for it is the great man who pays for the whole house. It is the custom always to give chang to the dancers besides their pay, but often he provides refreshment for everyone else as well.

Chumdo was a milestone on the journey, since from there on we had very little rain or mist for the whole of the next year, and never enough to interfere with work. The change in climate was noticeable from the moment we turned up the Potö Chu, for there was none of the forest we had had in Pemakö and to a lesser extent in the Po Tsangpo Valley. The country was becoming drier and more open, with thorn bushes and grass, and an occasional clump of willows beside the river, but no woods lower than the pines which were high up on the sides. It made work on the maps so easy as to be almost incredible, especially to me who still had the Purtsang-Shingke stretch fresh in my mind; and when we left for the north on October the 12th we moved up a broad, sunny valley with glimpses of snow and glaciers on both sides. There were many villages in which the houses were built of stones and clay, but the roofs were still mainly of wood and built on a decided slant, showing that heavy rain was by no means uncommon. For sixteen miles above Chumdo the Potö Chu flows in a deep trench, and we saw a big otter swimming downstream, which presupposed

plenty of fish. The valley was glacier-worn, however, and the real floor was flat and smooth just as if it had been planed out by the ice, so that when, after thirteen miles, we came across a collection of burial mounds on the right bank of the river, varying in height from ten to sixty feet, they stood out all the more clearly. There were more than a hundred of them, mostly dome-shaped, but there were some like crescents, and several long barrows about forty yards by fifteen. It looked as if a few of the domes had large stones on them, half-way up, at the four cardinal points, though as we were the wrong side of the river this was perhaps imagination. The Pobas knew nothing about them and dismissed the subject by saying that they were only earth and had always been there. They were certainly very ancient, and it seemed probable that they had been built by a pre-Tibetan people. It was disappointing not to be able to excavate any of them, but we had neither the time nor the implements for archæology (not even a spade), and we left them in the hope that one day they might be investigated by someone better qualified for the job than us. At present a good many of them are crowned by prayer-flags.

John used to describe himself as being "no hippocrat," and although the seats of the saddles we took from Chumdo were of solid wood, and like feather beds compared with the two mournful rungs we had been expected to sit on up till then, he refused to ride any more for a while and strode proudly along on foot, wearing a fantastic hat which Trakba had constructed out of red cloth and leopard skin. It was a shovel-hat, with a flat crown and a broad brim fastened up at the sides, the fur underneath,

and it combined with his beard and the lengthy dark red chuba he had on (our English clothes were in a parlous state by now) to give him the air of a mediæval prelate, so that I could no longer wonder at the populace mistaking him for my priest.

North of Yuru Gompa the valley narrowed considerably, and at between 11,000 and 13,000 feet it was well forested with firs, rhododendrons, and glorious scarlet-leaved bushes, already pinched with the early frosts. On the first four marches from Chumdo the path had been over firm turf, but on the fifth it climbed steeply across barren screes of slate and limestone, past several small hanging glaciers, and up to the Tungla La at 17,280 feet. We were now on the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed, and the contrast in the scenery on both sides of the pass was quite extraordinary. To the south there was line upon line of snowy peaks ; deep, wooded valleys ; ravines and torrents. To the north hardly a sign of snow, but a huge expanse of gently rounded hills stretching into the distance ; the whole country dry and brown, with only a few scrubby thorns and an occasional juniper to be seen. We could not have had a better illustration of the way a high mountain range such as we were then crossing condenses practically all the moisture on one side, leaving very little for the other ; and the tremendous effect of this was still further seen when we realised that, with the heavy rainfall south of the Tungla La, the Tsangpo and the Po Tsangpo have cut their beds down to 8,000 feet and tear along in rocky gorges, while immediately to the north the Salween flows quietly at 11,000 feet in a wide earthy valley. Camping that night south of the Pala La, with no wood at

hand, we had our first experience of yak-dung fires, the men collecting the fuel deposited by previous caravans. It gave out tremendous heat, but it was a month or two before we got used to the acrid smoke.

After crossing the Pala La we dropped three thousand feet to the Gya Lam, the great road running from Lhasa to Batang and so to Peking, which varies from a narrow beaten track to a fine highway almost wide enough to take a cart—if there were only a cart to put on it. It was a grand thought that we were following where the victorious Tibetan armies had marched into China in the eighth century, and where for more than a thousand years caravans of tea, salt, and rich merchandise had passed up and down, and we turned east along it with the knowledge that we were on one of the historic roads of the world. At Pare we stopped to take on fresh yaks and ponies, and while we were drinking tea we watched some more dancers, who were even better than those at Chumdo. One of the men took our breath away by turning a series of back somersaults with a long sword in each hand and the points against his neck. There was no fake about the points either, and though not as sharp as needles they were far from being blunt. Nearly everyone travelling on the Gya Lam carried a sword tucked under his saddle-cloth, for show rather than use, and even we adopted the custom, John's weapon being by a long way the most colossal we ever saw, and called "Big Harry." Mine was not more than two and a half feet long, but it had the tremendous advantage of having a small triangle of silver welded into the steel close to the tip, which not only gave the bearer immunity from wounds but ensured that any blow struck by



the sword should be fatal. That seemed to compensate for the extra size of "Big Harry," and I wondered whether it had perhaps some remote connection with the belief that a silver bullet is useful against witches, warlocks, and vampires. So it was that riding in state, swords and all, we reached Shopando on October the 21st, and made our way up the steep, narrow streets into the dzong-cum-caravanserai.

It was a large house of two storeys, built round a square court with a heavy wooden gate at one side, and, like all the other houses in the dry parts of eastern Tibet, with a flat roof made of hard pounded earth. The walls, of stones cemented with clay, were lined inside with planks and must have been hot-beds of bugs in the summer, though now that it was getting cold we found none at all and were piously thankful in consequence. We had a room on the top floor, and were welcomed by the old A.D.C. from Shikathang, who turned out to be the brother of the magistrate. He was no longer the plump figure we remembered, and had shrunk almost to a skeleton with some internal trouble, so that his beard looked even more wispy and desolate than before; but he brought khatas and tea, and sat with us for half an hour in quite good spirits in spite of everything. He had been in Shopando when Pereira visited the place in 1925, and described him as a tall man with grey hair, a limp, and an eyeglass; but he had never heard of Kishen Singh (A-k) who went through in 1882 when nearing the end of his last and greatest journey, and we could only imagine that this was because A-k must have been in rags by that time and have attracted no more attention than

Across the Between-Brahmaputra  
watershed. Our caravan climbing  
to the Kung-Lai, marked by a crest  
of stone on the ridge. (p. 142.)

We moved up a broad, sunny  
valley, with glimpses of snow and  
glaciers on either side, passing the  
picturesque monastery of Yuru  
Gompa, which looks down towards  
the flower-fringed river at its feet.  
(p. 142.)





one of the countless stray beggars to be found on all the main roads in Tibet.

In Poyü we had been told that Shopando was an enormous walled city, but in reality there were no more than a hundred and forty houses packed into a small space on the east slope of the valley, and as for the wall it only existed on the side above the town. From the road there was no defence whatever. None the less, Shopando is an important place, owing to the large amount of trade which passes through, and, as all of it had to pay toll before going on, the courtyard below our window was crowded with yaks, mules, shouting men, and packages (mostly of tea and butter) the whole day long. The hubbub was made worse by bands of dancers performing for our benefit ; by numerous donkeys calling to each other for their mutual comfort ; and by a loud rhythmic yelling from above. In Kham the taxes are paid almost entirely in kind, varying according to the locality as to what kind, and here, at 11,550 feet, they were in wheat and barley. The threshing of this tribute was carried out on the roof of the dzong by twenty men and women at a time, standing in two long rows, one at each side of the straw, and wielding their flails with terrific energy and a concerted shout at each stroke.

We had an orgy of buying during the nine days we remained in Shopando, largely because we had been infected with the passion for trade which lives in the hearts of all Tibetans, high or low. Even officials on a journey take a supply of goods along with them to sell by the way, putting them in charge of a servant who does all the actual bargaining, and who undertakes to give back a certain definite profit

to his master at the finish. Anything more he can make he keeps for himself, but if by misfortune there is a net loss he has to make up the difference out of his own pocket. We were not sanguine enough to try to compete with the natives of the country, but we felt certain that we could make our fortunes by taking musk to the Chinese market in Calcutta and *articles de vertu* to the dealers in London. Apart from the musk, in which we shared, John specialized in turquoises and I in assorted jewellery, and our optimism unfortunately persisted until we got back to Calcutta again at the beginning of 1937. There we did indeed sell most of our musk (sending Lewa to the merchants, though not on the Tibetan system), but at a shattering loss ; and in England John made one feeble attempt to interest someone in his wares, and I was too disheartened by the harsher atmosphere to do even that. Perhaps it was rash of us to break into the musk racket, scarcely knowing until then what the stuff looked like, but I have always felt that the note the Chinese sent back with the bill of sale, with remarks about the quality of our pockets, was a little hard, and that, if anything, we should have been praised for a bold attempt.

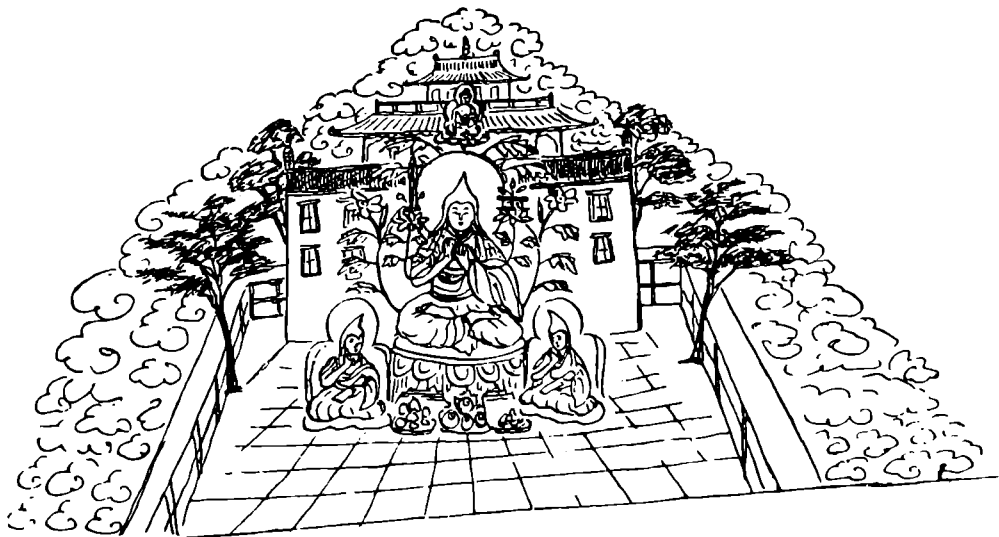
All the same, we did buy some useful things which stood us in good stead when we turned up the Salween Valley—such things as rolls of thick grey homespun for trousers, high-necked woollen jackets, chubas, sashes, and comfortable saddles with padded seats. We had already come to the conclusion that we would have to dress like Tibetans during the winter, because the only European clothes we had left which were fit to wear were shirts, stockings, and a pair or two of shorts, and even as low as Shopando it was

getting a little chilly for light dress. In any case, I believe it is better to wear Tibetan rather than English things in the cold weather, for the former are designed for the climate and are so much fuller than ours that, weight for weight, they are several times as warm. The long sleeves, too, are as good as a second pair of gloves, and the high soft boots are ideal until the snow melts ; after which they are a nuisance, as the leather is raw hide and becomes like blotting paper in the wet.

It was always fun to reach one of the main roads like the Gya Lam, because it was impossible for us to get any mail, and our only chance of hearing the news of the outside world was by gossiping with the other travellers who were passing along. At the best we did not hear much, and what we did was generally exaggerated, but it was a great deal better than nothing ; and besides that the ordinary talk of the road was worth listening to by itself. In the dzong at Shopando it was like being at Reuter's, with the stream of traders and official couriers coming and going day after day, and we felt really well posted in international affairs when we heard that the Russians had been fighting the Chinese in Turkestan, and had been so badly defeated that five hundred of them had been driven into western Tibet and promptly pushed out again by the Tibetan forces ; and that there was a mission of eleven Englishmen in Lhasa. The first must have been based on a battle between the Sinkiang Government's Russian troops and Tungans ; and the second referred to Mr. Williamson, the then Political Officer, Sikkim, who was paying an official visit to Lhasa, though with a much smaller party than we were told. We were also informed of the

true reason for the decay of the road which was built through the Mishmi Hills by the sappers and miners in 1912. This was that one of the officers shot a Chusing (a gharial) in the Lohit when the road was finished. This particular Chusing happened to be not only an animal but a powerful river-spirit, and the skin immediately burst open with a loud crackling, with the result that everyone connected with the work died shortly afterwards, and the road itself was swallowed by the jungle. There are certainly no gharials in the Lohit (at least until it flows out of the hills on to the plains of Assam), but perhaps one was shot lower down to give a basis to the legend. We could not help feeling, however, that as the road had not been touched since 1914, it was conceivable that it might have become overgrown without help from the Chusing.

Trakba had more than earned his wages and had been especially valuable in finding out the correct Tibetan spellings of place-names (for most syllables can be written in two or three ways, of which each has a different meaning); but he had only taken service with us for two months, and now that we were heading still further north, while he was anxious to go down to Sadiya to trade during the winter, we paid him off the night before we left. He was taking a heavy case of snakes, collected in Burma and packed in formalin, for the Natural History Museum, and a large bundle of letters to post in India, so we gave him the money to pay for a coolie the whole way through and said good-bye with regret. Needless to say, he handed everything over faithfully to Mr. Calvert, the Political Officer in Sadiya, when he arrived there the following January.



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*Tsong-Kha-pa and his two pupils*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

“ Thus, ever guided by the hand of God,  
They sailed along until they reached Cape Cod.”

From a forgotten Prize Poem on *The Pilgrim Fathers* : with grateful acknowledgments to the Rt. Rev. Sir David Hunter-Blair, who included this gem in a letter to the *Sunday Times* on “ Bathos in English Poetry.”

FOR three and a half miles after leaving Shopando we kept to the Gya Lam along the bottom of the valley, but when it swung abruptly to the south-east towards Lho Dzong and Chamdo we turned, in the opposite direction, to the Chungke La ; and it was from the top of this pass of 12,734 feet that we had our first view of the Salween. As a matter of fact, we could only just see it, for we had started very late and it was already getting dark, but we felt like stout Cortez on his peak and strained our eyes to pick up



every detail. Flowing smoothly and swiftly two thousand feet below us, with never a rock or a rapid to break the surface, it was unlike any river we had seen since Burma, and I think we might have been disappointed if it had been otherwise. To us it was *the* river above all others, and we had thought and dreamt about reaching it for so long that to find it no different from the rest would have been a melancholy anti-climax. We reached Shopathang at nine-thirty that night, rather cold, and discovered that our quarters were in the headman's private chapel, a large pillared room containing an altar, some figures, and a pile of religious books. These were of loose pages between carved wooden backs, bound with straps, and each about two feet long by nine inches broad and six or seven deep. It is quite usual to put honoured guests in the chapel, for that is very often the best room in the place, and provided one treats it with reverence, there is no reason why one should not sleep in it. Our bedding rolls were spread on the floor away from the altar, and a charcoal brazier carried in to warm us; and as I went to sleep I had the same feeling of tense excitement that children have when tickets have already been bought for the circus and there is no longer any possibility of a hitch.

The main path crosses to the left bank of the river at Shopathang, and as a rule there is a coracle-ferry made of yak-hides stretched over a frame of willow branches, and capable of taking a considerable weight. But the coracle had disintegrated a month or so earlier, and there was a substitute in the shape of a primitive and unwieldy raft, too small to take more than four loads at the most. The two women and a

man who made up the crew worked hard, but even so it took us nearly all day to get over, and we finished by making a total march of half a mile. The trouble was that the vessel was more or less square and very heavy, and the river some seventy yards wide with a strong current in the middle, which meant that the raft had to be poled upstream in the shallow water for three or four hundred yards before the mariners dared venture across; then followed a spell of furious paddling with bits of plank, and the stream swept them down to somewhere near the landing place. The whole business had to be repeated on the return trip, and the double journey lasted about an hour, excluding time off for rests. After watching some ponies swimming over from the far side, we rode back to the Chungke La with Lewa to bring on the map (which had been interrupted the day before by darkness), and to try to take a photograph of the Salween as we had first seen it; but the light was bad, with snow driving down the valley in thin white swathes, and the picture was not of the best. When we reached the ferry again our pathetic craft was still wearily plying backwards and forwards, and Balu was in a state of miserable indecision, divided between loyalty to the cook-box, which was already over Jordan, and to us, the Joint Masters.

Like ancient Gaul, Tibet can be divided into three parts: the Chang Thang, or northern plain, a bare, wind-swept plateau which merges imperceptibly into the grass-lands of Mongolia; the sub-plateau, with wide valleys and rolling hills; and the river-gorge country to the south and east, which is largely well-wooded and very fertile. On the whole, the inhabitants of the Chang Thang are continually on the move

with their yaks and ponies from one pasture to another ; those of the sub-plateau are settled in villages, but are herdsmen rather than farmers ; and the people in the river gorges are almost entirely agricultural. We had started in the third division, which includes Zayul, Pemakö, and Poyü, and had crossed into the second by the Tungla La, and we hoped very much to reach the Chang Thang before the end of the journey, for it is there that the Salween must have its source. In the interior of Tibet the climate is dry and evaporation extremely rapid, so that although in Zayul the permanent snow-line is at 17,000 feet or thereabouts, where we now were it was at least two thousand feet higher, and there was little to break the monotony of the dry brown hillsides dotted with junipers and thorn-bushes, and covered with a short wiry grass as dry as hay. It was a type of country which appealed to me more than to John, who preferred the jagged mountains and torrents of the south and the green of the forests ; but we all enjoyed it in our different ways, and Nyima Töndrup blossomed out in the cold weather like a flower in the sun, developing surprising powers of conversation and unlooked-for energy.

Our general plan was to keep as close to the Salween as we could, and to push on to the source wherever that might be, but at Zimda we were dealt what seemed to be a staggering blow when it was said that there was no path anywhere along the river beyond that point. It was a big disappointment, for from what we could gather we had no choice except to continue along Pereira's route towards Chungpo Tengchen, and then to follow the road taken at

separate times by Bower, Rockhill, and Bonvallet through Pada Sumdo and Sok Gompa until we could find some means of reaching the Salween again. Pereira had marked a stream flowing south-west from Idashi, however, and there was a faint possibility of being able to turn down that, even though he had reported no path and the headman of Zimda agreed with him to the extent of saying that it finished in an impenetrable gorge. To make quite certain that there really was no way of getting any further up the river, we climbed high up the side of the valley for as far as we could (six miles) to a small village where the track came to an end, with the Salween running in a deep cleft a long way below. That finished matters, and yet there was a spark of light in our darkness, for the natives said that there actually was a path to the river from one day above Idashi, and that it continued up it indefinitely. The only thing was, this was such a flat contradiction of what we had been told in Zimda that we did not dare to put too much trust in it. On our way up we disturbed a nyct of fifteen large pheasants (pure white, apart from pink rings round the eyes and a grey patch on the top of the head) which went gliding down the slope without any hurry from ten yards off; and Balu kept us amused by chasing the goats, of which, besides yaks and dzos, there were great numbers. He had forgotten all about his fright with the sow, and goat hunting became his chief sport on the march. He would pursue them down the steepest places, nipping their hind legs until worn out, and return, grinning from ear to ear and hugely delighted, to recover breath before racing after another herd. For some while we were afraid

that he might chase the sheep in the same way, but after one attempt he gave it up, finding that they did not run fast enough to be exciting. In any case the sheep of Tibet are not the degenerate creatures they are in Europe, but are very active and strong and quite capable of looking after themselves or getting up from any position. As well as goats, they are used as beasts of burden in the west, and when they are driven down to Lahul and other places to be shorn for the Indian market, they carry bags of salt and borax, or the wool of those that have been shorn before starting, and they often return in the autumn loaded with grain.

We reached Idashi on November the 4th, after a steep climb of more than five thousand feet to the Do La (16,665 feet, and already covered with snow), and an equally steep descent of four thousand. For a few hundred feet above the stream the south side of the Idashi Valley is covered with junipers and rhododendron bushes, and here we saw blood pheasants, not unlike dark green guinea-fowl with crests on their heads, which ran in front of us for some way until Balu flushed them. At Idashi our hopes were crushed once more by hearing that there was indeed a path down the stream to within four or five miles of the Salween, but that we could not reach the river by it. After a period of depression I suddenly had a brain-wave, and came to the conclusion that this bother was my own fault for putting the wrong sort of questions and forgetting the very literal minds of the Khampas. We sent for one of the village elders and tried again rather differently, asking whether there was any means at all of getting to the Salween, and how he would go if he wanted to reach it in the

shortest time. Certainly there was a way, he said cheerfully, but it was not a *direct* way such as we had been enquiring for ; and if he were going he would start down the valley and then turn west over four passes to arrive above the left bank of the river on the third day. So our troubles were lifted from us, and we felt almost physically lighter after the old man's words.

Two days later, from the third of these passes, which were all of 16,000 feet or so, we looked down on to the Su Chu, one of the large tributaries of the Salween, flowing placidly, for the last twelve miles of its course, in a deep trench, and invisible from the villages higher up. We were met that afternoon by a courier from the Dzongpön at Chungpo Tengchen, with a verbal message that we were welcome in his country, and that the Government in Lhasa hoped that we had had no difficulties on our journey in Tibet. We wrote two letters of thanks, one to the Dzongpön and one to Lhasa, thanking them and giving details of where we hoped to go, enclosing the best khatas we had as a sign of the purity of our motives. The courier was a remarkable old fellow, who had been at one time in the retinue of the late Dalai Lama, and had spent two years in Darjeeling with him at the time of his flight from the Chinese. He had been five times to Calcutta, to Peking, Shanghai, and many other places in China, as well as into Mongolia and as far away as Siberia, trading in cloth, incense, and skins. He was full of stories of his travels and sat with us till late in the evening, talking and advising us as to the best routes to take.

Now that we were within striking distance of the Salween again, there was not the same feeling of

anxious haste, and we stopped for six days just below the bridge over the Su Chu to make up arrears on the map. Once again we were lodged in the chapel, a spacious room with a high ceiling, and as we were at a little more than 12,000 feet up, it would have done very well for an ice house. In fact, the greatest temperature we ever had, even with a brazier, was 46° F. and there was always a howling draught. It was a good deal warmer on the roof, as long as the sun was shining, and John did the grading there; but I had too many loose papers to deal with and was forced to freeze in the gloom beneath. The barley was ripe in the fields, and on November the 9th troops of people marched round and round the mani-pile all day long, praying for a little rain to damp the crops, as otherwise, in that dry atmosphere, much of the grain falls from the ears as they are cut, and the labour of picking it up is ghastly. Their efforts were aided by an ancient female who sat for five hours in our doorway, turning a big prayer-drum with a crank, and chanting rather musically, though the words she sang were nothing but "Om mani, Om mani" repeated over and over. It was a little cold for rain, but we were glad for their sakes when the prayer was answered by thick mist at night, which they said would do nearly as well. The most obvious proof we had of this dryness was when we stroked Balu in the darkness, and found that he became lit up with hissing blue light and wildly excited.

It was lucky that neither of us was faddy about food, for with the exception of reserve rations of pemmican and bully-beef, and some tins of Christmas pudding, mincemeat, jam, and curry powder, we had eaten the last of our stores at Chumdo. Up to

Shopando we had still lived moderately well, on meat of various kinds, chickens, eggs, and potatoes; but there were no fowls higher than that, and as potatoes are practically not grown in eastern Tibet outside Poyü, and can only be bought where people from the central provinces are living, our stock was dwindling fast. As long as it lasted we did not do badly, for there was always meat and butter (we ate nearly a pound a day each of the latter in tea and cooking), and the chillies brought up the previous year by the Pobas; but food was coming more and more to the forefront of our minds, and we realized one day that it was of far greater importance to us that our leg of yak had arrived than to know that there was a European war raging or a Communist revolution in England, or any of the things one reads about so avidly at home.

We were now using yaks almost entirely for transport, and they were a constant source of joy to us. In fact, we loved them so dearly that presently we thought "yak" an unsympathetic sort of name, and christened them "critters" or, affectionately, "crits." The peaceful beasts wandered along the path, with a heavy box on each side, at a steady two miles an hour, so sunk in abstract thought that if there were a sudden bend to be negotiated it was an even chance that it would escape their notice and they would stroll casually on into the blue, pursued by their drivers with oaths and stones. Up or down hill made very little difference to them, and it was only when they meandered between two trees or rocks set close together (having long forgotten that their loads took up more room than they did alone) that they were shaken out of their calm. The boxes



suddenly catching on the trees brought them back to earth with a sickening thud, and they struggled wildly to get on, usually until their trappings broke and the baggage crashed to the ground. If boxes are carried at all, they need to be strongly made for yak transport, and for most purposes it is better to use soft bags of leather which bend but do not break. We had heard that critters were sometimes inclined to be truculent with Europeans, but whether it was due to our wearing Tibetan clothes or not, they were never anything but the gentlest of animals where we were concerned, and more like a collection of absent-minded mathematicians than we would have believed possible.

We moved on to the Salween on November the 14th, crossing the Su Chu by a long thin cantilever bridge and climbing very steeply up the side of the valley through patches of scrub and stunted trees. My mare had been born with lips much too small, and her teeth showed the whole time like those of a horse which is either dead or dead beat. I did not see this till half-way up to the pass, when it gave me quite a turn. I imagined she was giving up the ghost and hurriedly got off, walking for half a mile in clothes especially chosen for warmth in riding before I found that it was her natural expression. Once in the Salween Valley the path ran at one to two thousand feet above the river, with the many villages built for the most part close along it and dependent on small streams, often hardly more than trickles at this time of year, for irrigation and cooking water. The only crops were barley and turnips. High up as we were we could see for miles, and our one difficulty was that the days were becoming so short that we

could not work with instruments after four o'clock in the afternoon ; and before long, when the useful light became even less, we found it impossible to do much before eight or after three. This meant that unless it was a very small stage we always had to allow two days for it, returning on the second to finish what we had had to leave the day before ; and until April travel was rather halting. The first of these doubled marches was that to Kau, and from then on it was with a sense of the utmost triumph that we ever finished a stage in a day.

There is a path running directly up the Salween from Kau, but it is not available for any but unloaded men until the river freezes over in December, and we gave up the idea of trying it. Instead we headed north up a narrow valley, and made a long march of nineteen and a half miles to a grazing ground of four tiny huts at 13,700 feet. October was the latest that cattle were kept up there, owing to snow, but we were pleasantly surprised to find that the headman of Kau had gone on in front of us with a body of helpers and had put up a yak-hair tent. Actually it is the custom to provide one of these tents for travellers of standing at any camp within reasonable distance of a village, but we had forgotten about it, and were really pleased to discover that a fire had been lit inside and that the whole thing was looking cosy and cheerful. There was no way of closing the tent up, however, and about midnight, in thirty-one degrees of frost and a wind, I had to put a dressing-gown on top of my three blankets. Balu joined me and crept under it, very cold, to spend the rest of the night there—incidentally monopolising most of the space. Although I could see that John was as warm

as toast in his sleeping bag, not an envious thought crossed my mind, for it is one of the articles of my creed that the other name of "flea-bag" was probably not given without sound reason.

Another stage of the same length took us over the Michen La (16,110 feet) to Rukyithang, where we stayed for two nights in a room which we could barely stand up in, with a small opening in the roof for light and ventilation, highly ineffective in both respects. We were only a hundred and fifty feet lower than at our last camp, and not one of the twelve houses in the village had a window, for dung fires were the rule and the heat had to be conserved. There were corrals for the hundreds of yaks and sheep, but only half an acre of ground under cultivation, and it was far more like being in a temporary cattle camp than in a permanent settlement. It was the dung fire in our room, combined with the lack of fresh air, that was the undoing of John, and by the time we left he had been definitely poisoned by the fumes. The symptoms were those of acute asthma with a pain in his chest whenever he breathed or coughed, and the dark rings under his eyes made him look almost as ill as he felt. He volunteered heroically to continue his work as recorder on the way to Dere, but this would have been madness and I sent him off in advance with Nyima Töndrup and the baggage. As it was, he did not fully recover for a week, and although he was not the type to complain, he must have felt utterly miserable for days. The inhabitants of Rukyithang were presumably immune, and the servants had slept in a much larger room, but I believe I escaped because, to my shame, I had been eating numerous garlic sandwiches since Shopando,







The Gya Lam, the Great China Road, over whose surface no wheeled vehicle has ever passed. Caravans of priceless merchandize have flowed along this age-old highway to India since before the days of Kubilai Khan. (p. 143.)

Searching for the Salween, we crossed the Do La at 16,665 feet, only to have our hopes crushed once more. (p. 154.)

and we heard later that raw garlic was a certain cure for the complaint. The only other noteworthy event at Rukyithang was that we there saw the one raven of the trip, strutting round outside the house with an air of cautious bravado.

Even on the sub-plateau there are occasional gorges, and for nine and a half miles on the road to Dere the sides of the valley were almost steep enough to be called cliffs, falling straight down to the stream for two thousand feet and leaving the minimum of space for the path. This edged nervously along the bank, and it was covered in many places with sheets of hard smooth ice, usually on a distinct slope. Short of being caught in an avalanche or other act of God, no one has ever seen a yak fall, whether on ice or anything else. The ponies, so sure-footed on rock, found it a different matter, and after Nyima Dorje had taken a frightful toss, we waded the river at the more difficult patches. The crossings were damp affairs, for the water reached half-way up the saddles, and the plunging of our steeds in the current covered us with spray; but it was better than falling. Half a mile above Dere there is a hot spring, said to be most efficacious in curing almost everything. A little band of sufferers was camped by it under the supervision of a monk, who saw to it that they had the right number of baths a day, varying according to the complaints. Steam was rising from it, and even though the baths themselves may have been warm and pleasant, I could not help feeling that it must have been chilly getting out in that weather, especially as there were no towels. Our own washing had become rather perfunctory, and limited to hands, arms, face, and neck. We were

not anxious to mortify the flesh more than necessary, and our misery during an all-over scrub in Chumdo (where it was comparatively warm) had taught us that too much cleanliness was a mistake, and probably weakening to the system. It was baths which were the undoing of the Romans, and it may well be that in later ages historians will ascribe the fall of the present Western civilization to the same cause.

There was a rest-house in Dere with windows, and surprisingly clean, where we remained for five days while boots were made for us. We were taking no more risks of their being too small, and the results were so gigantic that we could have squeezed a foot and a half into each without discomfort. John's were bad enough, and as for mine I felt ashamed to be seen about in them, until Lewa brought the good news that there was generally considered to be something supernatural about these immense feet, and that we were beings to be regarded with awe. Flabby and nearly shapeless, the boots were very comfortable and not altogether to be despised.

Dere is at 12,820 feet, and since at that height the crops do not ripen till the middle of November, there is very little time to finish the threshing and storing before the winter begins in real earnest. Men, women, and children were hard at it while we were there, helped by numbers of monks from a big monastery a mile to the west ; the aged tapping the loose grain from the sheaves with sticks ; the lusty wielding flails ; and others engaged in taking the barley away to the granaries or stacking the straw on high racks in the fields, out of reach of the cattle. The straw is used as fodder for the ponies between December and March, when there is little grazing

for anything but yaks. Tibetans believe that disasters are brought about by angry spirits, and as foreigners are obviously more likely to offend these Beings than the natives, it follows that, in the event of calamity, it is the stranger who is responsible. The crops had failed the previous year, and we thanked whatever gods may be that we had not arrived in the district in time to be blamed for that, for hunger makes men mad, and there was so much distress that the people's fear might have been vented on us. Unfortunately this belief does not work in reverse, and although the crops were very heavy in 1935 we never heard that their excellence was due to our beneficent presence.

We were only ten miles or so from the Salween, and though there was a direct path running above the left bank of the river to Dege, it was as bad as that from Kau and not recommended by the headman. Indeed, he warned us that if we went that way we would save two stages but at the expense of certain damage to our boxes. We decided to follow the main route once again, branching off to Dege from Kyirothang, and on November the 26th we went down the stream almost to the confluence with the Salween, to finish its course. On the way we saw a covey of a dozen partridges and more than forty of the white pheasants picking about in the stubble within ten yards of us, merely glancing up as we rode by, and making no effort to move. It was always noticeable how very much tamer birds and animals were in the immediate neighbourhood of a monastery than elsewhere, for not even the most hardened poacher would dream of taking life in such a place. These pheasants were the commonest of



the larger birds in the Salween Valley, moving about on the sides as many as sixty or seventy together and shouting loudly to each other in the early morning from hill to hill. There were two distinct varieties, the one almost pure white like those we had seen above Zimda, the second a pale grey with black tips to the wings and tail ; and between them were half-breeds of every shade. It was a tragic day, however, for Balu stopped behind to investigate a village, and by the time he came galloping after us, nose to ground, we had left the path and climbed a little distance up the slope to get a better view. He never saw us and rushed past, to vanish in the direction of the Salween. That was the last of poor Balu. We waited a day and a half in Dere, enquiring all down the valley without success, and it was a fortnight before we lost the feeling that at any minute he might catch us up. He never returned, and at length we found ourselves hoping that he had been killed in a fight, and not captured by some herdsman to finish his life as a watch-dog chained to a post and fed on offal.

Disconsolate, we moved up to Kyirothang on November the 28th, and were only slightly cheered by finding a Chinaman there with a flock of fifteen hens. The birds were not for sale, but the eggs were eagerly bought for breakfast, and were far more joy to us than any amount of caviar. Transport could not be ready at once, so we went up to Pada Sumdo, on the road from Chungpo Tengchen to Sok Gompa, in order to connect with the work done by Rockhill, Bower, and Bonvallot. Before the days of wireless time signals it was extremely hard for travellers on east-west routes to fix their longitudes

with accuracy, but although we had scrapped our receiver early on because it was not powerful enough, we were moving in a general line south-east to north-west, and by taking frequent latitudes we had no difficulty. We had found that Shopando had been estimated as thirteen miles too far to the east, and we were particularly interested in Pada Sumdo to see whether its position also needed revision. We started soon after dawn and did not get back until nine o'clock at night, with the soles of our boots literally frozen to the stirrups and John's beard a mass of icicles ; but by discovering that the place had been put eight miles too far west on the maps we were able to bring that part of the route into alignment with the Gya Lam. It was past eleven before we went to bed, and nearly three hours later than our usual time, for with nothing better than butter lamps to see by there was no point in staying up, and we used to go to sleep when darkness fell and get up with the first light. The alarm clock had broken after a few months, but we awoke at five as regularly as if it had still been with us and far more comfortably.

In spite of the fact that we often spoke with longing of the old days when we could walk everywhere, and had dark forebodings as to the effect of constant riding on our figures, I think it was a very good thing that we did have to use ponies so much, for otherwise we might soon have grown stale with the continual hard exercise and have begun to feel permanently tired. As it was we were always fit, apart from a stray disease or two, like John's yak-dung poisoning. The saddles were of the type that is used all over Central Asia, and so by the Cossacks as well, who adopted them from their Tartar ancestors.

They are very high fore and aft, made of wood and decorated in front and behind with leather or shagreen ; and the stirrups are hung from the middle (not from in front as in Europe), so that one's feet are well back. The seats are covered with a thin cushion and a small rug is fastened on top, sometimes of silk if the owner is wealthy. When one is used to them they are very comfortable for long journeys over country which may be as rough as you like, but where there are no jumps. Galloping, or on steep slopes, you grip as much with your feet and calves as with your knees ; and cruppers are essential, or the saddle slips on to the pony's neck when going downhill. For much the same reason it is usual to have a breast-band to prevent it from sliding over the tail in going up. A string of horse-bells and a pair of large leather saddle-bags distinguish a person of rank, even if he is only a local headman, and the women ride astride as well as the men. The bits are plain snaffles, and there are no chin-straps on the bridles. Riding in Tibet is a picturesque means of progression as a long file of ponies swings slowly into sight along the path, with splashes of brilliant colour from the dresses of the great man, his wife, and attendants ; rifles and swords in full display ; and the musical jingling of the bells. It is only now and then that it becomes ludicrous, and Nyima Töndrup was one of those who inevitably managed to make it so. As time went on he took it upon himself to form an advance guard, leaving even before Nyima Dorje to make arrangements for our coming at the next halt. He was a staggering sight, perched uneasily on a pile of bedding, apparently at least a foot above his saddle, and hung around with an incredible

collection of odds and ends, such as a lengthy sword, a tea-pot, a heavy silver charm box, a frying-pan, two old sweaters, my jade cup in an iron case, and a dozen other things, clattering and banging as he trotted away. He was the nearest approach to the White Knight there has ever been, except that he was completely at home on a horse. It was Lewa who was lacking in balance. He relied entirely on his stirrups to keep him aboard, and more than once I heard a moan and looked back to see him gradually toppling off sideways, while, with a face of anguish, he vainly clutched the air. If a pony became skittish it was his for a certainty, and the outcome was always the same—a wild rush off the road, followed by a heavy thud, a volley of curses, and an inflamed face peering out of a thorn bush like a poached egg from a nest of spinach.

We had our first real wind on the top of the fifteen thousand foot pass between Kyirothang and Dege, where it was blowing about fifty miles an hour—a freezing blast straight from the Chang Thang, which stripped the skin from our noses in a couple of minutes. Noses are unhappy organs, for it is always they who bear the brunt of an attack whether from the elements or in a fight. At the end of the journey I reckoned that mine had peeled some thirty-seven times from top to bottom, and though John's was made of sterner stuff, even he must have had a shameful total to record. Not far from the pass, however, we saw a flock of fifteen burhel grazing, great sandy-brown mountain sheep with spreading horns; and this sight did much to comfort us for the state of our noses. We reached Dege just in time to escape a heavy snowstorm, which raged all night,

driving in through the shutters of our tiny window and covering everything with a glittering powder. By morning the storm had finished, but the wind was as high as ever, whipping clouds of snow off the ground till it was agony to face it; so we stayed where we were, huddled round a charcoal fire—villainously cold in the feet, but thankful to be in shelter. The wind dropped quite suddenly, and when we moved on, once more by the Salween, it was so still that it was hard to remember there had been a gale at all.

It was December the 4th, and the river was already frozen in the quieter stretches, strongly enough to bear transport. It saved us a lot of time, as we were able to cross over the ice a short way above Dege instead of having to use the rope bridge further upstream; and although it was more than fourteen miles to Chamda Gompa, it was one of the rare occasions when we were able to do all our work in a day. A contributing factor was that the valley ran almost due west, with consequent added light in the evening; but, as we found later, by itself this was not enough to make a great deal of difference. On the slopes near Chamda Gompa there was a fair amount of light juniper forest and rhododendron scrub, and the place itself was attractive, built on a cliff some fifty feet above the river, and enclosed with a mud wall. It was a big village of ninety houses with a monastery of a hundred and twenty monks and a good rest-house—by far the most important spot we had seen since Shopando—and we stopped there for three days to find out which was going to be the most profitable route to take. The night we arrived the critters lay just below our window, a collection of contented

mounds, covered with thick frost, and grinding their teeth with a pleasant squeaking until, one by one, they dropped off to sleep.



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*Padmasambhava*

## CHAPTER NINE

“ He murmured, as he chewed th’ unwonted food,  
 ‘ It may be wholesome, but it is not good.’ ”

From a forgotten Prize Poem on “ Nebuchadnezzar ” (when out at grass): with further acknowledgments to the Rt. Rev. Sir David Hunter-Blair.

At Shopathang we had been told that somewhere to the west the Salween was joined by a very large tributary ; but by deserting the river from Kau we had missed the confluence, and now we could not even swear that we were on the main stream. It was difficult to get information on this point from the natives, because the size of a stream does not depend on its width alone but on the current and depth as well, and when we asked about these the reports were most confusing. Although we were moderately certain about the matter (the river at Chamda Gompa

was called Gyamo Ngo Chu, which is the Tibetan for the Salween), we felt that we ought to cross the range and find out for sure. Gyamo Ngo Chu, by the way, means the Blue River of China, and it is an apt name, for it flows into Yünnan, and in the winter, just before it freezes, it is the most beautiful dark blue in colour, so deep as to be almost black. For the remainder of the year it is a muddy yellow, like the Blue Danube. After talking to six or eight monks and peasants, the only question which remained was whether to go straight up the Salween and then explore the tributary to the south ; or to reverse the order, and come back to Chamda Gompa down the river from wherever it might be. Either meant retracing our steps, but the southern route was said to be the better, and in the end we decided to start along that and afterwards to return to Chamda Gompa with light loads.

The day before we left for the Ge Chu (the big tributary) was John's birthday, although neither of us remembered it until lunch ; and considering the lack of time and supplies, the servants worked marvels in providing a suitable feast. Their share of the repast, as at Shugden Gompa, was a conical tsamba cake, coloured pink and decorated with blobs of butter, and there were mince-pies for dinner in a crust of baked dough. John earned Lewa's eternal gratitude by giving him his Jew's harp for an un-birthday present. For the next month he twanged away on it for hours on end, producing lugubrious buzzing noises with an air of deep absorption ; and proving, beyond a shadow of doubt, that he was no more a harpist than the original owner.

A fierce wind made the climb up to the La Gen



terribly cold, and the man who was leading my pony had both his feet slightly frost-bitten—not badly enough to be serious, but painful none the less. The pass, which is 16,350 feet high, is closed from January to March and has a bad reputation, the coolies telling us that it was not unknown for people to die of cold when crossing it in December. It was certainly a bleak spot, steep on both sides and covered with deep snow in which the animals floundered miserably; and the tattered prayer-flags fluttering from a cairn of stones at the top added a grim air of desolation. The wind died down shortly before we finished the climb, and it began to snow in small hard pellets, more and more thickly, until work became impossible. Even when we could see it had not been too easy, for there were nearly twenty degrees of frost; and, using metal instruments, our hands had been numbed in a very few minutes. Eight more miles and we reached the camp, in a long narrow meadow on the bank of a frozen stream. Tents had been brought up from Bumthang Gompa; and with bushes for fires, and plenty of grazing for our yaks, we were prepared to stop there a week if need be before returning to the pass.

As luck would have it the next day was clear and sunny, the one bad point about it being the tremendous glare off the snow, which gave us slight headaches even though we were wearing dark goggles the whole time. Quite close to the La Gen, at 16,000 feet, we saw a line of tracks running straight down the side of the valley at what seemed to be an incredible angle, and went over to investigate. Unfortunately there was a thin layer of snow on top and they were not very clear, but in size and every-

thing else they looked exactly like the prints of a bare-footed man—or men, rather, for there were five sets of them. Our first thought was bears, migrating from one valley to another, and I still think that that is what they must have been, but the four coolies swore that bears were unknown in the locality. Two of them were in favour of their having been made by snow-leopard, going slowly, the hind paws just overlapping the fore to make a long imprint ; and this was conceivable, although I had previously never heard of these animals moving in company. The other two said that they were the tracks of a party of Mountain Men—fearsome creatures who live high up in the snows. They all agreed that the Mountain Men did exist, and the oldest (a man of forty-five) declared that he had seen one some years before near that very place, when, in defiance of the law, he was hunting burhel. He described it as being like a man, white-skinned, naked, and with long fair hair on the shoulders, arms, and head ; running at great speed over the snow, and carrying a club. Neither the bear nor the snow-leopard theory found any support in the camp that night, and for my own satisfaction, I should very much like to spend some time in that neighbourhood one of these days, to find out definitely what the beasts could have been.

We moved down to Bumthang Gompa (12,480 feet) on December the 10th, and settled into a house close to the monastery for three days, to finish some calculations and develop films. Christmas was drawing on, and our minds were much exercised over the problem of what to give each other for presents. It was a difficult matter, for there were no shops ; but it was simplified to some extent by the fact that, after our

work, the two major interests in our lives were food and warmth. Finally when we discovered that we had decided to give the other precisely the same things, we each came to the conclusion that presents were more trouble than they were worth. It would have been a dismal little offering in any case, though we derived a certain amount of amusement from thinking it out. It consisted of a couple of dung-cakes for the fire, and a few sticks ; a choice fragment of meat ; a turnip (John was more generous, with two) ; an old bone for soup ; and perhaps some cold stew, if there were any to be had, or a piece of butter ; all strictly utilitarian, and the sort of things a cave-man gave to his fellow.

There was no doubt about the Ge Chu being the smaller, for at Bumthang Gompa, it was not more than twelve yards wide by six or seven feet deep, while the Salween at Chamda Gompa had been some fifty yards across and very much deeper. We were only one day from the confluence with the Gyamo Ngo Chu, and on December the 14th we went down to Sating, a small dzong about two miles below the junction, leaving Nyima Dorje and the bulk of the baggage behind. Most of the fifteen-mile march lay through light juniper forest, and there was a collection of white and blood pheasants (fifty all told) feeding together by the side of the path. We noticed that none of these birds seemed to be very strong on the wing. When they were alarmed they would run uphill for several hundred feet and wait on events from a height ; and then, if the danger came nearer, they would launch themselves into the air and glide, like aeroplanes to a lower level, with now and again a quick flap of the wings to add speed. This was all

the flying they did, and at other times they wandered quietly around on foot. The "manager" at Sating was a subordinate of the Dzongpön at Nakshö Biru, and responsible for the taxes from between Kau and Chamda Gompa. They were paid in kind, a hundred yak-loads of butter being sent off to Lhasa in the summer, and two hundred in the winter; so that the huge total of thirty-six thousand pounds of butter was paid every year by this small district alone. It was a testimony to the wealth of the country in cattle that more than enough remained for the people, and that supplies were exceedingly cheap. Hides, wool, and yak-hair blankets were included in the taxes, and these, together with salt from the Plateau, were also used as barter with traders from Poyü, who brought in chillies and madder, as I have said. It was quite exciting to use the white salt from the Chang Thang after the red, earthy stuff which comes from the Mekong Valley—the only source of supply for Zayul and Ngagong.

The magistrate gave us a supply of the white salt, and an almost forgotten luxury in the shape of fine wheat flour, sieved through cotton gauze in a tray. It would have been ideal for a cake, if we had only had some baking-powder left, but as it was it made us better chapatties than we had eaten for months, and lasted a very short time in consequence. We were at our lowest ebb as regards food at this period, and for the next six months we had what was practically an uninterrupted diet of meat (yak or mutton) and turnips—of course with butter, tsamba, and the weekly ration of chocolate. The yak meat was always tough, for young critters are far too valuable to be deliberately killed, and it was only those which

died of old age or through an accident which were eaten. It was good meat though, and at its best in wind-dried strips like biltong. It was not that which was such a burden, but the turnips, for they were our sole vegetable and, because of that, faithfully added to every meal. We had welcomed them at first, but seeing them every day, familiarity bred a good deal more than contempt in our hearts, and to say that they began to pall would be a wicked understatement of fact. We tried them in a dozen different ways—fried as a substitute for potatoes, boiled, mashed, as a salad, sauté—but no matter how we attempted to disguise them, they always remained just plain turnips, an offence to the taste and a weariness to the flesh. Even our packet soups were a delusion, for although in the early days they had seemed to have individual flavours, by now these had vanished in a flat basis of pea-flour, and things came to such a pass that we had to insist on the wrapper being sent in each night to give us some idea of what we were drinking. The recognizable varieties were Scotch broth, mushroom, and julienne, on account of the foreign bodies to be found therein; but, for the remainder, it was a matter of pure luck whether we guessed right or not. One day the label was late in coming, and we made a bet as to what the soup might be. After John had voted for mulligatawny, and I for mock turtle, we were not unduly surprised when it turned out to be lentil. The great thing was that, however uninteresting, the food was very healthy, and we found ourselves steadily putting on weight.

Pengar Gompa, some twenty-two miles above Bumthang, was the scene of our Christmas revels, such as they were. We arrived there on December

One of the tents with yak-hair  
tents. Unpleasant to look at, but  
comfortable and well ventilated.  
(p. 159.)

The Monastic Band kept us awake  
at Pengar Gompa. (p. 178.)





the 20th, and were so comfortable that we made up our minds not to move before the 26th, in case the next place should be as melancholy as we feared. The march up was full of incident, almost all connected with ice, for the valley was very much more open than it had been below Bumthang Gompa, and infinitely colder. The ponies slithered and slipped, and wondering when we were going to fall made the ride as exhilarating as a steeplechase. Nyima Töndrup was the first to go, and when he scrambled up, clutching his belongings, his feet instantly shot away, to land him with a rousing crash on to a large posterior. John escaped, but I was lowered from my high estate ; and another time I came perilously near dropping twenty feet into the Ge Chu, when my pony skidded wildly across the path and finished with its hoofs on the very edge.

We took a suite of three rooms on the upper floor of the caravanserai, using one for a living room, one for the kitchen, and one for drying negatives. We had a great deal of bother over this because of the cold ; for, even with a brazier near the dust-net in which we had to hang them, several of mine froze completely, so that the gelatine was permanently marked by crystals of ice and the films ruined. It was extraordinarily difficult to get the fire near enough to balance the cold without cooking the negatives, as it was only very close to the glow that the temperature ever rose above freezing. December the 20th was a festival in honour of Tsong Kapa, the Man from the Land of Onions, who was the founder of the Yellow Hat sect. Hundreds of butter lamps were burning in the temple and in all the monks' houses, twinkling in the windows like a



galaxy of yellow stars ; and the sound of chanting went on to a late hour, mingled with the hoarse booming of the big trumpets and the wailing of clarinets.

We visited the monastery in the morning, and were shown round by the prior. The tangkas were by a long way the finest we had seen, and painted by a real artist ; but naturally it was not possible to buy any of the good ones in the temple, and those that were offered to us were of a very different quality. It was a kindly gesture on the part of the abbot to send them round, however, and we bought a few so as not to appear ungrateful. There were two hundred monks in Pengar Gompa, most of whom had such amazingly kind faces, deeply furrowed in the older men, that it was a delight to be with them, and I took several portraits to brighten some future moment of despair. Europeans were almost legendary figures in that part of the country, and we were shown the utmost veneration by both monks and laymen. So marked was it, in fact, that we felt bound to act and speak even more carefully than we had up till then, for the ideals of children and simple folk are sacred things, which it is a sin to shatter, even by accident.

For a whole fortnight before this I had been maddened by toothache, on and off, but in Pengar Gompa it was obvious that a crisis was at hand. For two days and nights I had continual torment, and at length I was driven to such a pitch of desperation that I wrenched it from my jaw with a pair of forceps and a deep groan. It was 2 a.m. on Christmas Eve, and I was filled with so much bubbling relief that it was all I could do not to rouse John from his slumbers to tell him

about it. The next day I was too cheerful to do any work, and just sat in the sun, beaming at everybody, and looking, as John said, the living image of an old-time pirate. We spent Christmas in high spirits, opening various luxuries which had been religiously hoarded until then. It was more thrilling than we had dared to hope, beginning with a tin of bull's-eyes in the morning, and ending with a dinner of ox-tail soup (packet, unhappily !); roast mutton with peas, baked beans, and Chinese vermicelli (or *ping*); plum pudding, and no turnips. The greatest treat of all was that we broached our last bottle of rum, which had been carried with loving care for months. The servants had a sheep to deal with as they would; a Christmas pudding; and unlimited chang; and they excelled themselves by making us a cake of tsamba, butter, pulverized brick cheese, and sugar. It weighed like lead, but was delicious, and it was garnished with sculptured figures, in hard butter, of a lamb eating from a basket (Lewa); a bird of a new species (Nyima Dorje); and a mysterious fish (Nyima Töndrup). We went to bed so fortified with one thing and another that not even the thought of its being the last banquet of that sort until we reached India again could cast a blight on our minds.

Owing to my day of rest, we did not get away before the 27th, when we made a march of nineteen miles to a grazing ground at 14,700 feet, some twelve and a half miles south of the Thamtsa La. One of the monks had died two days before we left, and his body was just beyond the monastery grounds, wrapped in a red cloth, doubled up, and tied, sitting, to a post. It was to be there for another day (three in all),

watched hour after hour by a brother monk, who kept warm over a tiny dung fire. The watcher was relieved every two hours, and when the time was accomplished the body would be carried to the top of a hill, there to be broken up and given to the kites and vultures. The three days' vigil is necessary because the spirit takes a little while to become completely free of the flesh ; and it would be distressed, from its temporary home in Bardo (the state between the worlds), if the body were to be destroyed too soon. Of the three original elements, air, fire, and water (for earth is not classed as one of these), the former is the one to which it is best to be consigned, in the persons of the birds ; and by commonly following this custom the Tibetans resemble the Parsees of India. The water of the larger rivers is sometimes used by the poor, but fire very seldom ; for in most districts fuel is scarce, and those who could afford sufficient to buy the wood could pay the expenses of burial in the air.

Above Pengar Gompa there is nothing to stop the wind which blows straight down the valley all day long ; and, now that it was winter, work in the open became very trying. At nearly every exposed station we had to build a fire of yak-dung (or brushwood if there was any) to warm our hands ; and as there was one station per two miles, on an average, and the rule was ten minutes of thaw to five of work, it was no longer a case of simply taking a couple of days for every normal stage : it was an effort to do the work in even that time. I think John, as recorder, was the worst sufferer, as he sat on a boulder and struggled painfully, with dead fingers, to write down the angles and distances I gave him. His entries

were always legible, but, under stress, the figures became huge and wobbly ; and when later I came to open the book, I could gauge the measure of his pain by the amount he had squeezed into a page. One and a half miles west of Pengar Gompa, a path crossed the Ge Chu and continued up a big stream and over one pass to Lharigo, on the Gya Lam, four days away. It was a temptation to turn along it, at least as far as the pass, which is on the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed ; but the Salween itself came first in our plans, and we regretfully left it alone.

It was a long steady climb from the Ge Chu all the way to the Thamtsa La (16,970 feet), followed by a steep descent into the Salween Valley ; and the second march from Pengar Gompa, over the range, was intensely interesting from a zoological point of view, and exceedingly chilly from a physical. We started in 34 degrees of frost, and there was a continual blast ; but a thousand feet below the pass, on the south side, we found a gigantic warren of pygmy hares, which stretched for five miles along the floor of the valley, and was about half a mile in width. The ground was riddled with burrows, and hundreds of the little fellows went scurrying away as we approached, dashing back to their holes, and popping up again in a second, like marmots, to watch us go by. They were much browner than those we had seen in Zayul and Poyü, and strongly resembled a swarm of active guinea-pigs. A small fox was running about, apparently quite aimlessly, among the holes, sand coloured, and not more than fifteen inches high, with a very bushy brush and large ears ; and five or six hawks were eternally wheeling overhead on the look-out for the first unwary pygmy to

appear. Then, just across the pass, we put up a covey of four rare and very large partridges, which had been resting in the snow ; and further down we saw thirty more of the big pheasants, mostly of the blue variety, but with some half-breeds. We finished the march at Shukthang Gompa, a monastery of sixty monks, about nine hundred feet above the confluence of the Salween with the stream from the Thamtsa La, and were given a royal welcome, fires of juniper twigs being lit along the last two hundred yards of our route, and the orchestra playing us in from the roof of the temple.

In Tibet, etiquette and good manners are of more importance almost than anything else ; and the morning, when the sun is rising, is the most propitious time of day in which to arrive at any town of consequence. From Shukthang Gompa it was only six miles to Nakshö Biru, so that we were well placed in the second respect ; and to carry out the first essential, Lewa went off with a khata to present our compliments to the Dzongpön and announce our desire to visit him in two days' time. He returned with word that the Governor was eagerly awaiting our coming, and that a house would be got ready for us at once ; and on New Year's Day, 1936, we crossed over the ice of the river, rode past the walled monastery, and on for another four hundred yards to our quarters beyond. Nakshö Biru was not such a big place as we had expected, for apart from the monastery, which had a hundred and sixty monks and covered a surprisingly large area, there was no town of any sort, and the houses, which were considered to make up the village, were scattered up and down the valley for a mile or more. Our room was

good and light, with two windows, but very draughty, and the pan of charcoal which was there when we arrived gave out volumes of evil-smelling smoke, which not even quantities of joss-sticks could drown. After close inspection we came to the conclusion that it was full of old bones, and consigned it to the yard until better could be found. The trouble with houses in the interior of Tibet is that window glass is unknown. The small lattices are covered with sheets of paper (often old letters), but they block out so much of the light that close work, such as on maps, is a strain. In any case, the paper in our windows had broken long before, and, although a man turned up that evening to repair it, we decided against this, and stretched a piece of cotton cloth across outside, to try to keep out some of the wind and still let in light. Nakshö Biru is at 13,200 feet, and the rate of evaporation is very high, so that snow does not lie on the ground, even in mid-winter, for more than a few days at a time. It does not melt (for the temperature seldom rises above freezing-point at that time of year, on the sunniest day), but simply vanishes. And, except when snow is actually on the ground, an intermittent dust-storm tears down the valley four days out of five, driven by a high, gusty wind. Do what we might, this dust drifted into our room in such quantities that it was hopeless to bring out any maps or papers, for they became black in a very short while.

We called on the Dzongpön, the monastery, and the young abbot on our first day, starting the round of calls at ten o'clock and finishing at about four. It was a thoroughly wearing day, but quite good fun. Chandzö Yeshe Chömphe, the Governor, earned our

blessings by giving us a present of eleven eggs, and all eatable, which he had been treasuring through the winter, but he rather took us aback by so obviously looking our gift horse in the mouth. Admittedly we were rather short of presents by this time (we had brought far too few, having no idea of the number of officials we should meet), but still we had done our best for him, and one of the things we gave was a thermos of, I think, quart size. He thanked us very much, but immediately produced the very father of thermoses, like a shell case, and told us reproachfully that that had been given to him by Mr. Williamson in Gyantse. The abbot was a living Buddha of only twelve years old, sitting in a high lama's chair in a room which was filled with dark red pillars, tangkas, and books, and with several Lhasa terriers as pets. He was small and pale, with a delightful face, fine hands and very large ears; and, though shy at first, he soon cheered up and laughed. It helped us over the first few minutes that his father, Dzampe Kūsang, was in the room, for he was most excellent company and very amusing. He had formerly lived in Gyantse, and his claim to have frequently spoken with Sir Charles Bell raised his status among the Tibetans enormously. Wherever we went we heard Belli Lönchen (Bell the Great Minister) spoken of almost with adoration, and this was the more striking as he had never been in eastern Tibet for the people there to know him personally, but always in Lhasa and the centre. We only wished that we too could have claimed his acquaintance, to compete with Dzampe Kūsang. We had a meal with the Incarnation (strictly vegetarian, of milk and the roots we had first tasted in Shugden Gomba), and

knelt for his blessing and a khata, which he put round our necks. This because, as a living Buddha, he was much superior to us in rank.

Nakshö Biru is on the main road from Lhasa to Jyekundo, as well as on that from Lhasa to Chungpo Tengchen, and we were in a good position to get whatever news came into the country, generally from Yeshe Chömphe or Dzampe Küsang. It was on January the 3rd that we heard of the sad death from pneumonia of Mr. Williamson in Lhasa, and of the grief that everyone felt. They said he had done so much for Tibet that his death was like an eclipse of the sun, and the whole land was plunged in darkness and woe. It was a real tragedy, especially that it had taken place so far away, and our utmost sympathy went out to Mrs. Williamson, who was in Lhasa with him at the time.

We waited in Nakshö Biru for nine days, before going down the river to Chamda Gomba again, spending a good deal of our time in visiting and being visited, and collecting information from Yeshe Chömphe about the difficulties we were likely to find on our way to the source. He had not been there himself, but had spoken with herdsmen and others who had ; and he thought that, beyond Nakchu Dzong, some ten days to the west, we would find it impossible to travel much before April at the earliest, owing to the lack of fodder and the searing wind.

It sounded a grand country at the headwaters of the river, with herds of kiang and wild yaks, wolves and antelopes ; and, as no one seemed to know exactly where the source was—some saying in a lake called Amdo Tsonak, and some in a stream to the north of



the lake—it was all the more exciting to think that we might soon be able to solve the riddle.

On January the 10th, we started back down the Salween, by a road which is only used in the middle of the winter when the river is frozen. We rode along the rough ice wherever the sides of the valley were too steep for a path, and although in most places it was thick enough to carry a railway train, once or twice we had some nervous moments when the river flowed through a narrow cut ; for there the current was very strong, wearing away the ice from below until we could see the bubbles sweeping by a couple of inches below our feet. It was in one of these clefts that a yak fell through. Unfortunately it was the last in the line, and, with the others far ahead, the two men who remained were powerless to do more than keep its nose above the water. By the time we reached the spot they said it had been in the water for nearly half an hour, and it took nine of us a further twenty minutes to rescue it, working like madmen to finish the job before it froze to death. We smashed the ice all round it to find some which could bear its weight ; but, when we tied a log to its horns and lifted its forelegs out of the water, the poor beast was too cold to help at all, and there we stuck for some while. At last, as a desperate resource, for a yak is very heavy, one man left the others to hold it up as best they could and dashed back with a second log to try to raise the hind-quarters. Again and again the ice broke under the lever, but it held at last, and with a long heave the yak was out. It lay like a corpse, covered in icicles, for a little, staggered weakly to its feet, and in a short time it was able to walk off none the worse.

It is normally six days to Chamda Gompa by that route, and we had expected to take at least double ; but the marches were very short, and, in spite of everything, we made only seven stages of the distance. The best part of the trip was at dawn. We were always up before that, and I used to go out to watch the birds awake. The sparrows and finches were abroad with the first faint glimmer of light, a good half hour before the others. Later there came a sleepy murmuring from the magpies, which was soon swelled by the pheasants and choughs, and in five or six minutes there was an uproar in every spinney, with the pheasants leading the chorus. And then the exodus began. The pheasants did not leave the ground, and the sparrows were not very enterprising, for they had been up the earliest ; but the pies and choughs took the air in squadrons, flashing about with absolute abandon as if they had thought the day was never coming and that now they must strain every nerve to show how happy and relieved they were. The latest arrivals of all were the pigeons who did their best to atone for their sloth by giving a wonderful exhibition of formation flying at speed, banking and turning as one bird, round and round until I was dizzy with watching. Even the kites were up before the pigeons, being mobbed at once by troops of magpies, who could make rings round the larger birds, and who often came rushing down from above to hit the kites' heads as they sailed along.

On our way back, and while we were still two marches from Nakshö Biru, a dreadful event took place, for a man turned up at our abode and made off with the householder's wife, reducing both him and his brother to tears. There being polyandry in

the valley, it hit them both equally hard. A conversation was carried on from a distance, in which the abductor said that he would, of course, pay compensation ; but the bereaved husbands declared, weeping piteously, that not even the money would make up for her loss. Asked what was the sum agreed upon, they moaned proudly, "Twenty ngü-sang." A ngü-sang is six and two-thirds copper trangkas (of which twenty go to a rupee), so that the total value was about eight shillings and threepence. It did not seem excessive. And the wife of the headman in the next village had died the evening before we came. The house was full of monks beating drums, blowing thigh-bone trumpets, and praying to help her spirit in its new existence. Accommodation was therefore very limited, and, as a result, I slept on the roof, while John (like the Prophet) was established in a chamber on the wall, which had only three sides and was much too small for us both. We tossed up for who should have the room, and I feel that by getting the roof I won the better part, for there are few things more heavenly than waking up in the clear cold night, watching the stars for a minute or two, and snuggling deeper into the blankets to drop off once more into a dreamless sleep.



སངས་རྒྱལ་པུ་ཏུ་བྱུང་།

*Buddha Shakyamuni*

## CHAPTER TEN

“ One silent night of late,  
 When every creature rested,  
 Came one unto my gate  
 And, knocking, me molested.”

Robert Herrick: *The Cheat of Cupid ; or  
 The Ungentle Guest.*

It was January the 22nd when we reached Nakshö Biru again, and very cheering to see old Nyima Töndrup's moon-like face beaming a welcome from our courtyard gate. We had left him behind with

the boxes thirteen days before, as he had not been feeling too well ; but by now he was quite fit and dashing about like the fleas we had not seen since Poyü. It is one of the good points about fleas that they disappear in the winter, and though we sometimes wished we could say the same of lice, the latter were remarkably little bother, on the whole. In that connection, numbers of professional beggars were continually passing through ; people who do nothing but beg, and are brought up from birth in the belief that any form of work is almost degrading. A beggar's curse is a terrible thing, and, for fear of it, everyone gives what he can on demand. This might easily be pushed to extremes, but the mendicants themselves realize perfectly how easily a good horse can be flogged to death, and are content with the smallest sums, or a handful of tsamba. In any case these must all mount up, and most of those we saw were better shod, better dressed, and probably better fed than many of the hard-working peasants. They were all infested, as a matter of course, and as they sat in the sun under our window, it was a fearful and compelling sight to see them going through their clothes, men and women, and thrusting each louse into their mouths with a hurried movement, just like monkeys. This strange habit was not confined to the beggars either, for we noticed it among the ordinary Khampas in some districts. Lewa once asked whether they tasted good, or, if not, why it was done ; and the bewildering reply was that " They haven't much taste, but it is the custom."

Every night of our trip to Chamda Gompa had been brilliantly clear and filled with enormous stars ; but, as soon as we really wanted them, thick snow

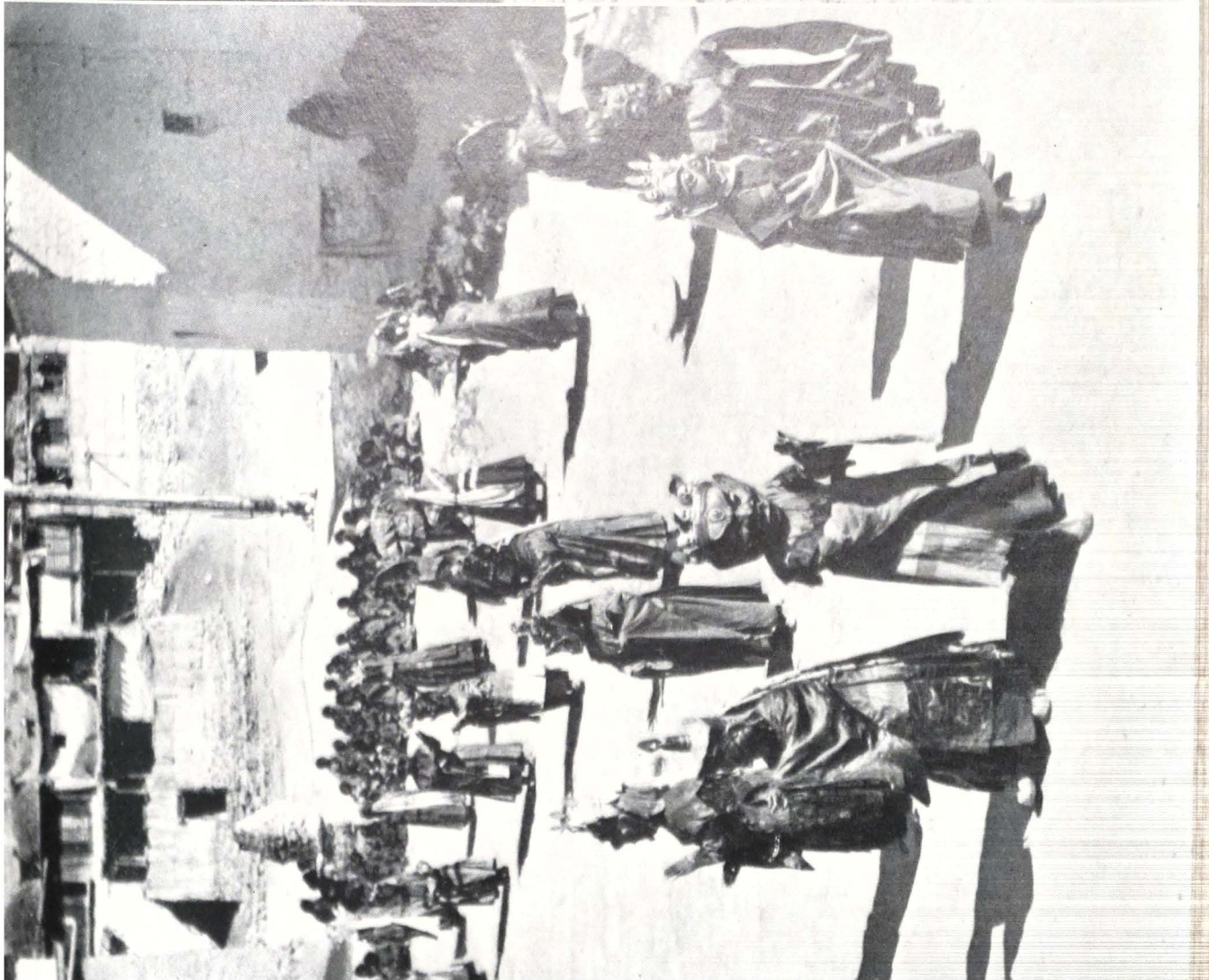
clouds rolled up, and we waited night after night in Nakshö Biru for a latitude in vain. John was suffering from a very heavy cold on the chest, however, with a headache and a racking cough, and we felt that this wait was probably exactly what we needed to let him get over it. It was not altogether wasted in another way, for I was led into taking a bath for the first time since Chumdo. In a moment of weakness I had told Lewa how much I wished I could have one, provided only it were moderately comfortable ; and, filled with this idea, he made off to the monastery and borrowed their tea-cauldron, a huge round copper vessel like a cannibal's cooking pot. We hoped it was a spare one and they knew for what use it was wanted. We turned an alcove outside the door of our room into a bathroom, by hanging some yak-hair blankets over the entrance ; and by building a large fire inside, it was quite pleasantly warm. In fact, the bath became a regular feature of our stay in Nakshö Biru, and John took to it too, as soon as he felt better. It was an astounding spectacle, whoever was in it, for at the first glance it looked as if it would be impossible to do more than stand in it ; but we developed the unexpected gift of contortion, and were soon able to curl ourselves up, frog-like, and sit in comparative comfort, with the water up to our arm-pits.

January the 25th was the Sherpa New Year, and the servants, dressed in their finest, brought in an offering of khatas, tsamba, butter, and arrack ; and later on a masterpiece of a cake (the usual ingredients), made by Lewa into a model of Everest, butter acting as snow and grains of barley as the rocks. Camp 6 was in full view, and there was a

flag of silver paper to mark Smythe's highest point. Not to be outdone, we presented them with a leg of yak (enough to feed ten men for a week), butter, chang, arrack, tsamba, cheese, and a rupee or two, so that they could celebrate that night in fitting style ; and the party was such a success that Nyima Töndrup was *hors de combat* until lunch-time, the rock-headed Lewa bringing in John's early tea.

We got our latitude at last, and on the 30th we asked Yeshe Chömphe to give orders for transport to take us to Nakchu Dzong, only to be told that he regretted having to refuse our request. He said that there was some doubt as to our right to be in the country at all ; and that, even though he had seen our papers, he must detain us until he had heard from his superior in Chungpo Tengchen whether we were free to go or not. We could find out no more than that, and resigned ourselves to wait for the courier to return with orders for our release. In the meantime we could only work on the maps during those rare intervals when the snow lay long enough to defeat the dust ; and we turned our attention to working out some tables to do with the rangefinder. We had done without them up till then, but they were going to save us so much trouble and labour in the end, that we toiled on day after day. It was a tedious job, however, and to keep ourselves sane we used to see Dzampe Küsang at frequent intervals, dining as often with him as he with us. We were still friendly with Yeshe Chömphe, but, in a sense, he was our gaoler, and relations were on a much more formal footing ; so that although we exchanged visits from time to time, and sent over odd presents—such as some chocolate from us, or a bag of rice







While at Nakshö Biru we com-  
missioned a friend of mine to paint  
two pictures of the "Wheel of  
Life." (p. 199.)

The Devil Dance at Nakshö Biru  
welcomed in the Fire Mouse Year.  
(p. 197.)

from him—there was none of the carefree enjoyment that we had with our other friend. We had made up our minds to cross the Great Plateau from the source of the Salween, as being the most interesting way to go back to India, and between calculations and outings we filled in the time by working out the details of this part of the journey as far as we could.

There were really two Governors in Nakshö Biru, and the second (Tsedung Jamyang Chömphe, the older brother of the Chandzö) arrived from Chungpo Tengchen the day after we were held up. He was a monk from Drepung Gompa, and full of gloomy stories about the Chang Thang. We knew already that the Changpas were as keen on banditry as on looking after their herds, for most of the Plateau is out of reach of the law ; but he told us that matters had become very much worse up there during the last four or five years, on account of the Mauser rifles and automatics which could be obtained so easily from Mongolia. Where travellers, in the old days, had had nothing worse to contend with than swords, lances, and primitive muskets, merchants between Lhasa and the north now had to go in bodies of three or four hundred well-armed men. Everyone was pessimistic when they heard that we intended to cross over with our small party, and never a gun between us ; and the only people who seemed to take a reasonable view were ourselves and the servants. The Changpas follow the grass as crabs do the tides, moving north in the winter to the lower ground where there is grazing for their animals, and back again when the fresh shoots begin to push up in the late spring ; and we felt that, provided we were ready to start west from the source by the end of

April, when they were still some hundreds of miles to the north, we would have a sporting chance of reaching the other side before they came far enough down to cut our route. As everything depended on how soon we could get away from Nakshö Biru, it was a big disappointment when the courier returned on February the 7th from Chungpo Tengchen with word that we must stay where we were until further instructions could arrive from Lhasa, some three-hundred miles by path to the south-west. An official messenger had already been sent off, but, although we were told to expect the reply at the end of February, it was not until the beginning of April that it arrived. For one thing, I imagine that the original letter was filed and dealt with in its proper turn, and, for another, the Tibetan New Year was on February the 23rd in 1936 (it varies from year to year), and during the celebrations all Government offices in Lhasa are closed for three weeks. All the same, a good deal of the mystery of our arrest seemed to be cleared up when we heard that, on account of his beard, John was thought to be a Russian and therefore a Communist and an undesirable. Yeshe Chömphe was quite frank about it as soon as he saw that we knew of the rumour. It must have originated from him anyway, because he had twice been to Calcutta, and he said that, in his experience, no Englishmen had beards, while, to judge from the pictures, they were very fashionable in Russia. I might well be what I claimed, but there could be little doubt about John being a Bolshevik, and our papers must have been made out in error. This was a tactful way of saying that they were probably forged.

Again we settled down to wait, and after we had finished the tables time hung very heavily for us all. Lewa, in particular, became bored, and, casting around for something to do, was at immense pains to acquire a reputation for magic. It all started when he went round to a near-by house to haggle with the good man over the price of a sheep. The wife said that her husband was away, selling wool, and would not be back for a week at least. Lewa peered fixedly into his bowl of buttered tea, and stated at random that he could distinctly see him returning the next day and bringing his sheaves with him. This was received with polite if incredulous smiles, until the following evening when the man really did come back, having finished his trading much sooner than was expected. No one was more astonished than the soothsayer, but he manfully hid his amazement from all but John and me, and the rest were convinced that he had second sight at least. This stroke of luck made a very good beginning, and he followed it up by reading Dzampe Kūsang's hand with almost complete accuracy—having first taken the precaution of talking at length with his servants, the cook being a very mine of information. Second sight, however, did not rank high in Lewa's opinion, and not even two swallows make a summer; it was imperative that a miracle be wrought, and to this end Nyima Töndrup was dragged in as an accomplice. One morning the latter was seen lying on the ground in front of our house, groaning dreadfully with distorted visage, and informing the small crowd of bystanders that he was dying of a colic and that Lewa alone could save him. An obliging individual hurried off to our kitchen, and in due course the magician

appeared, his face painted in a dazzle pattern with soot. For some time he brandished a couple of swords over the afflicted quarter, hopping and skipping, chanting incantations, and every now and then scattering magical tsamba to the winds—though sparingly, for it was an expensive commodity in Nakshö Biru. Little by little the moans subsided, and at last the sufferer jumped to his feet, rapturously declaring himself healed. The onlookers were deeply impressed, and the fame of his cure soon spread abroad ; so that the final stage in this birth of a prophet was when an official sent for him and demanded a display of his powers. It must have been a nasty moment for our gifted sirdar, but, from what he said later, he appears to have pulled himself together magnificently and to have offered to hypnotize his new patron. He waggled his hands in front of the man's face for several minutes, and then asked hopefully if he were feeling any ill-effects. The official replied with some gloom that it seemed to him as though his head were spinning a bit. " Ah ! " said Lewa, " that's only the start of things. You wait till to-morrow, and then you'll know what spinning really means ! " And he left the unfortunate so consumed with anxiety that, in the morning, he woke up with a splitting headache and a frightful attack of vertigo, convinced that he had run up against a wizard of the first order. That was the finish as far as magic was concerned. We were afraid of his doing something startling and getting us into trouble, and we put a ban on all supernatural phenomena for the future. As far as we could see there was no alternative but to provide him with work at all costs to keep him out of mischief, and we turned

him on to repacking baggage, weighing our musk and calculating profits, washing clothes, and doing anything else which came into our minds.

The New Year celebrations, though on a meagre scale compared with those at Lhasa, were just what we wanted to brighten our lives. February the 23rd was the first day of the Fire Mouse Year, and we were invited round to the monastery to watch the Devil Dance, finding that a tent had been erected for us on a low roof, from which we could see everything perfectly. The monks provided refreshment of hot milk, tsamba cakes, and the roots we had first eaten at Shugden Gompa (called *thoma*) ; the Incarnation sent ceremonial rice and tsamba cakes ; and Dzampe Kūsang chang and tsamba cakes ; so that we were in no danger of starving. And that was a comfort to us, for the performance lasted for seven hours, leaving me with a blurred impression of grotesquely masked figures in gorgeous brocade robes, whirling and posturing, on and on, to the throbbing, wailing music of gongs, cymbals, clarinets, conches, and the great prayer trumpets. There were thirty-one dancers altogether, and of these two were unmasked, wearing circular black hats some two and a half feet in diameter, with a crest of peacock feathers sticking straight up from the top ; and two, in the last dance, wore ancient armour of iron plates on leather, and carried swords, bows, shields, and quivers, mimicking the demi-gods fighting among themselves. There were three attendants (one with a peculiarly gruesome mask of a decomposing head, without eyes or nose), whose job it was to keep dogs and cattle out of the compound, and to arrange the dresses of the dancers if need arose. In the face of great

difficulties they were remarkably good at this, running in small circles as the dancers twirled, and seldom failing to put things to rights. The entire neighbourhood had gathered for the show, and was squatting around the outskirts of the enclosure ; those who had them wearing their best clothes. The women were extraordinarily smart in blue cotton gowns and striped aprons, and nearly all of them wore their hair in the distinctive style of the district. That is to say, very long (to their knees at least), in twenty or thirty small plaits, and often splayed out into a kind of curtain by means of a leather strip at the bottom, sewn with corals and turquoises. Sometimes the middle plaits were fastened to a broad band, nine or ten inches wide, and thick with turquoises, corals and rupees, which hung down to the hems of their dresses. The more poverty-stricken had similar strips, but perhaps only two inches wide and reaching to their waists ; and the humblest of the lot, who had not even jewels enough for that, might wear one pathetic, and dismally green, turquoise on the crowns of their heads. I never saw any who were completely unadorned. In the last dance of the day, one of the performers wore a long black beard, and it struck most of the crowd at the same moment that it was very like John's growth, so that a roar of delighted laughter went right round the square, with people craning from every direction to see the genuine article. Nyima Dorje had stayed behind to protect our belongings, but Lewa and Nyima Töndrup came with us and seized the opportunity to dress up. The former wore a pair of my old flannel trousers (six inches too long, and rolled up round the ankle) ; a pair of John's climbing boots, which were also many

sizes too big ; one of my shirts, with a coloured handkerchief as a tie ; a white drill jacket, and a Homburg hat. Nyima Töndrup was a soldier in his German army jacket (a relic of Nanga Parbat), my corduroy trousers, black boots, a Gurkha hat, and a kukri. He infected Lewa with the military complex, and both of them saluted, springing smartly to attention, each time we so much as looked at them. They took the affair very seriously, and had the time of their lives. Seven hours was rather much, and I think I might have a clearer memory of the whole if it had been half as long ; to say nothing of the fact that we were both stiff and sore from sitting down for such an age.

Another most interesting thing was when an artist-monk arrived from Sera Gompa, where he had been engaged in painting the Wheel of Life upon one of the walls of the monastery. In eastern Tibet at least, it is quite rare to come across this design, except in the crudest style, and we immediately commissioned him to paint us two copies on cloth. He took five days over each, and the results were real works of art, even though the colours, being new, were still inclined to be rather bright. The Wheel of Life, which is divided by the spokes into compartments, is said to have been first drawn by Ananda with grains of rice upon the ground, to instruct the disciples in the doctrine of Causation ; but through the ages it has become crowded with symbolical figures, until now it is a complicated affair, and exceedingly difficult wholly to understand. The Wheel is usually supported by the Lord of the Hells, who does not correspond to Satan, in that he is not evil, but simply the Punisher. Round the rim are shown the stages



of human life, from conception to old age, and the Empty House of the Senses ; and in the middle are the heavens and the hells, in which the punishment exactly fits the crime. And in the two upper corners are souls freed at last from the Wheel by many virtuous lives, and ascending into Nirvana.

The late Tashi Lama (who is called Panchen Rimpoche in his own country) was in Jyekundo at this time, and still in two minds whether to return to Tibet or not. Actually he decided against it in the end, but it must have been a near thing, for it was stated definitely that he would reach Lhasa in the following October on the way to his own monastery at Tashi Lhünpo, near Shigatse ; and the younger Doring (a nephew of the Palhese who is Sir Charles Bell's great friend) was sent up to meet him when he crossed the frontier. Doring Thaiji Kushap (to give him his full title) arrived in Nakshö Biru on March the 8th, with his wife, a Chinese doctor, a retinue of thirty servants, and two Kashmiri traders who had joined his caravan in Lhasa, putting up in a house about half a mile away from ours. They stayed for a fortnight and we saw a good deal of them. Doring, in particular, was a charming man of thirty-odd, and, as he had been in Quetta for some time, training as an officer in the Tibetan army, he could speak quite fluent Hindustani, and we were able to have long, easy conversations with him. He had met my brother Bill in Gyantse in 1933, and another mutual acquaintance was General Bruce, whom he had seen in Calcutta. One most exciting story he told us was of a party of Chinese mountaineers who had been killed climbing some high peak in the Himalayas. This was interesting, for he must have been speaking

of the German disaster on Nanga Parbat, and the change in nationality was owing to confusion between "German" and "Gyami," which is the Tibetan word for "Chinese." We often went round to his room to play Mah Jongg in the evenings, and it was strange to think that there were we (to say the least, under a certain amount of suspicion as Russian spies), sitting round a table in a mud house on the bank of the Salween, and gambling with a Tibetan nobleman, a Chinese doctor, and a brace of Kashmiris. Having suffered the painful hesitations and arguments which are almost inseparable from Mah Jongg in Europe, it was a real joy to be initiated into the rapid play of the East; and a constant source of wonder to watch the doctor, who was as much the best of us as the traders were the worst. In fact, they were paying out the whole time, and Mohammed Asgar (the elder of the two brothers) confided to me that they would be relieved when their road and Doring's divided, because, although they hardly liked to refuse to play, they were finding it rather expensive.

The Mah Jongg was great fun, but the biggest thrill of their arrival was provided by the Kashmiris, who had not only brought a portable gramophone, but a Pathé cinematograph projector as well; and March the 9th was so packed with excitement as almost to ruin our sleep. The day began with a concert of wonderful variety, for with the gramophone (of unknown Indian make) went one Cantonese record, two Tibetan songs, a Hindi band, four English dance tunes, one mournful ditty, "If Thou Wert Blind," "All Saints' Day," by Richard Strauss, "Tipperary," "The Punjaub March," and two sword dances. A little band of females crept in to

listen, and we put on each record about a dozen times (as much for our benefit as for theirs), and sent them away in a daze. Then, as though that were not already enough to unbalance us, in the evening we had a private cinema show, attended by the local G.P. and his wife, the servants, and a band of camp followers. The machine was worked by a hand-driven dynamo, turned by the perspiring Suraj-uddin, while Mohammed Asgar put in the films. These were five, of vintage 1910 or thereabouts; slapstick comedy of the lowest brand, and acted at the breathless speed of those days. Even we found the plots hard to follow, and the Tibetans must have been baffled from start to finish, but the party was a rousing success, and the talk of the district for weeks. It was most enterprising of the Kashmiris to carry a cinema about with them, and we felt that they deserved to do well. They gave a public show every night in their room (admission 2d.), as an incentive to trade, and, although the price of seats was considered to be expensive by the Khampas, there was usually a full house, for the majority had never even seen a still photograph, and a cinema was an unheard-of event.

Mohammed Asgar and Suraj-uddin had a Ladakhi cook, who looked like a thug but who turned out really good food; and it was he who was the cause of Nyima Dorje's departure from the fold. The two traders used to come over fairly often to talk and play their favourite card game, which was not unlike *Beggar-my-neighbour*; and after they had sampled two or three dishes of our thoma (as usual full of hairs from the butter and not very appetising), they sent over a dish prepared by their own chef, which would

have been no disgrace to the Carlton. We made arrangements for the Ladakhi to come over and give our man a lesson in depilatory work, and we accepted the offer of a pulao for our dinner from the same source. Nyima Dorje immediately gave notice, saying that he was not going to have any other cook messing around in his kitchen. He had been asking continually how long the journey was going to last, and I think that the true reason for his leaving us was home-sickness and a longing to be with his wife again. Previous to this he had never been away for longer than three months or so at a time, and there was not much of the wanderer in him. With the money we gave him for expenses he bought a pony and rode off, taking our mail with him to India. We were sorry to lose him, but it might have been very much worse, for Lewa and Nyima Töndrup between them produced far better food than we had had before, and there was now plenty of work to keep them happy. Not that Nyima Töndrup was ever the reverse. He was one of that blessed type who can sit indefinitely, if the occasion demands, without even thinking.

The commissariat improved once or twice while we were at Nakshö Biru, and notably when we were sold a tin of fancy biscuits by Yeshe Chömphe's butler, who had brought them from Calcutta. It was only a pound tin, but the beauty of the sugar coatings (which were mostly magenta and lemon, or magenta and brown), almost made up for this; and though we ate them all in a day, we felt that, æsthetically, they had given us more than our money's worth. Doring's presents to us included a tin of toffee and one of Brussels sprouts, besides some delicious jasmine

tea ; and we exchanged some quinine with the Chinese doctor for a large tin of sardines and another of mixed ginger. Heaven knows what the "sardines" were, for they had been packed in China and had a queerly pungent flavour, but with rice they were quite edible ; it was the sweet course that disappointed us so terribly. I should have remembered that mixed ginger (another Chinese delicacy) has nothing to do with ginger, but I did not, and when the pie was opened there was the most nauseating collection of scented fruits, which completely revolted us, in spite of our willingness to eat most things.

Before Doring left, he sent over his wife's jewels for us to see. They were simply lovely. Her head-dress, which was of the Lhasa pattern like that of the Cham Kusho, was a solid mass of small pearls, with a dozen very fine dark-red corals, an inch and a half across, sewn on in pairs ; and the charm-box was of gold and perfect unflecked turquoises. The pendant, some nine inches by three, to hang on the left side of her chest, was made of pearls, carved amethysts, sapphires, jade, coral, garnets, gold, and turquoises ; and she had a necklace of big, dark green jade beads, which must have reached below her waist, with a jewelled safety clasp. After seeing these, some of the things we had bought as part of our stock in trade seemed a little dull, but we comforted ourselves with the thought that we were not setting up as goldsmiths but as general storekeepers, and hope remained.

Doring departed for Sok Gompa on March the 26th, and we settled down again to the daily round, finding it more and more difficult to know what to do. Nothing palls so quickly as parties, whether they are in London or Tibet, and now that Mah Jongg and

Beggar-my-neighbour had gone, we were hard put to it, although Dzampe Kūsang was as delightful as ever. We learnt a complicated game of dominoes called Ba, in which every piece has its special name and is considered to be either a Chinese or a Mongol ; but there were not many people who could play, and those who did were used to higher stakes than we could manage as beginners. We took to weaving under the guidance of an old crone, and in two days time we had made enough for a belt apiece, striped like Joseph's coat, and we gave it up in disgust. We even sunk to making crossword puzzles for each other to solve, but we had to stop when they became so hard that neither was able to solve them. After that our chief recreation was in clambering about on the sides of the valley. We seldom went together, for John preferred the north side and I the south, and if we did ever trespass on the other's domain, it was only by invitation and as a great treat. John liked to take the ice axe as a walking stick on his rambles, and, sitting down somewhere near the top, he would idly pick at the earth as an accompaniment to his meditations. A yak-herd spotted this, and at once spread the report that he was prospecting for gold, so that for a week afterwards earnest figures could be seen in the gulleys heaving rocks hither and thither ; and Yeshe Chömphe himself sent to know if it was true, and whether he had been successful. I chose a spot at about fifteen thousand feet, which appeared to be hidden from view and out of the wind, and took a series of sun-baths ; all going well until one day I stopped at a house some way up a side valley to have a bowl of milk. Chatting with the old woman, she suddenly asked why it was that

day after day I climbed the slopes and there stripped naked. She and many others had seen me from the far side of the valley, she said, and they could only conclude that it was some religious rite. I tried to explain that it felt good to let the sun in occasionally, but this was beyond her comprehension, and she stuck to the belief that I was a mystic and as such to be revered. In any case, it seemed to me that, however many clothes she took off, the sun would have little chance with her, and it is my firm conviction that half the aged and infirm in Kham are only held together by grime ; years and years of steady deposits making a kind of shell which preserves them inside, free from harsh contact with the elements.

There was generally a powerful wind on the top of the valley, sometimes strong enough to be dangerous ; and once, when I had nearly been blown over two or three times, I gave up the idea of a sun-bath and climbed down to finish my walk in more sheltered places. The path ran close to a herdsman's hut, occupied at the time by a solitary woman of uncertain age, who apparently had an exaggerated sense of her own attractions and the gravest suspicions of my moral worth. From a distance of fifty yards she set a great black mastiff and a yellow pie-dog on me (the former as big as a Saint Bernard, and very fast and ferocious), and I fought a major battle with a club for five minutes, while the woman looked on. Finally I was able to pick up a rock and lay out the mastiff, upon which the cur fled and the mistress of the house vanished inside, with a wild cry of distress, barring the door and windows, and making preparations to stand a siege.

In spite of the shortage of work, our life in Nakshö Biru was not without compensations and amusements. For one thing we proved the fallacy of the saying that "dog does not eat dog," by seeing a pack of mongrels devouring the corpse of one of their brethren with every sign of enjoyment. The head was too much for them, so they left it to a large kite, and this had barely started on the meal before it was tormented by a magpie so successfully that, during the half hour we watched, it did not manage to snatch a single mouthful. That magpie must have had a real sense of humour, for each time the kite bent to tear at the meat (and consequently stuck its hinder part up in the air), the pie leapt on to its tail, and overbalanced it like a see-saw. The big bird made a few ineffectual charges at its enemy, and the whole proceeding began over again. When I first called John's attention to the spectacle, he thought I was pulling his leg, and it took some effort to persuade him to come to the window. There were two mountain cattle as well, who were clearly reincarnated chickens. At one time bags of salt must have been piled outside our house, and the amazing pair were behaving exactly like hens. They gave two scrapes with the near fore, two with the off, took a couple of hurried steps backwards, and ended with a luxurious lick at the soil. Then an advance and a repeat performance. It was after a storm that the place was at its best, with the clay houses standing out against the sparkling snow; the gold on the temple roof and the shrines (chortens); the virginal hills in the background, still untrodden by the yaks; and a grey-blue sky with clouds that were almost cream-coloured, they were so heavily weighted with

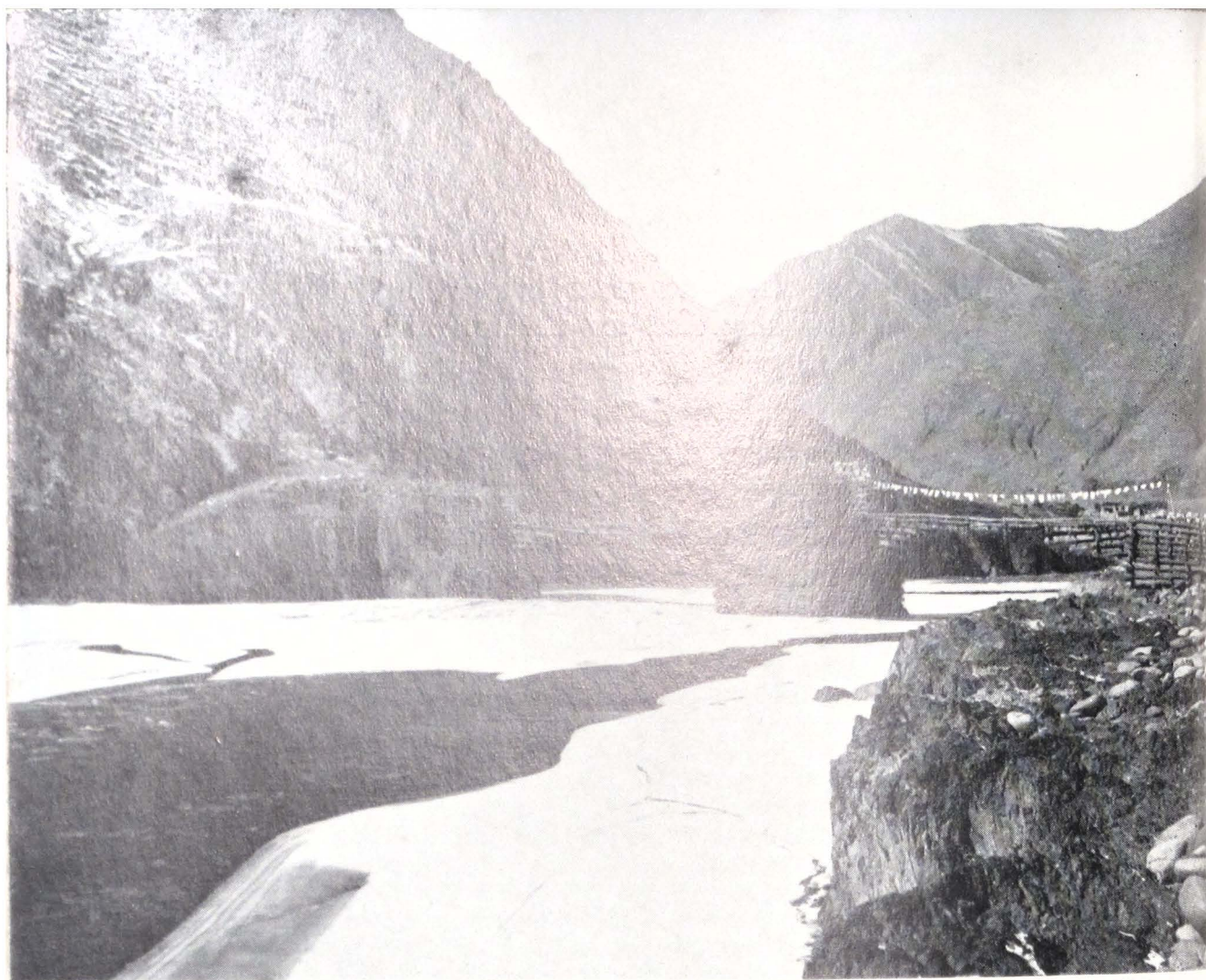


snow. On one such day a single rider was coming down the valley, in a fur hat, sitting strangely hunched on his pony in the blank whiteness beyond the village ; the picture of loneliness, like the last man on a dying world. And, as a final comic interlude, there was a night of terror for at least one person. Our drawer of water, an aged and highly respectable dame, slept in a pile of straw on the balcony outside our room. In the very early morning, a small but malevolent monkey (which belonged to Yeshe Chömphe, and had half wrecked our abode a week or so before) came over to the house and jumped on this ancient lady's bosom. She roused the household with a formidable yell, and, when Lewa rushed out of the kitchen, he found her crouched in a corner with the monkey just opposite, each gibbering, and each, except in size, looking remarkably like the other. The beast was driven off, but to no avail ; for the old woman, complaining that her nerves were shattered, refused to go to sleep any more, keeping up a faint but desolate wailing until the dawn.

The order for our release came from Lhasa on April the 5th, rather more than three months since we had first arrived in Nakshö Biru. It was too late by then to think of crossing the Plateau, because, in all probability, we should have met the Changpas about half-way over. There would have been a brief and very one-sided fight, and the results of the whole journey would have been lost. So, after hours of agonized thought, we eventually came to the conclusion that the source of the Salween would have to be left for another time. The trouble was that our money was not going to last for ever, and it was now a matter of doing as much as we could

There is a small bridge over a stream by what  
has been called the "Iron Bridge," but  
we did not go over it. (p. 215.)

Overshadowed by peaks rising to  
nearly 19,000 feet, lies the monas-  
tery of Pangar Gomba, near the  
Great China Road. (p. 215.)

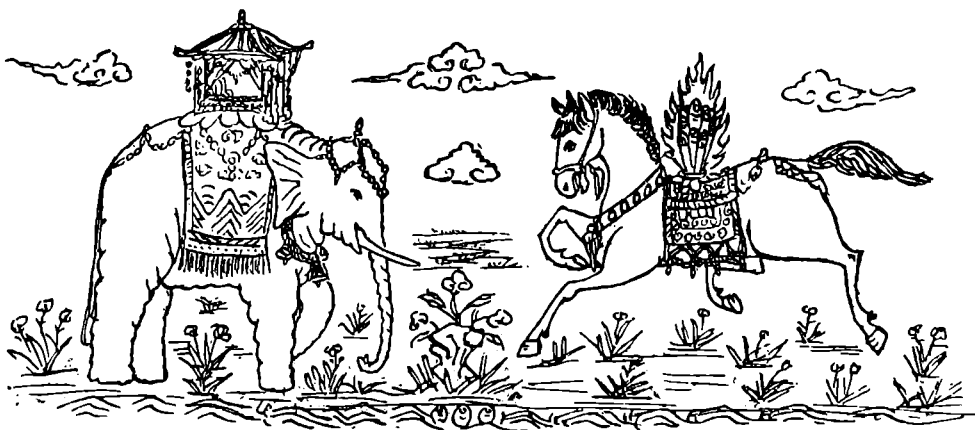




before the cash problem forced us back to India. Had we been able to continue west from the source as we had planned, almost all the way would have been through unexplored country ; but that not being feasible meant a waste of nearly two months in returning over ground we had already covered ; for the area to the south had all been done, and we could not afford to push up into the unknown tracts to the north-east. We felt that we could make better use of that time in the Salween Valley between Shopathang and Wosithang ; and, very regretfully, we marked down our search for the source as a failure. At the height of our disappointment it was as much as we could bear to see the wild geese and ducks passing over every day to their breeding grounds near Nakchu Dzong and the headwaters of the river ; but once we had made arrangements to leave Nakshö Biru and start work again, all sorrow was swamped in relief to be away.

Jamyang Chömphe had gone to Lharigo some days before, but we had farewell parties with his brother and Dzampe Kūsang, and left for the Gya Lam on the morning of April the 12th, 1936. The Salween (which is called Nak Chu, or Black River, above Nakshö Biru) was entirely free from ice, and we crossed to the right bank by what had once been a very fine log bridge, about three-quarters of a mile above our late house. The main span was full of gaps, however, and crying out for repairs ; though even the yaks got over safely in the end. The water was already two feet higher than when we had arrived in January, and a dull, opaque green in colour, sweeping down quantities of silt which, at this time, seemed to be mainly composed of the dust

which had been blown on to the ice during the winter. Judging by the marks on the sides, it had still to rise another ten feet before the end of the summer. We waved a final good-bye to Dzampe Kūsang from across the river and were on our way at last.



རྟ་མཚོག་དང་སྐང་པོ་ལྷ་ཚེ།

*The precious horse and elephant*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

“For all that here on earth we dreadfull hold,  
Be but as bugs to fearen babes withal.”

Spenser : *Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 25.

YESHE CHÖMPHE had given us a wholly unnecessary escort of one armed man to see us to the limits of his district—a willing soul who took very kindly to acting as scullery boy and general factotum, on the understanding that we would tip him when he left us. The only person he ever escorted was Nyima Töndrup, riding ahead to make arrangements at our next halt ; but we felt that his old rifle added lustre to the party, and were very pleased to have him with us. The Tibetans are naturally hospitable, but, beyond that, it is compulsory for the headman of any village or encampment at which a traveller of rank may stop to give a present of meat, tsamba, butter, chang, and perhaps curds on behalf of himself and the people under him ; and to provide free lodging for three

days. After that time one buys supplies in the ordinary way, and pays a small sum for the house or room one is using. As far as I know, the only part of the country where this is not the rule is Zayul, and everywhere else we had done pretty well. Our escort, however, filled with the thought of possible added backsheesh, was zealous in persuading the unfortunate villagers to hand over immense quantities of food (often by force) ; and when this was brought to our notice we had to damp his ardour very considerably, and to tell him that the best way to earn wealth was to devote himself to the pots and pans in the kitchen. He was a Tibetan (Pöpa) in the Tibetan sense of the word, for he came from Tsang ; and it is only the natives of the central provinces (and Tsang) who call themselves Tibetans. If asked, the others say no, they are Khampas, or Pobas, or Zayulis, or whatever it may be. The Tibetans consider themselves (and are considered, oddly enough) to be vastly superior to the rest, and adopt a hectoring, swashbuckling air in the outer districts. Hence the attitude of our help towards the Khampa headmen.

The Thamtsa La, which we had crossed in December, was still closed by snow ; and as, in any case, the valley between that pass and the Ge Chu cannot be used except when the stream is frozen, we crossed back from the Salween by the Shar La (16,384 feet), some five miles further east, and camped at a large grazing ground at a height of 15,280 feet. It was a march of seventeen and a half miles, from the pass down, most of the way through water or melting ice ; and, although we were moderately comfortable on our ponies, it was a wretched trip for the coolies who

were leading us. The room we had at the finish was about ten feet square and six high ; and, in spite of the fact that one wall was merely a piece of yak-hair blanket, and that gusts of wind came whistling in all night long, a dung fire made the whole thing cheerful and cosy. There were twenty-seven degrees of frost, and snow was falling heavily, but we would not have changed places with anyone in the world. We were a good deal higher up than at Nakshö Biru, of course, but, even taking that into consideration, the north side of the Ge Chu Valley seemed to be much colder and drier than beyond the Shar La ; for on the way up we had seen great numbers of dwarf rhododendrons, shrubs and junipers, while down to well below the camp there was little but stunted thorn bushes, and far more snow.

April the 14th brought us back to the Ge Chu at the point from which we had originally turned off to reach the Thamtsa La. There was a serious accident on the way, when one of our yaks tried to shoulder past another on a very narrow stretch of path, two hundred and fifty feet above the stream. It was pushed over, to go crashing down the cliff on to the rocks at the bottom, and it died shortly after the man had climbed down to it, poor critter. Besides the loss of the yak, its load was smashed to bits. It had been carrying the medicine chest, our one table, my balalaika, the rangefinder case (by good luck the instrument itself was with us), and the map case ; and the only thing which survived completely unscathed was the most fragile—the balalaika. All the same, our losses were lighter than we had expected. Of the medicines, the box was good only for firewood ; the Epsom salts had upset into the vaseline ; everything



was soaked in iodine; and most of the bottles had perished. The rangefinder case and the table were finished for ever, but the map case, though battered, was still usable in dry weather.

On turning back from Nakshö Biru, we had intended to seize the opportunity of going to Lharigo by the route we had seen on the outward journey. Unfortunately, Yeshe Chömphe had not understood this, and when we reached Pembar Gompa again we found that he had issued orders for transport to take us to Sating. We could have sent back to ask him to change these orders, but the thought of another wait was so repulsive to us, that we decided not to bother. It made very little difference, for there was a path to the Gya Lam from Sating as well, and whichever we took meant leaving the other undone.

With no survey work to do along the Ge Chu, the marches were over very quickly, and the days would have been desperately long if it had not been that there was a certain amount of collecting; for the grass was just beginning to sprout, fresh and green, and butterflies and beetles were coming out all down the valley. The mating season was well under way for the partridges and hares, and the white pheasants seemed to be pairing off, although most of them were still in big coveys of up to thirty or thirty-five brace. It was difficult to say with the pheasants. Male and female were so much alike that, for all we knew, they might be conducting their affairs on harem lines, and the few pairs we saw were possibly the unlucky cocks which had only been able to reserve one wife apiece. The Ge Chu was running a pure, beautiful green, and the contrast with the Salween at the confluence

made it seem yet more lovely, as by now the latter was the colour of rich milk chocolate.

We paid off our escort in Sating, and the magistrate lent us his son of sixteen to see us as far as the Gya Lam. He was even more useful than his predecessor, for, apart from working in the kitchen, he was quite well educated, and became my tutor in the evenings after we had made camp, while John was otherwise engaged, packing insects or checking supplies. I could read and write in the Tibetan printed characters without much trouble, but, until Chamba Söpa took me in hand, the script had been a sealed book ; because it looks much harder than it really is, and it had always frightened me away. He was a born teacher, for he was with us a bare five days and succeeded in his task to such an extent that, when he went back, I could write a legible, if not a good hand.

From Sating we crossed several passes, and reached the China Road on April the 24th, turning east along it towards the Salween. As far as Shopando the road had been mapped by A-k and Pereira, and from there to Lho Dzong by A-k, but we did not feel that we were wasting time and effort in doing it over again, for they had been working under much greater difficulties as regards instruments ; and we knew that their longitudes at least must be considerably out. We had meant to stop for a day or so in Pembar Gompa to put the map on paper, but the only available room was too hopeless for anything, and we made up our minds to move on the next morning and make no halt of more than a night until we arrived in Shopando. Our hovel at Pembar Gompa was a close copy of that at Rukyithang, and the one

point in its favour was that the fire was of charcoal instead of dung. The monastery is of two hundred and thirty monks, and it looked a very fine building. We would have liked to have seen over it, but we had made a rule not to go into the temples without being asked, and, as no invitation arrived, we saw no more of it than the outside. But, with one thing and another, we had moved very slowly on the march, and there would have been little time to go sight-seeing before it was dark. Among the various causes of delay had been nine marmots playing together on a small grassy hillock, just out of their winter sleep and bursting with joy to see the sun ; and Brahmini and other ducks waddling about in the marshy ground near the monastery, with hundreds of diminutive waders and an occasional solitary snipe undismayed on the very edge of the path.

Chamba Söpa returned to Sating from Pembar Gompa when we started in the morning, and from then on we were unaccompanied except by the men with the baggage animals. It was twelve and a half miles, over the Pute La (a low pass of 14,650 feet) to Lhatse, a village on the left bank of the Sa Chu, where we put up in an excellent house which had been built as a fort by the Chinese in 1910. There was one loop-holed room, commanding the Gya Lam in both directions, and all the other windows looked inwards on to the courtyard, which was barred with a heavy wooden gate. We had seen the junction of the Sa Chu with the Salween from near Kau, and when we sent for the headman to tell us about the route down the river, he gave us the first news we had had of fighting on the Chinese-Tibet frontier. However, we were not much better off, for he knew

no more than that Tibetan troops were engaged, and that more were being sent to Chamdo from the west as reserves. Who the enemy was, or what the fighting was about, was quite immaterial, and unknown. Indeed, it seemed to be very much of a mystery with everyone ; and when, on the following day, we were passed by some fifty soldiers on their way to the front, we found that they too were just as ignorant. They were not regulars, but levies from the villages further up the China Road, armed only with swords, and wearing chubas and the most amazing Homburg hats, decorated with lurid bands and fragments of bright cloth ; so there was a certain amount of excuse for them. They trailed along in twos and threes, without the slightest pretence of discipline, but they were amazingly cheerful at the thought of being in the fighting, and looked as if they would be able to give a good account of themselves. Perhaps it was really not so amazing after all, for, in the old days, they were a very warlike race, and the martial spirit must still exist deep down inside them. Like Christianity, Buddhism condemns war and the taking of life, and when the Tibetans were converted from animism towards the end of the first thousand years A.D., they took their religion sufficiently seriously to give up war altogether as a nation, except in self-defence. And now, to fight with the blessings of the priests and the Government is a rare treat, for the burden of sin rests on their superiors and they themselves are doing no more than their duty.

It was a long march of twenty-three miles to Pare, and the days were becoming so much longer that we only failed to finish the work by three miles. That

was enough to put us in very fair heart, and our delight was unbounded when we were served at dinner with the first fowl we had tasted for seven months. Not even the fact that it was a villainously tough old chicken, and stringy to a degree, could lower our spirits more than a peg or two ; and, as we had already done the country between Pare and Shopando, it did not matter that we had to retrace our steps before continuing on our way. We got to Shopando at seven in the evening, to see the old familiar figures smiling a welcome as we rode up the hill for the second time. It was not so good when our friends called on us that night and the next morning, for I seemed to have put on a good deal more weight than John during our stay in Nakshö Biru, and they were loud in their praises of my increased plumpness. Lewa too was on the wrong side, for he said that his name would be mud if he brought us back to India thin and meagre, and he used to prepare the richest possible food, with the limited supplies, to guard against this dread contingency. As a matter of fact, meat, butter, and tsamba were hard to buy, for these stores were all being bought up for the troops in and around Chamdo, and what butter we did obtain had been kept for more than six months in skin bags, and was very strong. It was all right for cooking, but rather too well flavoured for tea, and even the Tibetans, who like their butter with a bite to it, said that it was a bit ripe. There were a few chickens to be had, but they had hardly begun to lay, and eggs were brought from Poyü via the Chumdo La, the Tungla La being still closed.

We had the same room as before, and the donkeys

were as vocal as ever. The one change was that there were no longer the massed bands of threshers on the roof, and so the noise was considerably less. It was just as well, for there was so much to do that it was nine days before we were ready to push on again. As far as the maps were concerned, John was more or less unemployed, and he had a healthy week wandering over the countryside and making valuable collections of insects and the early flowers, largely primulas, which were now beginning to come out on the summer slopes. My time indoors was brightened by a pair of choughs. They had their nest in an old basket hanging up over the balcony, and in forty-eight hours they were so tame that they perched within two yards of the table in their rests from foraging, earnestly talking about the children (who were squeaking lustily in the basket), and, I believe, discussing me also. At least, when they were facing in my direction, they sometimes looked exactly like a couple of middle-aged gossips busy criticizing someone younger than themselves, with frequent hurried glances out of the corners of their eyes, and more excited gabble. Excluding them, natural history in the house was limited to a single bed bug (the first of the season), slaughtered by John on his blanket as it was galloping towards him.

The old A.D.C. had gone back to Zayul, and his brother, who had been magistrate when we were last there, was away on sick leave. A third brother was acting magistrate in his place. He was a monk from Drepung, about thirty-five years old, with a close-cropped head, a perpetual smile, and shifty eyes; and, although we hid our dislike of him, and were always as polite as we could be, he gave us a cold

creepy feeling whenever we saw him. We found out quite early that not one word he said was true, but he was normally a very accomplished liar, and it was not until he told us that the fighting on the frontier was against an army of Russians that the dregs of respect we still felt for him on that account vanished for ever. However foolish we may have looked, no one but a fool himself could have hoped that that story would pass, and what the Russians were supposed to be doing in that part of China at all was left to our imagination. The quartermaster who was buying the stores for the soldiers gave us a much better version of affairs, if not with many details. He said that the trouble was with large numbers of Chinese communist-bandits from Kansu, who were pushing in over the border towards Derge and Chamdo ; and this turned out later to be quite true as far as it went. John was so pleased to know what it was all about at last, that he celebrated by having his head shaved for the first time, with a sharp knife. To do the hairdresser justice, the knife was very sharp, and it cannot have caused much suffering. Previous to this he had stood out against anything more drastic than a pair of scissors, and I was totally unprepared for the fantastic spectacle of a white gleaming dome on top, a vast tangled beard underneath, and, in the middle, like some strange vegetable, a red and peeling nose, smitten by the sun. I warned him of the ghastly fate which overtook a bald-headed friend of mine, who wandered abroad hatless at the height of the Bombay summer, until nature provided him with an obscene skull-cap in the shape of a gigantic blister from neck to forehead ; but he refused to profit by my advice, pointing out that my

head had been shaved not once but many times without ill-effect. I had no answer to that, and it was disappointing to see that he went through the remainder of our time in Tibet unblemished.

We moved on again from Shopando on May the 7th, following the Gya Lam for two days, past Dzetho Gompa to Lho Dzong; and the only interesting thing about the journey was the hundreds of red-legged larks singing all along the path, as though their lives depended on it. Lho Dzong (the South Fort) consists of a large dzong built up on the west side of the valley, a monastery of two hundred and forty monks, surrounded by a wall, a quarter of a mile further up; and a village of a hundred and thirty houses on the right bank of the stream. We took a couple of rooms in the caravanserai (one being the kitchen), and prepared to stay for three or four days in order to carry out some survey work to the north. We ran on a serious snag, however, when we found that the governor had lately been relieved, and that his successor had not yet arrived from Lhasa. The deputy governor (who was a clerk at ordinary times) was terrified of responsibility and said that he had no authority to provide us, or anyone else, with transport on any road whatever. We would have to wait for the Dzongpön to come, and God alone knew when that would be. Of course, the reason for his holding us up was that we wanted to leave for Shabye Zampa, which was vaguely in the direction of the fighting, and he thought that we were spies. It was an infernal nuisance to be detained again, but there was no help for it, and luckily there was always collecting to be done to keep us busy. The flowers especially were worth having, and nearly all that



we got from this district were rare—orchids, primulas, rhododendrons, and irises for the greater part. As usual, John did most of the collecting, while I continued to work out heights and things for the map. Although we were still at nearly thirteen thousand feet, the weather was comparatively warm and pleasant, and we really had very little to complain about.

Between Pembar Gompa and Shopando we had become used to living on the fat of the land, with chickens and eggs whenever we wanted them ; and the only thing (besides being detained) which did depress us was that these seemed to be a thing of the past, and that our tea was running short. We persuaded the authorities to send a courier to Chamdo on our behalf (six days' march) to buy tea and candles ; and, in the meantime, Lewa scoured the village to see what he could find. It was not a question of being hard up for food, for there were plenty of pigs, goats, and sheep ; but simply that we wanted a change from meat if we could get it. In the end he found a venerable rooster, leading a lonely life with never a hen to keep him company, and instantly commanded the headman to sell it to us for our sustenance. With tears in his eyes, the poor man explained that it was the only time-piece in the place, and that all the monks relied on it implicitly to announce when morning service was due. His story softened our hearts, and we consented to spare the good bird. The headman was overcome with gratitude, and sent a runner post haste to procure us a substitute from somewhere along the Salween.

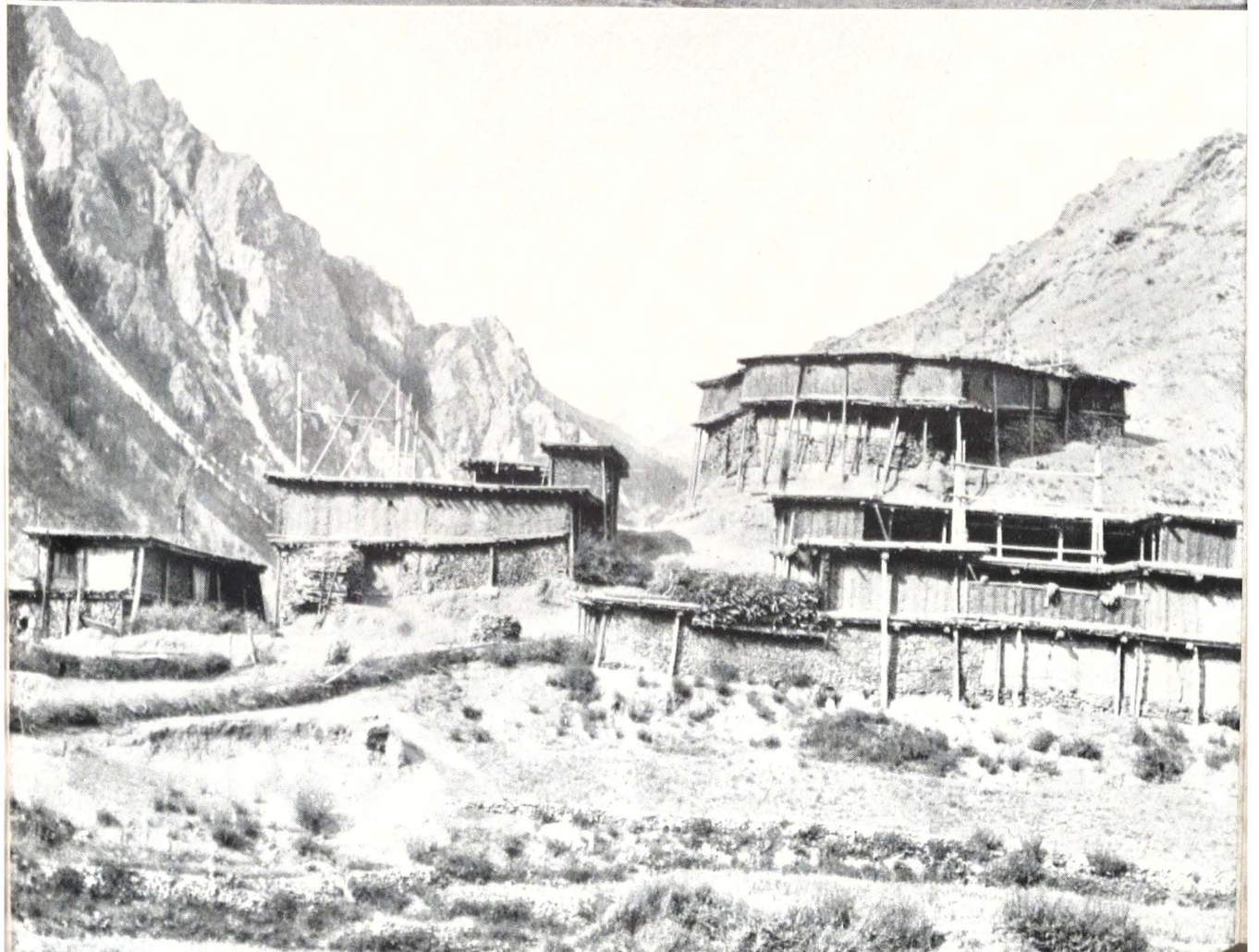
There were about a hundred Chinese settled in Lho Dzong, almost all working as muleteers up and

down the Gya Lam. They were exceedingly well treated by the Tibetan Government, paying no taxes whatever, and all the official notices were put up in both languages. One of them took to making regular calls on us after two days, presenting a turnip, some milk, or tsamba each time. He was a strange character, incapable of telling the truth about himself, but quite reliable about everything else; and we called him Shishilala, because that was his favourite expression, apparently meaning "bad," or "it is bad" in some Szechuanese dialect. The autobiography he gave us was to the effect that he had once been a wealthy merchant, owning three hundred mules, and that he had fallen on evil times through the machinations of a wicked Dzungpön. This was obviously a romance, and we knew as well as he did that he had never been anything but a cheerful, if rather half-witted muleteer. It was from the bootmaker that we eventually heard the correct version of the cause of the fighting. A certain Khampa called Pu Topgye had been sent in command of nearly a thousand men to do frontier duty. He was presently joined at his post by a friend of his, known as Kara Lama, who had been cup-bearer, or something of the sort, to the late Dalai Lama, and who was disgruntled because he felt that he had not had his rightful share of promotion. They held a short conference, and then treacherously decamped over the border in the night, taking with them all the rifles and ammunition, a number of automatics, and two mountain battery guns—of which, however, they forgot the sights. Once in Kansu, they collected and armed some fifteen hundred unemployed bandits, and started back into Tibet, with Kara Lama

as C.-in-C. ; sending a message to the Government in Lhasa that they would be content with the eastern half of the country, and that it would be better to hand it over to them peaceably, without bloodshed. The Government did not see eye to eye with Kara Lama in this, and although they did not take him very seriously, a certain number of troops were sent east to reinforce the garrisons in Chamdo and Derge. During the six weeks we were in Lho Dzong, perhaps three hundred dribbled through in small bands, of which very few were regular soldiers. Most of them seemed to be from the Salween Valley near Nakshö Biru, and among them were several men who had served us as coolies.

On May the 21st, Depön Phulung Makpa arrived on his way to take over the supreme command, and we gathered that there could be nothing in the way of a crisis, for he remained four days before continuing to Chamdo. He turned up under a red silk umbrella, with his wife and a bodyguard of fifty, all dressed in smart khaki uniforms with white topees ; and preceded by a band of two bagpipes, two trumpets, four bugles, and four kettle-drums. He had a red standard with a yellow sun in the centre, and, at the rear of the procession, were two white flags, which, we felt, were liable to be misconstrued in time of war. He was given a salute of three guns on arrival ; and, as a matter of fact, a small brass cannon was fired off every day. I think he was fond of noise. A thunderous report woke him, and everybody else, at five in the morning ; Reveille was sounded soon after ; the band played outside his window at breakfast, lunch, and dinner ; and, finally, Last Post and another ear-splitting detonation





The fort, *Usho*. At Lho  
Dzong lived a present fowl  
whose virtue, as an alarm-  
clock, earned him a slave from  
the pot. (p. 222)

Village houses in Shari Dzong.  
Private estate of the thirteenth  
incarnation of Nejo Tempe Gampo.  
(p. 234.)

brought the day to an end at nine o'clock. We would have liked to have met him, but, for the whole of his stay, I was afflicted with an attack of purulent ophthalmia, picked up originally from the dust in Nakshö Biru, and this made any visiting impossible. We wrote each other notes and exchanged presents, though, so that relations were perfectly friendly. Before he left, a courier arrived from the front, having ridden night and day, with an urgent request for nineteen soldiers ; and to us this was the biggest mystery of the war. No one could explain the number, and we racked our brains in vain. However, the required men were packed off in a couple of hours, amid loud wails from their temporary wives, and the remainder of the forty, who had come in that morning, settled down to their sleeping and gambling in quiet once more. The nineteen were worth seeing. Half of them were wearing decorated Homburgs ; there was one with a parson's black wideawake ; and the rest had an assortment of Chinese and Tibetan headgear. Between them there was one khaki shirt and a pair of puttees ; two pairs of munition boots and one of brown ; three aged khaki jackets minus buttons, and six pairs of uniform trousers. Four of the warriors were bearded, and all were incredibly filthy, but in the best of spirits. They are brave fighters, but they must be handicapped by the state of their rifles, which are never oiled and are pitted with rust all over. The most that is done is sometimes to pour paraffin into the works, and that does more harm than good.

Our courier came back from Chamdo on May the 28th, with many messages of good will from Mohammed Asgar and Suraj-ud-din, who were



selling amber there, and who had done all our buying for us. Supplies had been cheaper than we had expected, and, with the remainder of the money, they had bought two tins of biscuits and some soap, both much appreciated. Actually the soap was so potent that we could only use it for washing clothes, but since all our laundry work had been done for some months past with nothing but soda and water, which cracked the servants' hands most terribly, it was all the more valuable on that account. We were lucky that he arrived when he did, for shortly afterwards, snow began to fall almost continuously on the hills, and for ten days the passes were blocked in every direction. Such weather was said to be quite unprecedented for the time of year, and the general opinion in the village was that it was the work of some high lama, who had brewed the storms to discomfit Kara Lama's forces, and hold them up until the Tibetans could make all ready to receive and annihilate them.

Apart from work, we were well supplied with interests at Lho Dzong, and one of the greatest of these (although it was all we could do to watch it) lay in seeing how the animals were slaughtered. In Zayul it is done by strangulation, but here, in Kham proper, they opened the chest with a swift slash of the knife, thrust in a hand, and tore the heart bodily out. More than seven hundred years ago the Yassa, Chengiz Khan, the great Tartar, stated that "It is forbidden to cut the throats of animals slain for food. These must be bound, the chest opened, and the heart pulled out by the hand of the hunter"; and the present Khampa custom possibly dates from the time when the Mongols conquered Tibet in the

first half of the thirteenth century. For two days (June the 4th and 5th) our courtyard was filled with people making *tsatsa* (or *tsadri*—small models of stupas) and filling the air with monotonous song. In the middle, relays of men beat and thumped the clay with all their force, and round the sides rows of women were hard at work moulding the *tsatsa*, and chanting with hardly a pause. There were representatives from every house in the place, and the idea was to please the gods and ensure a good harvest. Incidentally, when we reached Lho Dzong, the fields were being ploughed ; and by the time we left, six weeks later, the barley was already from five to seven inches high. Permanent amusement was provided by the village square, which was just in front of our window, for many pigs were tethered there during the day. There were dozens of others running about free, but those which were tied up regarded the area they were free to wander over as their own inviolable property, and woe betide any trespasser who ventured to cross it. The furious squeals and rushes never failed to fill us with joy ; but there were even better things than that. One day a yak was at large in the “ place,” whose delight it was to charge the hogs. He would stand awhile, deep in thought, and then suddenly bear down upon a near-by pig and give it a wild bunt with its forehead (not its horns) amid shrieks of fright and indignation from the victim. And best of all were the antics of the unhappy hogling which, night after night, was left tethered half an hour after the others had been taken in for their evening meal. As the last one vanished he would set up a series of shrill, despairing screams for his mistress, running round



the peg and pulling at the rope until he was half-choked, full of the most lively terrors that he had been forgotten. When finally his owner came to lead him home, the wails dropped to rapid grunts of pleasure, and he would drag the woman across the square almost at a trot to reach his dinner with the least possible delay.

Shödung Sekshingpu, the new Governor, arrived in Lho Dzong on May the 31st, and the following day we climbed up to the dzong to pay him a visit. The building was something of a whited sepulchre, for, although it looked very fine from outside, the rooms were mean and dirty, with mud floors, and full of bugs. Sekshingpu was a nobleman, and handsome in a rather effeminate way. He was only twenty-one, and had spent all his life between Shigatse, where his house was, and Lhasa ; this being his first appointment. As a sign of rank, his hair was done up in a tight little roll, like a dumb-bell tied with red silk, on the top of his head. He said that it took a painful four hours to arrange it properly (worse than a permanent wave), but that, once in place, it stayed up for about twenty-five days with no further trouble. The hairdressing was done by his wife, aged nineteen, who was very tiny and really lovely to look at. In fact—though with the utmost respect—I lost my heart to her at first sight ; and their small daughter of four was nearly as attractive. Altogether they were a delightful family, and Sekshingpu himself showed his efficiency by despatching a courier at once to Chamdo to find out whether we would be permitted to continue east along the Gya Lam. He was very anxious to learn English, and induced me to write him out a few useful phrases

in Tibetan script, so that he would be able to greet any other English travellers who might pass through Lho Dzong in their own language. It was the most appalling task, and I bitterly regretted having taken it on, for, in Tibetan, there is no F, V, Th, or final T ; and a final S, N, L, or D modifies the preceding vowel, besides being generally mute, with the exception of the N. After fearful toil, most of the difficulties were more or less circumvented, however, and the triumph came when Pulak read out the sentences from the notebook and John was able to understand them.

Pulak was a Lhasan who had married a Khampa girl in Lho Dzong, and who was now keen to take her back to his home. Short of going as a beggar, which did not appeal to him, he could not afford to make the journey along the China Road, and he signed on with us as supernumerary, to go as far as India, on the understanding that his wife could come too and help in the kitchen. She was called Sönam, and was a hard worker, but her man was a lazy devil who got more and more on our nerves, and whose only virtue was that he could write a good letter. To be accurate, he began life with us with a fortnight of tremendous energy which seemed to burn him out completely, and after that we kept him on for the sole reason that we had undertaken to see him into Assam. In any case his wages were only fifteen rupees a month, food and transport, and Sönam was being paid nothing but her keep, so that between them they just about earned it all. On June the 16th the courier came back from Chamdo with word that the Governor there would rather we did not proceed any nearer the fighting, because, with large numbers

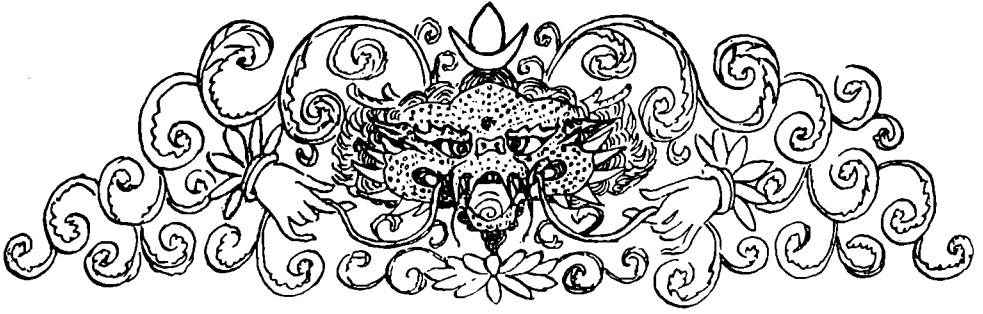
of troops wandering about the country, we were as likely to be pillaged by them as by the Chinese, and if that happened he would be severely blamed. So we changed our plans, and when we left Lho Dzong on the 20th we headed south-east to Shari Dzong, four days away, along the route A-k had used in 1882 on his way to the Gya Lam and India.

The first march amounted to only four miles or so, for we made too late a start to stand any chance of finishing the usual long stage ; and actually, this was quite a good thing, for there were several delays on the road. Among other stoppages, Shishilala, aided and abetted by five females, had spread a little meal for us about one mile out, and further on the Chinese cobbler (who had made me two pairs of excellent boots) had prepared another, to send us off in style. The valley was very wide, with steep limestone sides, and so deceptive that, although we estimated the top of the ridge to the east to be four thousand six hundred yards from the path, when we measured it we found it to be close on seven thousand. After our second detention we would have been glad to travel even in a blizzard, but no one could fail to have been thrilled by the beauty of the country and the perfect days we were now having. Everywhere the ground was carpeted with masses of yellow kingcups, buttercups, and humble dandelions ; white anemones with furry leaves ; here and there patches of blue dwarf irises or tall mauve primulas ; a few dark-blue anemones on long stalks ; white rhododendrons on six-foot bushes, and little purple ones not fifteen inches high ; butterflies flitting ; an incredibly blue sky, with small white clouds, like sails on a fairy sea ; and, away to the south, the snow-capped moun-

tains running down into Zayul, and pointing the way home. Never contented, we found that we were missing the hogs of Lho Dzong.

On June the 23rd we climbed fairly steeply down into the Dü Chu Valley (which John had reached in August of the year before at Düchu Sumdo), crossed the river by log bridge, and halted at Sangönang. The place was worthy of note for several reasons, one being that the people spoke an entirely different dialect from those on the other bank, and that only half of them could understand the speech of the Gya Lam. There is a Tibetan proverb which runs: "To every district its own dialect; to every lama his own doctrine"; and nowhere is this more true than in Kham. But most of the differences are no greater than those between, for example, Yorkshire and Devonshire, and it was astounding to come across what was almost a new language. Secondly, the two sides of the valley had been carrying on a bitter feud for the last seven years, and things had reached such a pitch that if anyone (barring coolies with some traveller of importance) dared to cross the Dü Chu, he was promptly slain. Finally it was there that we had our first real taste of bed bugs, which swarm in the houses during the summer, everywhere except in pine country such as Zayul and Poyü. Why they should abhor pinewood houses, I cannot imagine. The walls of our room were alive with them, but they gave no sign of their presence until some time after we had gone to bed. We woke together, spent a frenzied five minutes by the light of our one remaining torch in massacring the invaders—there is nothing more sickening than the smell of a squashed bug—and then beat a retreat on

to the roof, where we remained for the rest of the night. As far as we could gather from later reports, once they had been foiled by us the enemy must have migrated in a body to the kitchen.



མེས་རཱེ།

*The shining beauty, a bodiless entity*

## CHAPTER TWELVE

“ What, must I hold a candle to my shame ? ”

Shakespeare : *Merchant of Venice*.

FROM Lho Dzong our original intention had been to go to Shabye Zampa, and thence down the Salween ; and when that plan had been ruined, we had still hoped to follow the course of the river from Shari Dzong. It was pure bad luck which defeated us in this, for we found that the only path ran along the far bank, and that the rope bridge, of plaited yak hide, was now too old to be safe. We could not afford either the time or the money to have a new one made, as it would have needed some fifty yaks and three weeks to do the job ; and, as for building a raft, that too was out of the question. The river was a hundred and twenty yards wide, in flood, and the sides of the valley were so steep that there were not many places at which we could have landed, even if we had succeeded in getting across. To make matters worse, there were only about two trees anywhere within reach, and they were miserably small.

We spent one baking hot night by the rope bridge, at a height of 9,800 feet, and then returned to Shari Dzong, almost two thousand feet higher, to decide on our next move. In point of fact, there was so much to do in that district that the difficulty was to make up our minds where to go first. There were two direct routes to Trashitse Dzong, of which the more westerly had been done by A-k ; so we left that alone in favour of the one running through Wa, and we wanted to explore the Dü Chu as well, to go back to Shugden Gompa in order to join up with our track of the previous year and, lastly, to get back to the Salween again as soon as we could.

Shari Dzong is in the district of Pashö, which is a private estate belonging to a young lama of thirteen, called Taktsa Gedrung Rimpoche. He is the thirteenth incarnation of Nejo Tempe Gampo, a very holy lama, who was the first to own the district, and who did a great deal to convert the western Chinese to Buddhism. He died in China, and was embalmed there, his body being brought back to the town of Pashö and installed in a shrine of brass covered with gold leaf, and with a window through which the face of the mummy can still be seen. There was said to be a large dzong and two big monasteries in the town, and it seemed to be a place of such importance that we added it to our list of objectives immediately. Taktsa Gedrung Rimpoche lives in the Kündeling Lebrang in Lhasa, and all the taxes from the estate are paid over to him, mostly in the form of paper, which was being made in huge quantities, while we were at Shari Dzong, from the roots of a shrub. The bark is peeled off by the women, and the white wood is boiled for two days before being beaten to a pulp.

It is then mixed with water in tea churns, till the mess is like thick cream, and poured over cotton cloths stretched on wooden frames, so that each is covered by a thin uniform layer. The frames are put in the sun to dry, and the paper pulled off quite easily. The sheets are about twelve square feet in area, and no less than twelve thousand of them are sent from Shari alone every year to Lhasa, where the sale must provide a very considerable source of income for the lama. The plant pointed out to us as the one used was *Stellera chamaejasme*, but when we dug one up the roots looked much smaller than those we had seen being stripped, and I think it was a trade secret which the people were unwilling to give away.

We could not do all we intended without going twice over at least one stretch of the route, and we came to the conclusion that it would be easier to do the Wa-Trashitse road in two bits. Accordingly, we went up to the Wa La first (finding wild garlic and mint in profusion, which were very welcome for our cooking); and, returning to Shari Dzong the same night, we left for the Dü Chu on July the 2nd. We made camp after eight miles, in a narrow valley at 14,820 feet, surrounded by purple rhododendrons, yellow and crimson primulas, irises, and many sweet-smelling shrubs. It was a glorious, starry night, and we slept in the open; but, as luck would have it, it began to pour with rain and sleet in the early morning, and life was becoming grim when Lewa and Nyima Töndrup dashed up to drape the old tent fly over us like a dust sheet. It was full of enormous holes, and had to be rearranged once or twice before it did much good; the chief obstacle being John's face, which persisted in popping out of the rents in the



most startling manner, with oaths and curses. We had almost forgotten what mist was, but, as we climbed up to the Phokar La (17,240 feet), it became thicker and thicker, and we had to give up any form of survey. The pass is open only from June to the end of September, and, with deep snow on the east side, it was by far the most difficult we had met. The last three hundred feet were so precipitous that we watched the yaks clambering up in blank amazement. Tibetan boots are not designed for walking, and still less for climbing, and it was even more of an effort for us to find a foothold in the hard snow than it was for the animals. We sat exhausted at the top for a few minutes, taking a boiling point, and then dropped very steeply for two thousand feet over loose limestone screes into the ravine leading down to Dzongra, appalled at the thought of having to go all the way up again in fine weather to continue the map. The magistrate from Miu Dzong paid us a visit that evening, with the usual present of tsamba, eggs, and butter. He had a remarkably oily face, pop-eyes, and a colossal belly; but, in spite of these disadvantages, he was a very good soul and exceedingly helpful.

Although Dzongra is nearly 12,300 feet up, the weather was growing pretty warm, and we gave up the Tibetan clothes we had been wearing since Chumdo and reverted to shirts and shorts; feeling distinctly embarrassed, after the long chubas, to be displaying so much leg. Groaning in spirit, we toiled up to the Phokar La the next day, to find everything smothered in cloud and a snowstorm. We stayed gloomily up there for half an hour in a biting wind, slowly congealing in our asinine garments,

but patiently hoping that things might improve. At the end of that time we were more than half frozen, so down we stumped to Dzongra, determined on no account to try it again if there were the slightest chance of the day being anything but perfect. We left Nyima Töndrup and Sönam behind on July the 6th, to look after the boxes, and went to Rakpa with as few loads as we could manage. We would have gone to Sangönang, but for the difficulty in obtaining coolies at short notice. The trouble was that as far as Rakpa the Dü Chu Valley is under Chö Dzong, while below that the right bank belongs to Pashö and the left to Lho Dzong ; and arrangements for transport have to be made with the different magistrates. We had a great time insect-hunting on the way, chiefly grasshoppers and butterflies, and both Lewa and Pulak were very keen on wielding the net, almost coming to blows over whose turn it was. Lewa was wildly energetic, madly thrashing the air round some unfortunate insect with loud shouts and heavy breathing, and, as a result his specimens were generally rather mangled—although not for worlds would we have hurt him by saying so. Pulak became quite useful. He had the most spindly legs and the flattest feet we had ever seen, and when, not content with rolling his trousers up above his knees in imitation of our shorts, he insisted on wearing my old cast-off climbing boots (at least four sizes too big), he looked like some weird fowl with the staggers. For almost half the way, the path to Rakpa ran through light scrub at about two thousand feet above the river, and it was not really good enough to ride along, climbing, as it did, over great boulders and in and out of narrow gulleys. Now that it was no longer

cold, I had chaplis to wear (leather sandals from the north-west frontier of India), but John was still condemned to Tibetan boots; and walking in them gave him such blisters that he took them off and strolled along barefoot. He was blessed with horny feet, and, though mine would have been in shreds at the end of a single mile, he found nothing to complain of except that the rocks were too hot, and I was filled with admiration. We waited two days in Dzongra for decent weather, sleeping on the roof, servants, Sönam and all, to avoid bugs. Indeed, this was our regular custom in every place, unless the headman was prepared to swear that we would be unmolested in the rooms, and that happened very seldom. Then one more dreadful effort to the top of that accursed pass, which was five thousand feet above the village (the last two thousand being unsuited for anything higher in the scale than a maniac monkey); and, after a period of frightful uncertainty, while a sudden shower blotted out the view, we were at last able to finish the work and move on up the Dü Chu.

On July the 12th we reached the camping ground Düchu Sumdo, on the left bank of the river, in a clearing among the pines; and there we were hideously tormented by horse-flies. In fact, they were so bad that we had to build a smudge in front of the tent, finding it better to be kippered than devoured. John had already been there, on his way from Chö Dzong to Rangbu Gomba, but, owing to a lack of duplicate instruments, he had only been able to make a simple compass traverse. This kind of map can be very valuable provided it can be corrected at both ends of a comparatively short route.

We had done that between Shugden Gompa and Dashing, and now we were able to have an accurate check on the rest of his journey. For the same reason he had been forced to estimate all the heights of the villages and passes, and so we took a most enjoyable ride up to the Gotsa La (16,380 feet) in order definitely to fix the height of that and the neighbouring peaks ; more especially because it was another point on the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed. We were out for eleven and a half hours, making a short trip up a side valley to return the call of our Miu Dzong magistrate friend, who was stopping for a day or two in an encampment of yak-herds with his wife. She had the most astonishing collection of corals. The five in her hair must have weighed eight ounces, and she had a dozen long strings round her neck. No self-respecting Tibetan woman would thank you for the wretched pink fragments which are worn in England, for in her country a coral is a solid, deep red chunk, at least half an inch in diameter and generally a good deal more. In fact, something one can be proud of. The Gotsa La did its utmost to be as vile as the Phokar La, but after waiting for forty minutes in a hurricane of sleet, we were able to see most of what we wanted ; and, looking into Poyü, it was a grandly harsh sight, with range upon range of dark, jagged mountains, and dense banks of cloud sweeping solemnly up from Assam and pouring torrents of water into the valleys.

Believing that it was probably well known to everybody else, we yet made what to us was a thrilling discovery ; and that was that musk deer habitually return to the same spot to deposit their dung. Some fifty yards above the camp we came upon a couple

of these musk latrines, not far apart, and each on the top of a rock. One was of a male, the other of a female, and in both cases the droppings made a small mound eighteen inches in diameter by four high in the centre. We were not great zoologists (nor great at anything, if it comes to that), and up till then we knew only of the Sumatran rhinoceros as having the same strange habit ; but possibly it is quite common, and it was our limited knowledge alone which made it seem so exciting.

Between Düchu Sumdo and the Ling Chu, we followed John's route over the Deu La (16,780 feet), and he showed the most extraordinary memory, not merely of the path, but of the minutest details which we needed to help in making the map. For instance, I might point out a small rock as a useful forward bearing, and ask him how far down the winding valley it could be seen. He would say, "Not more than half a mile, because there's a ridge round the corner which will block it out" ; or, "Yes, that's all right. You can see it for about three miles quite decently" ; and he was never wrong. I had always rather flattered myself that my own memory for such things was fairly good, but I could not compete with John, and willingly handed over all the laurels in a bunch. It was simply magnificent. The climb up to the pass was easy, and as steady as that running down to Trashitse Dzong ; over bare country with little scrub and no trees. The grass came to an end some seven hundred feet below the Deu La, but above that the broken limestone slopes were covered with tall mauve primulas, dandelions, yellow garlic, and bright blue *Lagotis*. And when we reached the Ling Chu, a rapid stream twenty yards wide, we saw

a family of six wild ducks sailing down at a great pace and having a grand ride. It was dusk, and we could not tell what kind they were, but the natives said that many of these ducks float right down into Burma. I think this must have been a myth, for we certainly never saw anything of the kind on the Salween, where we would have expected to find them if the story had been true ; and, as none of the men had ever been far down, we did not believe that they knew much about it.

Trashitse (Prosperity Peak) rather belied its name. The peak was nothing but a low, sandstone hillock, crowned by a small but well-built dzong ; and a dilapidated village at the foot showed no signs of excessive good fortune. Both A-k and Kingdon Ward had reached this place from Shugden Gompa, respectively, and when we finally turned eastwards down the river, we followed in the tracks of the latter as far as Dzikar and up to the Trakge La. We had not been able to take a latitude since Shari Dzong, and, although we waited for three days to give the clouds a chance to blow away, we had no luck, and so we left for Wa on July the 19th. John's pony was accompanied by a young foal, a long-leggedy beastie which loathed the steep climb up to the Bumgye La. When we reached the top, it thought that at last the day's work was ended, and, with an obvious (and ridiculously smug) smile of contentment, it lay down and went to sleep. Its look of reproach when we moved on again, after taking a boiling-point, cut us to the heart. Up till this time, and because they have to be preserved in alcohol, we had not been collecting spiders at all ; but I had unearthed a bottle of rectified spirits from the medicine chest,

and armed with this, John began hunting enthusiastically. I say "John," and not "we," for I had always been frightened to death of spiders, though fond of snakes, and even the sight of a small one was enough to make me shudder. In a little while, however, I was shamed into joining him in his efforts, and the odd thing was that my fear soon vanished, and I could grab all but the fattest and hairiest specimens without a tremor. The very small ones we picked up with a paint-brush dipped in the spirit, and they gave us no trouble; it was the big fellows who were the difficulty. We generally found ourselves with nothing but a pair of forceps, the bottle, and the brush. If we tried the former, they shed a leg or two without thinking twice about it, and the latter was no good at all by itself, so we held the creature down with a pencil and splashed alcohol on to his head with the brush to dope him. It was a serious operation before they went under and allowed us to seize them without biting, and more than once they chewed the brush so viciously as to pull hairs out of it. One night, out on the roof, we were dismayed to see a frightful fiend, about three inches across, peering at us from beside our beds. In spite of our proven courage, it was unthinkable to go to sleep with that near us, and we set out to capture it at all costs. We had nothing on but dressing-gowns, and when, after a long chase, it suddenly shot right up my leg, I was petrified with horror.

John filled in time by muttering, "Steady, old boy, steady. We've got him now!" But that was small comfort, and it was Lewa who had the presence of mind to open my robe and knock the beast smartly

to the ground, where we pounced on it and consigned it to the bottle.

From Wa we went down below Po to fix another point on the Salween. The river was flowing in a narrow gorge, the sides being too steep to permit of any sort of a path along it. It had not been too easy getting even as far as that, but our chief suffering was caused by a fowl on which we had based great hopes. By carrying it with us on the march, and cooking it again as soon as we made camp, we stewed that bird for four nights and five afternoons, and it was still like rubber at the finish. It was something of an exception ; but, cooked and eaten the same day, the chickens of Tibet—apart from young females, which are hard to come by—literally cannot be consumed unless swallowed in massive chunks, unchewed and probably undigested. On our return to Trashitse, we stopped in a herdsman's tent below the Bumgye La for some refreshment and to buy some butter. There was plenty of company, for inside, apart from the man himself, were his wife, daughter, son-in-law, and their baby ; fifteen critter calves, three piglets comfortably reposing under old blankets and talking to themselves, an itinerant goat or two, and once, for about two seconds, before it was put to flight, a full-grown bull yak. All these besides numbers of butter churns, leather sacks, bedding, a large fire, a small altar, several saddles, and a rich aroma of yaks, goats, pigs, smoke, and unwashed human beings. Lewa and I felt that the hut above Dashing had been a paltry affair in comparison. The wretched baby had fallen into the fire two months before, and was still a ghastly sight, though apparently quite happy. On his forehead was a dreadful circular



scar as big as an orange, burnt to the bone, and his left eye and lid had been entirely destroyed. The parents wanted me to produce some medicine for it, but no medicine on earth could have done anything for the poor little brat. For my birthday meal, of chicken and Christmas pudding, we managed to buy a virgin of tender years, and then we started off for Shugden Gompa.

That was on July the 26th, and when we reached Rangbu Gompa we found Nyima, the headman of Purtsang, stopping there on his way to Lho Dzong to trade in cloth. He had been down to Calcutta in the winter, selling musk, and was the first to tell us of the death of King George. It was a great shock to us, but we knew no details, except that the new King was said to be middle-aged and unmarried, which pointed to the Prince of Wales having mounted the throne. We took a latitude at Rangbu Gompa, in case there were clouds later on at Trashitse, and then made a long march of about twenty-two miles over the low, grassy Dokha La to Rau, at the north end of the Ngan Tso. On the lake immediately south of the pass half a dozen Brahmini ducks were swimming, one of them with a brood of nine ducklings; but otherwise there was not much to see in the way of animal life. To our delight there was even less in Rau, for the houses were built of wood, and bugless. Provided we could see Shugden Gompa, it was not necessary actually to go there, and the next morning we climbed some two thousand feet to the top of the ridge east of the lake, from where we could get a view. I was wearing a new pair of chaplis, which had been made on the small side; and, by the time we reached lake-level again, it was my

turn to go barefoot. This brought to my notice a fact which had previously escaped me—namely, that the surface of the path was almost wholly composed of a gravel of broken slate and limestone. There was nearly four miles of this to cover before the village. The hale and hearty John was well in front, while I, limping miserably, followed behind at the head of a procession consisting of Lewa, Pulak, and four coolies, all with lugubrious expressions indicative of sympathy. From time to time John looked back, giving way, on each occasion, to heartless laughter; for he said later that it looked like some fourteenth-century baron undergoing a dismal penance, with the moral support of his minions and varlets. Be that as it may, he paid for his levity. My feet were in bad shape by Rau, and it was he, therefore, who had to stump off by himself seven miles to the end of the lake, and seven miles back, to fix that point while I reclined in our room in comfort. It rained heavily twice during the afternoon, and he did not get back until nearly nine at night. Truly the Lord rewardeth the virtuous! We came to Trashitse for the third and last time on July the 30th, and remained there for nine days in order to bring the map up to date and to take the latitude. Long before we departed down the river, the two headmen were desperately anxious to see the last of us—not that they disliked us personally, but that the strain of providing eight eggs every day for our breakfast was wearing them to shadows.

The Ling Chu Valley below Trashitse is bare and very arid, with little vegetation of any kind (apart from thorn scrub), except round the many villages. The rocks are mainly of limestone, with outcrops of

dark-red sandstone and slate, and the sun beat back from these until we felt that, at any minute, we might begin to fry in our own juice. There was no breath of wind, and our thirst became almost unbearable. This was all the more strange because the shade temperature at midday nowhere exceeded 80° F., although if we had been told that it was 110° we would have believed it. The place had some great advantages, however, for in the irrigated ground there were mulberry, peach, pear and walnut trees; and though the mulberries alone were ripe, it cheered us to think that lower down the others might be ready too. The valley was swarming with lizards; we caught a few specimens of a Chinese pit-viper; and, at ten thousand feet and under, there were flocks of Yünnan parrakeets, darting through the air with harsh screams. On the march below Nera Gönsar (the second from Trashitse) we passed an enterprising village whose inhabitants earned an honest penny by serenading us *en masse* from the shade of a large walnut tree as we approached; and half a mile further on we were met by a rival (and pathetic) party, of an aged woman and her man, twanging an instrument and bravely striking up with high, cracked voices. Needless to say, these also were not disappointed, but tottered off speechless with gratitude at the small sum we gave them. It was a real scorcher of a day, and we were rather listless, but when we came to a gipsy encampment by the roadside, we were revived with draughts of cold water and mulberries, and, plodding on, the next to stop us was an old man who came hurrying down the hill with an offering of milk and a request for treatment. He had herpes, rheumatism, and an

amazing faith in the medicine we were certain to have ; and when we told him that we would send him some back by a coolie, we could see anxiety and despair drop from him like a cloak. He looked appreciably younger and very happy, and he insisted on marching along with us to get the medicine for himself. We changed transport five times that day, at almost every village we reached.

We arrived at Dzika on August the 11th, and settled into a small but respectable house at 10,180 feet, some three hundred feet above the right bank of the Wa Chu ; and the next day, with Lewa and Pulak, we went down to Po, to see the Salween again. Nyima Töndrup and Sönam remained behind together as before, but Pulak never seemed to be jealous in the least—possibly because old N.T. was no beauty. Below the confluence with the Wa Chu, and as far down as the Salween, the Ling Chu flows in a very deep gorge, and, barring one steep descent into a narrow gully, and an equally steep climb out, the path ran fairly steadily at between 2,000 and 3,000 feet above the water, which looked almost close enough to be reached with a stone. Po was more than eight hundred feet higher than Dzika, but in that stifling valley it was as hot as anywhere we had been, and black with flies. People at home seldom realize what a trial flies can be, chiefly, I suppose, because they hardly exist in England ; but when there are several thousand at once in a tent or a small room, crawling over one's face, knees, hands, neck, eyes, and even on the food as you put it to your mouth, they are hard on the temper. But it was the bugs that we feared in our house at Po, for even the Tibetans said that there were a good

many about ; and we quickly had our bedding put on to the roof, according to our custom.

Shortly after we had gone to bed, I woke up, highly uncomfortable, but with a dim feeling that, whatever else it might be, there surely could not be bugs on the roof, our one place of refuge heretofore. Before I had time to collect my thoughts, there was a throaty gurgle in my ear, and, starting round, I saw a hideous bearded visage, not six inches away, with a look of patient appeal in its eyes. It was a mournful goat, condemned to the roof for the night, and seeking comfort. This had thoroughly roused me, and I discovered that my vague suspicions had been only too well founded, for the hosts of Midian were upon us, marching grimly from every direction. I awoke John, and, as bugs are vanquished by light, we switched on the torch and spent a distressing twenty minutes in clearing our pyjamas and blankets, with a total score of a hundred and five. The goat crept into the magic circle, and it should be accounted unto us for righteousness that we went as conscientiously through his shaggy coat as we had through our own bedding. His careworn face seemed to light up, and he remained with us until the battery gave out and we were once more plunged in darkness ; when he wandered miserably away. All this time the Khampas on the roof were sleeping peacefully, recking little of vermin ; but we, not being so fortunate, hurriedly fetched a candle, which blew out every three minutes with sickening regularity. We huddled round it, feverishly striking matches, and were prepared to continue doing this for the rest of the night when John had the brilliant idea that conditions, as regards bugs, could not be much worse inside, and at

all events the candle would burn more steadily. We moved in, leaving the goat to its fate (although had it not deserted us, we would have gladly taken it along), and sat up for more than an hour, too depressed even to talk. It was now 3 a.m. and, hearing Lewa wake up and stir the kitchen fire, we asked how things were with him. He replied that there was not a bug to be seen, and so, thunderstruck by the news, but hoping that our room also was pest-free, we fell asleep and finished what was left of the night without a single nibble. The explanation appeared to be that, in the summer, the natives of Po all sleep on the roofs on account of the heat, and consequently the bugs are forced to follow them out so as not to lose their livelihood ; and the only place where they are to be found from June to October is the very one we had chosen for our safety.

After one day in Po, to give us time to see something of the Salween Valley, we returned to Dzikar by the same path, buying a very young parrakeet for fourpence on the way. We called him Binjamin, in memory of Jorrocks, and he was only just fledged. He had not eaten since his capture two days before, and was pretty certain to die ; but we felt that he stood a better chance of surviving with us than with the Tibetans, and that was our main reason for buying him. He was really mine, and on me fell the burden of nursing him and trying to make him eat. I experimented with peach, mulberry, walnut, tsamba, and boiled wheat in vain, and at last I had to pour a little milk down his throat, drop by drop, with a paintbrush. This forcible feeding made him so affectionate that he was not happy away from me, and, when put into his basket for the night, he would

come hopping and flapping across the room to rest on my shoulder or nowhere. The only thing to do was to treat him like a baby and hold him till he went to sleep, before wrapping him in a pair of old pants and popping him into his bed. All went well for one night, and during the second he seemed to be sleeping soundly and getting much stronger ; but, early in the morning I was awakened by a faint squawk, and there he was, struggling feebly towards me. He died, quite suddenly, about half-way over, and left me with such a feeling of grief that for two or three days I was low in my mind. Unhappy Benjamin ! We buried him in a deep hole to discourage the dogs, and hoped that in the parrakeet heaven he was enjoying an even better time than he ought to have had on earth.

John had strained a muscle in his thigh, and, so that it could mend properly, he stayed behind in Dzikar while I took Lewa and Pulak and went up the Wa Chu to the Trakge La, to map that route and fix another point on the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed. At the first village the headman brought a present of a hundred and fifty eggs, of which, on examination, a bare sixteen proved to be eatable. To his great joy, we returned the hundred and thirty-six, saying that they would be useful the next time a Tibetan official passed that way, and accepted a substitute in the shape of sixty pounds of turnips. Shortly after our arrival there, a heavy shower took place over the northern half of the village, while the southern remained bone dry. My room was on the dividing line, and I could put my hand out of the window and have it soaked in a couple of seconds ; but not a drop fell on the roof. It was a long march

of some twenty-three miles to the last camp before the pass, over a track which varied from moderate to bad. The ponies found it so difficult that we gave up riding and went on foot for all except three miles, in order to get as much work done as possible. By half-past five it was growing dark, and I left Lewa and the coolies behind and hurried on to find the camp. Presently, at 15,300 feet, I saw the flicker of the fire on the other side of the Wa Chu. This affected me like a will-o'-the-wisp, and I started to wade across at once, in the inky darkness, with a fierce torrent up to my waist, and the bed of the river full of boulders and pot-holes. In spite of a long staff, I fell twice, and was swept along many yards each time before I could get a footing again; and then, through the night, I saw two incredible figures on the bank, leaping up and down like chimpanzees and screeching—although what they said I could not hear, owing to the roar of the water. I took it to be an injunction to cross lower down, however, and returning to the right bank I was able to get over, with considerable difficulty, a hundred yards below where I had first tried. There was no damage, bar an enormous bruise on my shin, and the stitching of one of my chaplis, which had burst; and, being infernally cold (for the river was icy), it was wonderful to change into pyjamas and squat by the fire, slowly thawing out. The proper ford was half a mile downstream, and very easy, but there was nothing to mark it, and I had walked straight past.

On the third day out from Dzika, we went up to the Trakge La (17,320 feet), an easy climb of about eight miles under normal circumstances; but I was just beginning to be ill with what I thought was dysentery,



and it was all I could do either to reach the top or to get down in the evening. To save transport, we had left the tents behind, and the camp was under a couple of overhanging rocks. It was one of the grimmest nights in human history, for it began to pour with rain at eight o'clock, which dripped steadily from the roof on to my bed. The servants and coolies were luckily under the other rock (facing the opposite direction), and were quite dry, but already crowded out; and I came to the conclusion that it was probably slightly less wet where I was than in the open. By the morning I was lying in half an inch of water, with every single thing soaking, not having had more than five minutes' sleep on account of the constant fresh trickles of water which found their way into the bedding. This together with the disease made me feel like death, and the ten miles down the valley to where the ponies were waiting has been a nightmare to me ever since. All the same, it was a relief to know that it was not dysentery, but merely acute colitis, and a diet of milk and eggs for a week put me right again. We got back to Dzikar on August the 20th, waited two days for my stomach's sake, and then pushed on over the Sibū Sharkong La (14,835 feet) to Jēpa, on the right bank of the Salween.



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*The lion jewel*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“ Let our worthy Cantab be bachelor or Benedick,  
what concern is it of ours.”

*Mrs. Edwards : A Girton Girl, ch. xv.*

AT just below nine thousand feet, Jepa was a perfectly lovely village of forty houses, all built close to the river. It was surrounded by crops, including maize, potatoes, and vegetable marrows ; most of the lanes were shaded by vines ; there were orchards of peaches, pears, walnuts, pomegranates, and mulberries ; and hundreds of parrakeets (or “ Binjes ”) made flashing streaks of vivid green among the trees. The small, sweet grapes are used for making wine in September, but this is drunk fresh every year instead of being allowed to mature, and so I was not able to taste it. John had some later on, when he came back to Jepa from Situkha, and he said it was good stuff, and very heady. On the way down we saw a couple of dwarfs on the path, driving cattle. There are a few of these in Zayul, and at one time I

thought that they were probably the result of inbreeding or something of the sort ; but they are all so much alike (about four and a half feet high, with very round flat faces, practically no necks, squat bodies, and short legs) that I now think they must be the remnants of an aboriginal race ; the inhabitants of eastern Tibet before even the Kachins and Mishmis moved in, to be driven out, in their turn, by pressure from the north. The dwarfs that remain are more or less slaves, but they seem to be well treated and as happy as their limited intellects allow. The Wa Chu Valley and the right bank of the Salween up to Po is all under the Sangachö Dzong, and we spent one night in Kharndempa's own room in Jepa, wishing that we could wait there longer. Pashö was our next port, however, and, as it was an unknown distance up the river, we felt that we had no time to waste in idle dalliance.

We crossed the Salween half a mile above the village, by a new leather-rope bridge some seventy yards long, taking the ponies over as well. Both they and the baggage animals are so used to being slung across like this, simply with straps under their bellies, that they do not kick or protest, but resign themselves with stoical indifference to what must be an exceedingly uncomfortable passage. The only trouble lies in landing them, for, unless a good deal of help is available, they are likely to break their knees on the rocks. Our luggage had dwindled to thirty loads, and there were only eight ponies, but it took us a full three hours to cross the bridge, with fifteen or twenty people on each side to lend us a hand. Nyima Töndrup and Pulak came over together towards the end, the former very red in the

face and grinning sheepishly, overcome with embarrassment at being the regarded of all ; and so obviously ill-at-ease that the bystanders started cracking jokes and making personal remarks at his expense as soon as he was near enough to hear. He arrived, sweating profusely, and immediately took refuge among the boxes, hoping to appear as one busily occupied with important labours.

This part of the Salween Valley is very like that of the Ling Chu, but exaggerated in every way, in depth, heat, aridity, and glare ; and even at the end of the short march to Tongpar (short because of the delay at the bridge), it was deliciously restful to see the soft green of the trees and fields, after the burning rocks along the path. To reach Pashö we had to leave the river for a while, but we hoped to strike it again below Shari Dzong, at the broken bridge, and return to Tongpar, keeping as close to it as we could, before continuing down the left bank from there. A climb of a little more than five thousand feet took us to the Dela La (13,990 feet), and then there was a short, gentle descent to Thenthok Gompa, a monastery which had been visited both by King and by Sir Eric Teichmann. The monastery, of a hundred monks, is a fine building on a ridge, and we actually stopped close by in the village of Thenthok, a wretched affair of fifteen hovels, on the right bank of the Tsayi Chu. As the crow flies, Thenthok Gompa is only seven miles north east of the Salween, but it is on the plateau which forms the watershed between this river and the Mekong ; so that, while the Salween here flows at about 8,600 feet, the Tsayi Chu, though a big stream, is at no less than 12,900 feet. Our room was dreadful, squalid to a degree, and we had to remind ourselves

that it was only for one night to prevent us sinking into a state of despair. In the morning, however, no transport was forthcoming, on the plea that it was being sent from some way up the valley, and could not arrive before midday. We were certain that there was more behind it than this, and at noon, a messenger arrived from Tsawa Dzogang, the headquarters of the district, with a present of sugar and *ping* from the Dzongpön, and word that he must regretfully refuse to allow us to go on, as it was reported that one of us had a great bush of hair on his face, which showed that we must be Russians. It was the same thing as at Nakshö Biru, but I do not see how we could have avoided it. If we had cut the beard off matters would have been worse, rather than better, for news travels fast in Tibet, and everybody would then have been sure that John was trying to disguise himself as a harmless Englishman, instead of showing himself as the wolf he most certainly was. The messenger was an odd sight, in what seemed to be a large top hat, draped in yellow waterproof silk. After earnest scrutiny we discovered that it was really a Homburg, innocent of dent, with a cover to protect it from the weather. As a matter of fact, the Dzongpön was away in Chamdo, and it was his deputy who had stopped us, a man of forbidding appearance, with two gold front teeth, put in somewhere in China, and a very inferior turquoise in his ear. None the less, his looks belied him, for he was a most pleasant fellow, and quite the most businesslike official we had met; going straight to the point by asking our names, what we were doing in the country, where we originally came from and when, and why we wanted to go to Pashö. Having

Numerous onlookers spent a happy afternoon making personal remarks and offering unsolicited advice. (p. 254.)

At Jepa the sophisticated ponies crossed the rope bridge without protest. (p. 254.)





written it all down in a notebook, he said again how sorry he was to have to hold us up, but that he hoped it would not be for long. He would send a special courier that day to Chamdo, to ask about us, and, as it was now August the 29th, the man would arrive there on September the 1st. Of course, he could not say how long it might take for the answer to come back, but he thought that in ten days' time we should know our fate.

He brought another present of rice, tea, and eggs, and was (strangely enough) most loath to accept anything in return, as he said he was unable to help us—it depended entirely on Chamdo—and, anyway, we had come from a long distance, while this was his country. In the end, we prevailed upon him to take a roll of silk, and he sat with us for two hours, insisting on using one of our camp chairs, although we did our best to persuade him to perch on a box. The camp chairs (which were of Rhoorkee pattern) had been a danger to life and limb for months, for the wooden struts had long since shrunk until nothing would induce them to stay firmly in place. We tried steeping them in water, but without avail, and the only way to keep them in at all was to bind the legs with yards of rope, like a spider's web, and then sit very still. We were used to them, but, even so, falls were a regular event; and, in the case of Sönam Wangdü, it was a foregone conclusion. We warned him, but I believe he thought that we were trying to keep the most honourable seats for ourselves, and refused to take heed. He had been to Calcutta three or four times, both by Lhasa and through the Mishmi Hills, and, as he talked of his experiences, we sat in an agony of suspense until,



with a rending crash, he was deposited on the floor.

Now that Chamdo had been called in, we knew perfectly well that we stood no chance of getting to Pashö, for the identical reason that had been given at Lho Dzong, and we immediately made plans to return to the Salween by a path which went to Situkha, and to finish the stretch from there to Jepa before continuing south. It was a disappointment that Pashö was also barred to us; and almost as great a one that we had to wait in that infested cabin for not ten but twelve days. We would not have believed it possible earlier on, but we found ourselves yearning for the comforts of Nakshö Biru, for there our abode, at least, had been moderately comfortable. What was worse was that we were no longer in a land of plenty, and were back on the meat-and-turnip diet; and the only fruit we had was when an enterprising peasant turned up from Tongpar with a basket of thirty peaches. We bought his entire stock for twopence, or a penny more than he had expected, and he went away overjoyed. Not very much of note occurred during our stay in Thenthok. Sönam declared that she had *yama*, of which we had never heard, and we became rather alarmed; for, judging by the confused description and the graphic gestures which were used when words failed, we understood her to say that the disease caused a dropping off of the nose. That might have been syphilis, and we enlisted Lewa to see whether he could make something less serious out of her story. If anything, he made it more lurid, and we were becoming distinctly worked up about it, when Sönam Wangdü explained that it was no more than a cold in the head that was meant. Then the staid

Nyima Töndrup fell in love with Tsepa, our water-girl, who was responsible for keeping the kitchen supplied. She was not a bad looking child, of about nineteen, and he was so anxious to take her with him to Darjeeling and marry her there, that we said she could come along if she was as keen on it as he was. He already had one wife, and it seemed to us that it was asking for trouble to add Tsepa to the establishment too ; but he swore that wife No. 1 had been pestering him to take on a second to help with the housework, and in any case that he was tired of her and wanted someone a shade younger. As Lewa said, to help him out (for Nyima Töndrup was no orator) : “ She is old and toothless, and a very great shame to him in the bazaar.” Our party had now reached the giddy heights of seven, but that was the maximum, Lewa being completely faithful to Chikki Sherpani, his spouse in Jalapahar, and never so much as looking at any other woman, either for a temporary alliance or as a permanency.

The courier arrived on September the 6th, bringing the message we had expected, and, three days later, we said *au revoir* to Sönam Wangdü, and shook the dust of Thenthok from our feet, heading south along the main Chamdo–Menkong or Chamdo–Sangachö Dzong road ; that to Jepa being the route to Ngagong and Poyü only. The path ran up the bank of a small stream, and the ground was sprinkled with autumn flowering gentians, dark blue, pale blue, and yellow. On the first march we passed twenty-six grazier’s tents, with large numbers of yaks, sheep, and goats, and we were met by a caravan of ninety-six mules taking tea from Yünnan to Lhasa. The muleteers were all Chinese, but the four merchants were

Tibetans and armed with modern rifles. One of them had just shot a hare, which seemed strange in view of the proximity of Thenthok Gompa ; but he was carrying it along quite openly, apparently not caring a straw. After about ten miles, we halted at a grazing ground, where a blue and white cotton tent had been put up for us, and hardly had we moved into it than there was a heavy hailstorm, followed by rain and a strong wind. The rain all came through the roof, of course, and my side collapsed twice, so, not knowing how long the shower was going to last, we erected our own tent and emigrated. Almost immediately, as if conscious that there was no longer any need for effort, the cotton affair fell down altogether, a sorry heap, and was hastily carted away by its owners.

On the way up to the Mar La (15,700 feet) we had a great day collecting grasshoppers, all of which proved later to be either new or very rare, and then, once more, we were looking into the Salween Valley. We could see several small hanging glaciers far away on the west side, and some glistening white peaks between Salween and the Tsengo Chu, but east of the river there was nothing approaching permanent snow, and the highest mountains were not more than about seventeen thousand feet. From the Mar La down, there were some bad patches on the path, which ran for a couple of miles across a steep crumbling face. At the worst spots, it was built up with stones to make a narrow causeway, perhaps two feet wide, with a long drop below ; and at the others it was often a case of scurrying across, one at a time, in order to get over before a landslide could begin. The coolies said that, a week or two previously, a

yak and two mules had been caught in one of these small avalanches and killed ; but there were no mishaps to our caravan, doubtless because we all treated the place with the utmost respect, even to the extent of getting off and leading our ponies, which had by now become an almost unheard-of thing. The last six miles to Situkha were down a deep ravine, dry, bare, and as hot as an oven ; with a tiny stream trickling along the bottom. But, baked or not, the land is very fertile under any form of irrigation, and the three villages by the stream were surrounded by groves of fruit trees, and little fields of excellent wheat, barley, maize, millet, buckwheat, peas, turnips, onions, and chillies. The whole country was very much eroded in this neighbourhood, the slopes seamed with precipitous ridges, and the sides of the Salween Valley dropped more than eight thousand feet in from five to seven miles. We were not surprised that it was hot, for it was practically impossible for a breeze to reach the river at this time of year, and the air was still and shimmering.

Situkha, at 8,460 feet, is a village of fourteen houses above the left bank of the Salween, and a good rest-house. In spite of our stop in Thenthok, I had accumulated a fair amount of work, and John undertook to map the routes between there and Jepa to give me a chance to clear it off, taking Pulak and Nyima Töndrup with him. He left on September the 13th, crossing the river by the rope bridge below Situkha, and turning up the right bank ; and I settled down to a life of office work and doctoring. A little old man came in from one of the villages on the way to the Mar La, with a present of a cock, a sack of turnips, and twelve eggs ; very humble, but

hoping against hope that I could make him fit again. Ten years before, he had broken his ankle and dislocated most of the bones in his foot ; and by now the latter was a solid, twisted lump, and the calf had dwindled until it was nothing but bone, skin, and sinews. He could hobble, but only just, and there was a great sore on his heel going in more than three-quarters of an inch. I found out that cripple though he was, there were twelve aged relatives living on him, and that he was quite the poorest of the poor ; and naturally I returned his offering (to his unbounded relief), wondering at the strangeness of human nature. It was always these wretched ones who brought the finest presents when they needed help, somehow or other producing a wonderful gift, and very often, as a final heart-breaking touch, adding a trangka or two as well ; while the wealthy merchants occasionally handed over a couple of eggs, or, more usually, nothing at all.

I could not do much for the old man except to try to put the sore to rights, and as that was going to be a long job, I told him he could live on the balcony and feed with the servants until we left. He was dealt with twice a day for ten days, and, at the end of that time (so extreme was his faith—for it had nothing to do with me), not only could he walk almost without a limp, but his calf had increased by nearly four inches ; and, from being icy cold, it had become as warm and healthy to the touch as my own. He used to follow me around, gazing at me shyly out of the corners of his eyes, beaming all over his face, and sticking out his tongue if I ever glanced in his direction ; and when I gave him an old pyjama jacket and a pair of pink-topped ski-ing socks, his

happiness was complete, and he swaggered about, chuckling with glee, and making improper remarks to all the women.

The houses in Situkha, and ours especially, were infested with a species of harmless snake, running up to more than four feet in length, and feeding chiefly (or possibly entirely) on the rats. They lived in the roof, and could often be seen looking out from between the rafters, or climbing along from one place to another. As far as Situkha was concerned, I think that they had arrived on their own, but in some parts of northern China this type of snake is definitely encouraged to come into the houses, instead of cats, and they are even bought and sold in the markets as valuable household adjuncts. I caught half a dozen while John was away, to brighten me during his absence, and it was an extraordinary thing to see that the peasants, living as close to nature as they do, still had no idea that they were not poisonous. There was a family of sparrows under the eaves outside my window, and the parents seemed to be having such a hard time of it collecting food, that I took to scattering grain and bits of walnut on the floor of the room to help them out. They soon began to look on it as their right, and if the supply failed, a series of furious chirrupings reminded me of my laxity ; and, before long, they were so tame that they would fly right on to the table and steal from the plate of cracked walnuts that was generally beside me. One of the babies fell out of the nest one day, and lay gloomily on the ground, naked, all head and beak. I was considering how best to replace it when the mother (or it may have been the father) arrived on the scene, and, to my astonishment, picked

it up and flew home again. It was a comfortable house, and I enjoyed the few days I was there, even though, apart from the accident to the fledgling, there were not many excitements. One of the coolies who had been with me over the Kangri Karpo La came through with word that Trakba had delivered the snake-box in Sadiya ; and one of Kharndempa's servants looked in on his way to collect the taxes from further up the river, to say that he would be delighted to travel with us when we moved on from Situkha. Otherwise the only thing of interest was that Lewa was assailed by violent toothache. In fact, he said solemnly, he had been having it, on and off, since 1931, and he reckoned it was due to go. I extracted it, without difficulty, after breakfast, and he rushed madly from the room, claspng his jaw, to return grinning in a couple of minutes, and very talkative, as one nearly always is after having a tooth out.

I had expected John back on September the 17th, but he did not arrive until the 21st, having had a certain amount of trouble in persuading coolies to come with him from Tongpar down the left bank of the Salween, where there is no regular path. There was nothing more to keep us in Situkha, and we left on the 23rd, crossing the river by the same rope bridge that John had used, and turning south. The leather was cracked and perished in parts, desperately in need of renewal ; but it was only when one was half-way over with the muddy water swirling and foaming underneath, and the tattered rope worn to half its thickness, that one realized exactly how unsafe the structure was. On any rope bridge Lewa was a comic sight, and all the more so because, in other

circumstances, he had no nerves at all. On more than one occasion, he had assaulted, with nothing but a stick, a whole crowd of armed Khampas, who were interfering, by their very presence, with the work of the camp ; and several times, when he was out with me, he had climbed the most dangerous crags to get a flower or to give me an idea of what could be seen from the top. Once he was fastened to the slider, however, and about to be dragged across a bridge, he was finished. It was as though the lack of contact with the earth destroyed all confidence, so that he clung on for dear life, with eyes tight shut and a face of acute alarm, praying hard. To recover his self-respect, on being unstrapped, he would issue strings of shouted orders to the coolies or anyone else who was within range of his powerful voice, and not return to normal for five or ten minutes. On the far side we were joined by Puka Trashi, Kharn-dempa's servant, on his way back to his master in Menkong ; and we marched down the river, following King's route as far as Wosithang, and then branching along the Sangachö Dzong road.

Those three days were the last we saw of the Salween, and perhaps because they were, in a sense, a final chapter, the picture of them is almost more clear to me than that of any other part of the trip. The west side of the valley rose gently for two miles to the mountains, covered with boulders and heaps of stones, and cut by dry watercourses, like trenches, and a few small streams. The east fell steeply from top to bottom, a wilderness of narrow gulleys ; and, on both, there was little but coarse grass and thorns for a thousand feet above the river—fodder for the many cattle, sheep, and goats which dotted the hills



as far up as we could see. The Salween itself, broad and still, flowed placidly on towards Burma and the sea, brown and turbid during the day, but at sunset reflecting the painted clouds as though it were crystal ; and here and there a patch of green by the bank marked a village or a solitary house. It was hot and dry ; an occasional eddy of wind lashed the dust into our faces ; and sometimes there floated down to us the faint, monotonous piping of a shepherd, charming his savage breast with music made from a reed whistle. Half-way between Situkha and Wosithang stands a white *chorten*, beside a rectangular pile of mani-stones ; and there three small, naked boys were playing in the sun, so absorbed in their game that we were upon them before they knew. They scuttled like marmots behind the shrine, to peep out, friendly but shy, as we passed ; and, although we halted for twenty minutes and they emerged, round-eyed, from their cover, they never ventured nearer than ten yards, and stood ready to fly at any sudden movement.

It was a sad thought that we were turning our backs on the Salween for good, when we struck up the Lho Chu to Wosithang ; but there was compensation in the fact that it was virgin ground, as far as Europeans were concerned, to Sangachö Dzong, and that we still had to cross the watershed into the Brahmaputra basin at one more point. Besides, to be quite frank, we were now almost ready for the journey to finish, and we were so near to India that such things as fish, real cheese, china plates, beer, full-length baths, letters, motor-cars, and trains seemed to be waiting for us just round the corner. Civilization of our sort may be enervating, but there is no doubt

about its advantages, and one of the comforts we were looking forward to most was the thought that, instead of having to plan out each detail of each fifteen or twenty miles, changing transport and arranging camps, we would soon be able simply to buy a railway ticket and be removed wherever we wanted without any further effort on our part. Even Lewa was affected by the approach of Western conventions to the extent of sleeping outside the kitchen, with praiseworthy modesty, leaving our two couples, Pulak and Sönam, Nyima Töndrup and Tsepa, to their own devices within. Down to two hundred feet above the present level of the Lho Chu, the valley had been carved out by ice, and successive glaciers in their retreat had left huge lumps of granite lying about on the floor, standing out against the limestone of the sides as clearly as negroes in England, and proving that the main range at the head of the river must be chiefly granite, no matter of what the lower slopes were made. And, to go from glaciation to volcanic action, we passed a large hot spring (or rather four small ones in a circle of twenty yards), at 12,500 feet, the warmest beating all our records with a temperature of 133° F., and all smelling vilely of sulphur. We had not seen very much of Puka Trashi since he had joined us near Situkha, but we were glad that he had come along; for when he left us (on September the 27th and before we crossed the Juk La), to continue south-east to Menkong, he took with him a letter to Kharndempa, with a present of a Mauser automatic and about fifty rounds of ammunition, originally bought in Nakshö Biru from Dzampe Küsang in case we went across the Plateau. We said in the letter how very sorry we were not to be seeing

him again before we went into Assam, but that we would be looking forward to paying him another visit if ever we returned to Shikathang from India—for we had heard by now that Tasong Tsang had died from the poisoned foot he had had in Sangachö Dzong and that Kharndempa had taken on a further four years of service in Zayul. We also asked him to authorize us to collect forty coolies from the Rongtö district, who could go with us all the way through the Mishmi Hills to Dening, the most easterly British outpost, which is fifteen to seventeen marches from Shikathang, depending on the amount of baggage that has to be carried. It was important for us to have Tibetans for the whole of this route, because it is generally rather difficult to engage Mishmis as coolies; and, if we could only get Zayulis for half the way, there was the grim possibility of finding ourselves stuck in the Lohit Valley without transport, and with no other choice but either to take root there, perhaps for months, with our boxes, or to desert everything and hurry on into Assam, leaving the results of all our work to the tender mercies of the inquisitive natives. We knew that we would get an answer of some sort by the time we reached Sangachö Dzong, and as Kharndempa was a friend of ours, we were quite sure that it would be a good one.

It was about sixteen miles over the Juk La to the camping ground of Gotsong, and we almost decided to leave it for a day. When we awoke in the morning, snow was falling on the range and it did not seem at all likely that we should be able to do much in the neighbourhood of the pass. However, by seven o'clock the sky had cleared a little, and the coolies all swore that it would be fine by the time we finished

the climb, so we took them at their word and started off. They were wrong, of course, for the visibility on top was something like a hundred yards and blurred at that ; but we did not much mind. As we went down into the valley we found that we were back in the pine country of Zayul, and, even though the floor was at thirteen thousand feet, so that the trees grew only along the bottom, they were thick enough to remind us of the Rongtö, which, to us, was nearly the same as being at home. Gotsong, too, was a most attractive camp, in a clearing in the forest, and, waiting there ten days for the weather to clear up, we were every bit as comfortable as we should have been on the other side of the Juk La. This pass, by the way, in spite of being on the watershed, is only 15,410 feet high, but, although the ascent from the east is easy, that from Gotsong is steep ; and it was the one real grudge we bore Fate that, if ever we had to return to a pass on account of the map, it was always the worse side which remained to be done. I suppose we were lucky that the Juk La was so low, for to north and south the range hardly dropped below seventeen thousand feet anywhere, and it was nearer twenty thousand in most places.

Gotsong is close to the left bank of the Chumnyö (the Treacherous river—so called because of its sudden floods), and the valley is used for grazing cattle during the summer and autumn. There were a couple of lean-to huts of pine branches at the camp when we arrived, built by some herdsman or other earlier in the year, and only needing slight repairs to make them habitable. We took possession of these, turning one into the kitchen and one into our mansion, and then, keeping two coolies to fetch wood and

water, we sent the remainder back to their homes, to wait until we were ready to move on again. Every day the mist dropped to within two hundred feet of the Chumnyö, and it was damp and chilly, with a drizzling rain, so that we were glad to give up work in favour of the fire in our hut. It was hopeless to try both, because, for one thing, the wood was highly explosive, going off with a loud report every minute or so, and filling the air with sparks and embers ; and, for another, it produced great volumes of vapour which were guaranteed to blacken the face of any sheet of paper in a matter of seconds. A third disadvantage was that the showers of glowing fragments never failed to set one bedding roll alight per day (John's being more unfortunate than mine), and, after our ten days of wrestling with the flames, our blankets were very much not what they had been before. Better that than a fireless hearth, however, and it all served to keep us occupied. We gave a good deal of our time, when not gazing eagerly towards the sky in hopes of a change, to the invention of a sweetmeat, which ended by being so rich as to defy the strongest stomach, if taken in more than the smallest quantities at a time. There was a lone cherry tree standing close to the camp, with small, bright red, but very bitter fruit, growing singly and not in pairs, and it was this tree which inspired us with our experiments in cookery. It was beautiful, a splash of pale green and scarlet on the verge of the dark woods ; but presently we felt that handsome is as handsome does, and took to mixing mashed cherries and walnuts into melted chocolate, and congealing the product in the cool outside. This was so good that we were driven to further and better

efforts, until our united genius devised the remarkable combination of chocolate, cherries, walnuts, raisins, "Ovaltine," milk, and vanilla custard powder, which set in a glutinous, fudge-like mass, a delight to eye and nose. There could be no two opinions about its excellence. The trouble was that it took us so long to get through it, for three bites a day was the most we could manage without fear of internal strife.

The milk came from a cattle camp some four miles up the valley, together with butter, cheese, curds, and a sheep, and when Pulak first went to do the shopping he found that all the men had fled to the forest, on the theory that, as strangers, we were probably up to no good. Four apprehensive women had been left behind in the tents to keep an eye on events and report on the expected damage—possibly even to seek to dissuade the robbers from ill-doing. This was a most logical thing to do on the part of the men, for the wickedest malefactor in Tibet would scarcely beat or kill a woman ; and as for that which is said to be worse than death, the Tibetans regard the matter from a more practical viewpoint, and say frankly that it is not. There was a little milk in one of the tents, but no sign of butter, and it was not until after some keen detective work that the latter was discovered sunk beneath the wave in a nearby stream. Pulak's statement that thirty pounds was all he wanted wrung moans of anguish from the wretched guardians ; and they were dumbfounded when he handed over the correct market price, and unable to believe the marvel. A cry went up, and the sons and husbands hastened from their retreat to offer all that they had on the same terms, from yaks to tsamba, and from that day on we had no more

devoted admirers than those two families. In any case, John's appearance helped to fill them with a proper sense of rapturous awe, for he had now passed from the ecclesiastical to the purely scholastic, with gigantic beard and fair hair *en brosse*; strongly resembling a Scandinavian professor of mythology, and lacking only spectacles to complete the illusion.

Lewa, Pulak, and Nyima Töndrup were all attacked by an acute form of gingivitis at Gotsong, obviously, I think, through borrowing and smoking the same pipe. Their gums started to recede in the most alarming way, and the pain kept them awake, night after night. We tried syringing them with various disinfectants, but nothing made any difference; and it was Lewa who eventually found out that melted butter was the only thing which gave relief, applied between the teeth with a piece of cotton wool on the end of a stick. Oddly enough it effected a complete cure, and, ten days later, there were no more complaints. At last, on October the 8th, the clouds rose and we were able to toil up to the Juk La and get that off our minds. It was a particularly trying day for John, as his thigh muscle gave way again, having behaved perfectly well since Dzikar. If we had only known sooner, he could have stopped behind in the camp; but it chose its time with uncanny skill, and showed no signs of weakness until we were nearly at the top of the pass. Then it cracked quite suddenly, and coming down the steep slope back to the Chumnyö must have been a very unpleasant affair, with a stab of searing agony at every step, and more than once an entire collapse, when the leg refused to function at all. With John one had always to judge what he was going through,







Between the two stupas at Yosithang stands a tall, slender stupa beside a rectangular pile of flat stones, and from among them we had our last glimpse of the green. (p. 266.)

Shugden Gompa. Clear as crystal, the south end of the lake reflected the mountains and the clouds. (p. 282.)

on occasions like this, by a quick glance when he was off his guard, for otherwise his cheerful good-humour was misleading ; but I am sure that the six miles or so from the Juk La to Gotsong were by far the most trying he had covered since crossing over from Burma. Coolies and ponies arrived that night, however, and being on the move again had as much to do with his rapid recovery as anything else. When we had started from Nakshö Biru in April, we had almost hated the wild ducks and geese which were flying over in the early dawns towards the source of the Salween. It was different now, for the former at least were on their way home, crossing the valley to the south-west at a great height, in skeins of from ten to thirty brace, and making directly for Assam. It was strange to think that they would arrive there that very day, doing in less than twelve hours what would take us the best part of a month's solid travelling by the shortest possible route ; but we wished them luck, without a trace of envy, because they were mocking us no longer.

We had finished with the Salween-Brahmaputra watershed for this journey, for, even though we were to return to the Trakge La once more, it was only a matter of reaching it from the other side, and we could find out no more about it. Altogether we had crossed the watershed six times between us (by the Tungla, Gotsa, Yoni, Dokha, Trakge, and Juk passes), and we had found it to be composed mainly of limestone and slate, with frequent outcrops of strawberry-red or mauve sandstone. Below that it was largely granite. As regards the range south of the Ngagong Chu, the rocks, near the Chindru and Kangri Karpo passes, are of limestone and slate ; those round the

Ata Kang La are of granite ; and near Shugden Gompa itself of limestone and slate also. Neither dip nor strike were of any help to us, owing to the great variations in both which occurred even in comparatively small areas ; and, on my way from Purtsang to Shingke Gompa, I had not been able to see any of the crest of this range. John had done better, though, in seeing that it was permanent snow throughout its length from Shugden Gompa to Dashing, and apparently between 18,000 and 20,000 feet in height. We had found that the Ngagong Chu ran almost in a straight line from the western end of the Ngan Tso to Shöwa—not cutting twice through a possible easterly extension of the Himalaya as Kingdon Ward had suggested in 1934—and that the range to the south, though high, was very narrow, varying from about twenty-five miles in width between Shugden Gompa and Purtsang, to a minimum of about ten miles. In spite of this narrowness, it is very tempting to assume that this strip of mountains is a direct prolongation of the Himalaya, bent round the north-east promontory of Assam and continuing south as the Salween-Brahmaputra, or Salween-Irrawaddy, Divide. Following Burrard's argument that the Tibetan rivers cut through the Himalaya at the points of maximum elevation,\* this assumption is perhaps supported by the fact that south of Shöwa and west of the Sü La the level of the range appears to rise to more than 20,000 feet, facing Namcha Barwa on the other side of the Tsangpo Gorge. If this is so—that the Himalayas trend east and south from Namcha Barwa—then it would seem that the Salween-Brahma-

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\* S. G. Burrard and H. H. Hayden, *A Sketch of the Geography and Geology of the Himalaya Mountains and Tibet.*

putra watershed, west of the Trakge La, might be a secondary fold pushed up at the same time as the Himalaya themselves.

Gotsong was the last place in which we had to stop on account of work, although, once or twice, we came perilously near a hold-up and only escaped by the skin of our teeth. We crossed the Drindre La on October the 9th, and dropped steeply into a narrow, wooded valley, to reach Pashö the next day. It resembled the Pashö we had failed to reach in nothing but the name, being a completely unimportant village ; but as we had expected (for shö means a widening in the floor of a valley), the nineteen houses were set in a tiny plain, and separated by fields of wheat, barley, and vegetables. They were built of wood, on piles, and with sloping roofs, and just gazing at them was something of a thrill ; for they were the first houses we had seen of that type since leaving Poyü, and they looked very friendly. Furthermore, being of pine wood, there were no bed bugs, and, at more than eleven thousand feet, it was becoming cold enough to discourage the fleas. We were only one day from Sangachö Dzong, if we went straight down the Pashö Chu, but we wanted to kill two birds by doing the winter route to Shugden Gompa, via the Dama La, and the road from Shugden Gompa to the Trakge La ; so we left Nyima Töndrup for ten days, to look after his bride to be, Sönam, and nearly all the baggage, and conjured him to remain clean, sober, and of good repute in our absence.



ཚེ་རིང་ལུག་པོ་འབྲི་བ།

*The six long-lived attendants*

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.”

Robert Southey: *The Inchcape Rock*.

TRAVELLING with transport between Pashö and Shugden Gompa, it is just too far to do the whole distance in a day, and the custom is to camp short of the Dama La in whatever direction one is making the journey. A steady climb from the village soon took us above the tree-line, and we halted for the night in a little meadow on the bank of the Dama Chu, a torrent ten yards wide and pretty deep. It was a still, lovely night, and the brilliant moon shining on the snowy peaks all round made them look fairy-like and unreal, as though, at any moment, they might become mistily translucent, to let us

see something wonderful glimmering through from beyond. Most of the way from the camp ran among light, scrubby bushes and gay patches of gentians, with pygmy hares scampering round the boulders, and a few belated butterflies fighting a losing battle against the autumn chill. We were growing resigned to the idea of a wet and freezing passage over the stream, which was as big as ever, but at last it broke up into two wide, shallow branches in a sandy bed, making an easy ford where we hardly even got splashed. The pass was a most tremendous surprise to us, crossing a crumbling limestone ridge at 15,460 feet, a bare three hundred feet above one of the source streams of the Zayul River which we had mapped on our first trip to Shugden Gompa. From a little distance off, the path up to the Dama La from the west is quite invisible, and the ridge itself is so insignificant that we had dismissed it as nothing but an old lateral moraine, imagining the true side of the valley to lie several miles further back, out of sight in the clouds. The pass is in full view of the road from the Dzo La (the summer route), but we had failed altogether to spot it, and it was a comfort to us to realize that Bailey and Kingdon Ward had done exactly the same thing, and that we were not so blind as we had feared. It was the best camouflaged pass we had ever come across, and very hard to see whether one knew where to look or not.

Shortly after passing the Dama La, we joined our old path of fifteen months earlier, but now the valley seemed oddly deserted. The marmots were sunk in their winter sleep ; the tents, the yaks, and the sheep had gone ; and most of the birds had forsaken it, although one large and vociferous flock of choughs

flew overhead in the afternoon, and a pair of hoopoes kept us company for close on half an hour. It was a long march of nineteen miles to Shugden Gompa, and we did not arrive until seven at night, in blank darkness, having had some difficulty in finding the path from the lake up to the monastery. We had the same room as before, and it was fun to see our friend, the magistrate, again. What is more, we were able to do him proud by giving him all that remained of our presents, as he was the last official we were going to meet, and there was no point in hoarding any longer. Even so, it was only some twelve yards of red flannel which he received, but flannel is always popular in eastern Tibet, and he was far more delighted than we had dared to hope. Our four coolies went back to Pashö in the morning, and he set to work to rake up substitutes for the trip to the Trakge La at once, telling us that, as he had had no warning of our coming, we would have to wait there a day while they were collected. That was very satisfactory, for we wanted to measure the difference in the length of the Ngan Tso between summer and the cold season, anyway, and, though it was not a day's work by any means, it was going to take long enough to make it too late to start away. We found that it had shrunk at the south and by more than four hundred yards, and that, owing to the shortage of snow water (for it was freezing hard on the mountains), and the fact that the glaciers were no longer melting so fast, the streams which fed it were scarcely half their former size.

By the end of the first day up the Tsengo Chu, Lewa was feeling really ill with a bad closed abscess inside the angle of his jaw. We had left all our

instruments and medicines behind in Pashö, to save transport, and we did not relish the thought of operating without them, so we sent him back to the monastery where he could lie down quietly and rest. He had great faith in Tibetan surgery, and had already engaged the magistrate's services in Shugden Gompa for cupping—an interesting proceeding, but unhappily ineffective—the second night we stayed there. His cheeks were first slashed with a knife, and a yak-horn was applied to each, the magistrate sucking nobly through a small hole in the point, like an animated vacuum pump, and closing it, at his last gasp, by clapping on a piece of paper off the tip of his tongue. About half a pint of blood was drawn off, but, apart from that, the results were disappointing, and we came to the conclusion that nothing could be done before we got back to the baggage ; so Pulak was left alone to cook and run the establishment, doing the job remarkably well. The weather was becoming cold, and in the open Tsengo Chu Valley, with snow on all sides, we found it essential to have fires in camp, not only to cook hot food, but simply to keep warm. For this reason, on our way up to the Trakge La we had to make our last camp some fourteen miles south of the pass, because higher than that there was no fuel—or rather there was no place both flat enough and provided with bushes. It was at 14,400 feet, on a grassy space near the bank of the river ; and the next day a heavy snowstorm made it impossible to continue. We spent a good deal of the morning in arranging matters so that we could have a fire close to the front of the tent without either snow or smoke blowing in too freely, and the remainder of the time in writing



letters to be posted when we reached Assam. The storm was over by two o'clock, and we heard pheasants calling on the hills, though whether they were the big white ones we knew so well from the Salween, or some other kind, we had no means of telling, for we never saw them, and all pheasants sound very much the same in the distance. But for a short while we were adopted by three plump little birds, like diminutive quails in size and colouring, which skipped round the tent as if it belonged to them; and one in particular was so absurdly tame that it hopped about unconcernedly within six inches of John's feet.

October the 18th was a day of evil memory, and an unpleasantly long march of twenty-eight miles, working up to the Trakge La and returning to camp that night. Everything was covered in snow, and the one coolie who had been up before had trouble in finding the path (if, indeed, he found it at all), so that we made very poor progress, floundering in drifts and continually fording the Tsengo Chu. For the last three miles below the pass the floor of the valley was a tumbled mass of boulders, and here we left the ponies, in charge of a youth, and picked our way along as best and as fast as we could. It was a race to get to the top before the light went, and we succeeded so narrowly that if we had arrived five minutes later it would have been too late. The last thing we had to do was to take a boiling-point (the water boiled at less than 190° F.), and no sooner had we finished than a severe blizzard broke on us from the south, howling straight up the valley with nothing to break its force. The hard snow drove into our faces, making it very difficult to see, and the wind cut through our clothes as though they had been muslin,

and tattered at that. Luckily a solitary wolf had crossed the pass before us, leaving tracks as large as those of a small snow-leopard, and, as he obviously knew the way perfectly, we followed his trail until we could no longer pick it up in the darkness, heads bent and faces covered with ice. It was an extraordinary thing that the tracks remained clear to the end, in spite of the drifting snow ; but, when night fell and we lost our guide, life became rather a burden. We had left Pulak and the two coolies behind, for they were no good in any case, and were treading in our footsteps in blind trust ; and, practically blind ourselves, we stumbled on into the storm, through the maze of rocks and across half-frozen streams, falling into pot-holes, staggering, tripping, and growing steadily more dispirited, cold, and weary. After two hours of this we came to where we had left the ponies, and found their guardian faithful, like Casabianca, to his duty, but almost unable to move. To warm him up we despatched him with Pulak's mount to join the others, and went on alone as before. John climbed into the saddle, for the boulders had not done his leg any good and he was very exhausted. But the ponies would not face the blizzard without being led, and I stumbled in front for another hour until the snow stopped. Then I rode too, with slack reins, leaving the choice of path to my steed, while John kept close behind. It worked excellently, except that we became colder and more lifeless every minute ; and it seemed too good to be true when at length we saw torches flickering below us and heard the yells of two stout-hearted coolies who had come out as a search party. We were hardly two miles from the camp, and there were some rhododendron bushes

close by, so they built a huge fire and sustained us with tsamba. A few minutes later we were joined by Pulak and the rest, and, when he had thawed enough to speak, John said gravely that it was the first time he had ever enjoyed tsamba in his life. Finally, and led by our two Lucifers, we came home and rolled into bed, having been out for just over seventeen hours.

The following day we went right through to Shugden Gompa, being welcomed by a transformed Lewa, cured of his malady. He told us that after he had reached the monastery, the pain had increased to such a pitch that he had made up his mind to open the abscess himself. He took out his knife, and was on the point of thrusting it into his mouth when he was smartly seized by a pair of monks, who thought he was going to commit suicide. They gave him a lecture on the sin of self-murder anywhere, and especially in a holy place, and he said that it took him a long time to persuade them that he was innocent of the great offence. When they let go he had a second shot at it, and jabbed the knife in behind his left lower wisdom tooth, upon which a fountain of pus spurted out—a whole handful, so he said—and the torment left him. We gave him a present as a reward for his courage, on the lines of the shilling-a-tooth we had been paid as small boys, and were reluctantly forced to admit that he was a much braver man than we were.

Heading back to Pashö, a snowstorm came on in the late afternoon and the valley was wickedly cold and drear. To our surprise, however, we really enjoyed the night, all ten of us squeezing into a cave which was a scant five yards wide by three across,

and further complicated by two fires in the middle. The dzos and ponies crowded round the low entrance and kept out some of the snow, and, with the flames flickering on the dark rock walls, and the wind shrieking outside, the coolies told us a gruesome bed-time story of a merchant, on his way from Sangachö Dzong, who stopped in that very cave and was cut to pieces in the darkness by robbers eager for his gold. "When men came in the morning, the floor was thick with frozen blood; and it is said that the merchant's spirit, tied to earth by love of riches, hovers yet at the scene of his death, and moans with anguish of his loss." Certainly the smoke in the roof took on strange shapes, and the wind made enough noise for a dozen ghosts, but the story seemed to lose a good deal of its horror when it turned out that the event had taken place forty-six years ago; and, by the morning, we had to admit that the unhappy phantom, if it had ever haunted the cave, had now departed to a better land. There was a herd of five burhel on the hill above the camp, moving slowly down into a ravine, presumably for shelter. As soon as we came into view they started back again, but stopped at once, out of curiosity, when one of the men gave a piercing whistle, and they were so interested as to lose all fear. He told us that they were easy to kill provided there were two hunters in the game together, for one stayed in the open, whistling and playing about, while the other made a wide detour and shot them from the opposite side. Otherwise the journey was uneventful, until we reached Pashö on the evening of October the 21st, to find change and decay in all around we saw. Love had rejuvenated Nyima Töndrup like monkey glands, and, from what we

could gather he had spent the ten days we had been away as an eccentric millionaire, riding over the country in his best silk robe, attended by Sönam and Tsepa, and buying up all the local liquor for his evening parties. Red-eyed and shaky, he was well under the weather when we arrived ; our room was filthy ; the dinner which he had had all day to prepare was half an hour late ; and, when it was brought in, the soup was high, and the meat should have been buried full fathom five a week before. We consigned both to the village scavengers (the pigs, dogs, and hens), who are responsible for the sanitation of all Tibet and most of Further Asia ; and then his hour was come. Poor N. T ! We spoke to him at length, and Lewa carried on the good work in the kitchen when we had finished, but perhaps he felt that it was worth it. After all, he had had ten crowded days of glorious life, and those must surely have outweighed an hour's grilling. And, unlike Adam, he took all the blame himself.

One more day to collect transport and we forsook Pashö for Gochen, a large scattered village about two and a half miles east of Sangachö Dzong, and close to the junction of the Pashö and Zayul Rivers. It was good to see Sangachö Dzong again, perched on its ridge in the distance like a band of white foam on a breaking wave ; but the biggest excitement was when one of Kharndempa's servants, known as the Nyeba, hurried in soon after our arrival to say that he had been ordered by his master to ride night and day from Menkong to make sure of intercepting us at Gochen. He said that there was a letter and a present for us from Kharndempa ; and a letter and tin from India ; but, as he had left them all for safety in a house three

miles away, we had to wait for them until the following day. We could not imagine what the two latter could be, although we had a grim feeling that the tin was probably a biscuit tin of letters which John had sent off from the Ngagong Valley in 1935. It was wildly thrilling when all the things were brought to us early in the morning. First of all, Kharndempa wrote to thank us for the gun, and to say that somehow or other word had reached him that we were going to Menkong. He had been overjoyed to think that he was going to see us again, and everything had been prepared two days before Puka Trashi had turned up to give him our present and tell him that we were going through to Sangachö Dzong. It was a big disappointment, but the least he could do for us was to send the Nyeba to see that we obtained coolies to take us to Dening. He said too that he was going to remain three more years in Zayul, and he greatly hoped that we would come to see him once more before he returned to Lhasa. To help us through the Mishmi Hills, where food was scarce, he sent sixty pounds of flour, sixty pounds of butter, and sixty pounds of rice. We had no more worries, and the one fly in the ointment was that we could not see him to thank him in person. From India there was a very delightful note from W. H. Calvert, the Political Officer in Sadiya, to the effect that, if we should be coming out his way, he would be only too glad to help ; and the tin proved to be a magnificent gift from my aunt, Mrs. H. P. V. Townend, of pemmican, chocolate, and Oxo cubes, all very much appreciated. She had sent it up to Kharndempa by a henchman of his who knew us and who had gone to Calcutta to sell musk, in the faint chance that we might pass

somewhere within reach so that it could be forwarded to us ; and a pathetic story was attached to it. When the tin reached Kharndempa, he remembered that we had promised to send him a gun of sorts when we could, and, not being able to read the English address, he carefully opened a corner and peeped in, hoping for the best. He then wrapped it in cloth and sealed it up, so that no one but himself knew what it contained ; and it was lovely to know that he had got his weapon at last. That batch of presents and letters alone would have been enough to make it a day of days, but, to our joy, old Sera Geshi came along in the evening, brimming over with good-will and looking very well. We were deeply touched that he had taken the trouble, and contrite that we had not found time to go up to the monastery ourselves, as we should have done ; but we were so pleased to see him that all other feelings died a rapid death, and we had a long talk about what we had been doing in the year we had been apart, and how things had progressed in Sangachö Dzong. On leaving, he laid his hands on our heads and gave us a solemn blessing, for he said that he had not much longer to live and, while it was unlikely that he would ever see us again, he wanted all that was good to be about us for the rest of our lives. He was a grand old man, and I still hope that I may get back to the Monastery of the Magical Religion in time to show him that I have not forgotten my promise to bring the paints and decorations to his monks.

All the four possible ways to Shikathang had been done by now, and simply to vary the route back we turned down the Zayul River, which had been explored by Colonel Bailey in 1911—that being the

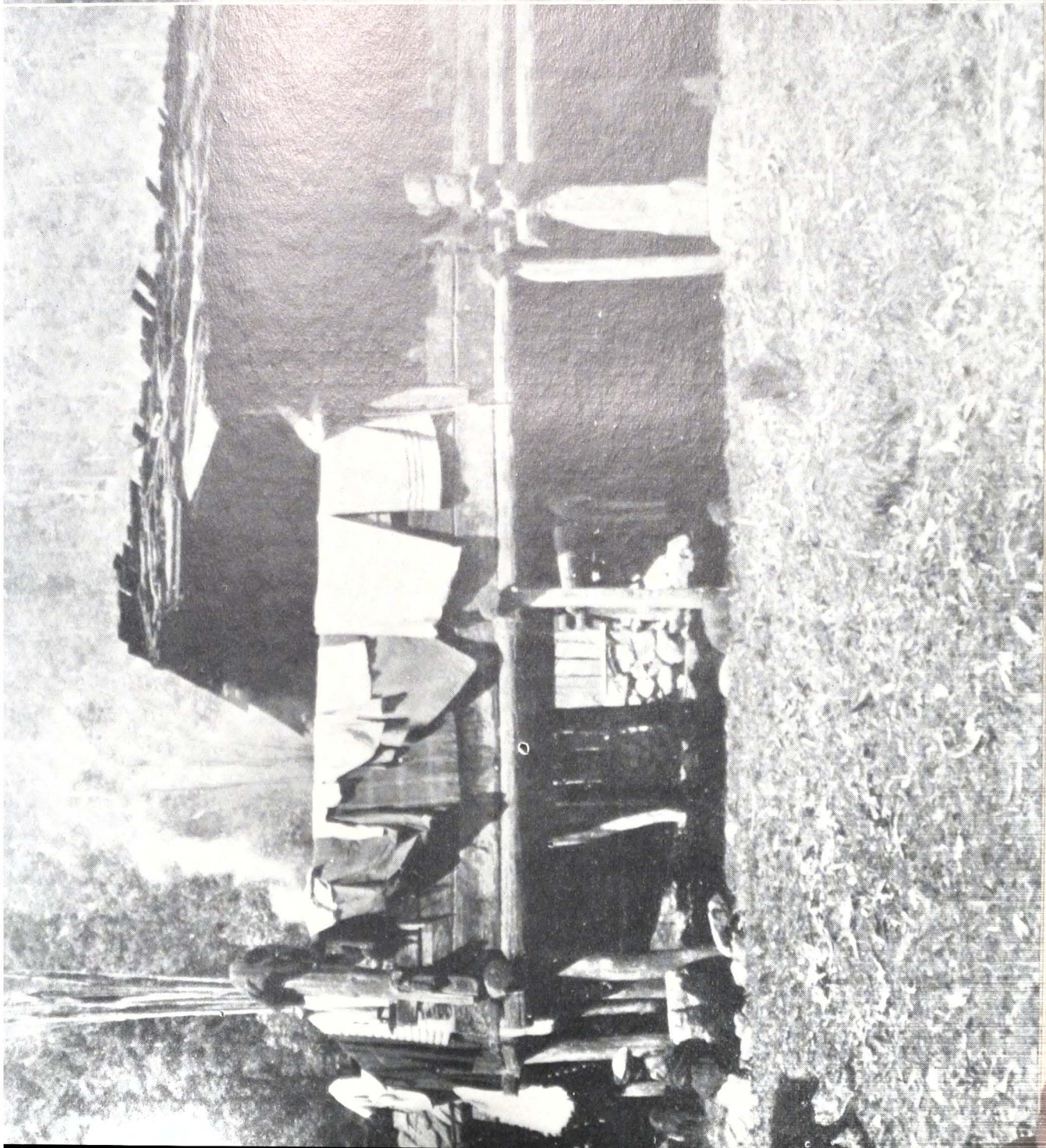
only path we did not know. The sides of the valley were very steep indeed, and thickly wooded with pines, birches, oaks, and hollies, so that work was sometimes difficult ; but it was deliciously quiet and restful to be riding along on a carpet of old pine needles instead of on the broken stony tracks of further north. The river must have changed its source many times since it took over the construction of the valley from the glaciers, and, at one point on the long march to Loma, we could see five distinct terraces, formed at different periods as the water moved steadily over to the east. It now seems to be swinging back again to the other side. The Nyeba caught us up before long, in great heart, with two bamboos of chang tied to his saddle bow, and his speech somewhat blurred. Every few hundred yards, in an absent-minded manner, he and his pony made short excursions and circuits into the forest off the path ; and, more than once, in a burst of good fellowship, he offered us a swig from his bottle. At length he departed in front of us, filling the air with beery melody, and, time and again, turning to yell that he would see to all arrangements at Loma. When we arrived, however, there was no sign of him (nor at any house on the way at which he might have stopped), and the mystery was not solved until the baggage arrived at ten o'clock that night. The coolies said that, hearing snores, they had investigated, and had found the Nyeba peacefully asleep under a rock some way off the path, with two empty bamboos beside him and no sign of the horse. The revivalist meeting was a failure, so they left him alone in his glory, to appear as we left Loma, pale and shattered, faint but pursuing. Nyima Töndrup's romance came to a tragic end that



morning, for Tsepa declared, without warning, that she did not like this part of the country and wished to return home to her own people in Thenthok Gompa. So we packed her off at once on a pony, with sufficient money to pay for her food, lodging, and transport on the way, thankful to be rid of her but fearing for the happiness of our jilted servant. She had lately developed into a confirmed hypochondriac, apparently incapable of doing the least amount of work without being laid low by a sick headache or worse ; but, whether this was the cause or not, we were relieved to see that Nyima Töndrup was undismayed by her loss. He said, philosophically, that she had been good company for the last few weeks, but that perhaps there might have been trouble, after all, when he presented her at his home.

Between Gochen and Drowa Gompa, the sides of the valley ran straight down to the river for almost the whole distance, and, in addition to Loma, we passed only one small village of three houses. There was no room for any more. Even Dzongutrathuk, with its lengthy name, was not a village, but merely an immensely tall, shallow cave, with an entrance fifty feet high by thirty wide. It stands on the bank of the river, which here runs through a deep gorge, and is so well protected from the weather that the sandy floor was as dry as a bone. In fact, there was nothing to cause us apprehension apart from a nest of wild bees hanging like a dark brown sack from the roof, and they fortunately treated us with every courtesy, as, indeed, we did them. From Gochen, at 10,745 feet, we had been dropping steadily, and, by the time we reached Drowa Gompa, we were already down to 8,140. Below that place, the bottom of the valley widened to three







Old coolies, and the coolies from the hills, amazed us by carrying loads of more than half a ton of weight, across the precipitous slopes of the Lohit Valley. (p. 287.)

Typical Zayuli house. At Treba, a missing balcony rail caused the melancholy incident of the pig. (p. 290.)

or four hundred yards in places, and there were a number of small settlements, as far down as Chikong, in which the houses were mostly of one squalid room only, built on very low piles or actually on ground level. Further down than Chikong, where the Zayul River runs nearly due west, they were infinitely better made, standing a full six feet from the earth and with excellent roofs ; and this was undoubtedly because the rainfall in this stretch is appreciably greater than higher up, though never very heavy. Drowa Gompa was in the jerry-built area, and, after hearing it spoken of, in Shikathang and Lepa, as one of the glories of Zayul and the parent of the other Drowa Gompa above Purtsang, it was a shock to find that it was a decayed little place of thirteen monks, who were all away in their own homes. The sole survivor was a caretaker to look after the house which is used by the Dzongpön on tour. Immediately north of the monastery, we crossed a large stream by a wooden toll bridge—the first we had seen in Tibet—at which traders are taxed on their way to Shikathang, at the rate of sixpence per pony, dzo, or coolie, and fourpence per donkey, loaded or unloaded. On the trip back they get through free. These merchants come down from Chamdo in December and January to buy up the rice and wheat crops of Zayul, and to meet Zayulis who have brought trade goods from Sadiya and Calcutta—things such as silks, cigarettes, matches, brocade, knives, and cotton cloth. They bring with them salt, jewellery, swords, and daggers, and during those months Shikathang is an important mart, although it is hard to realize it at other times of the year.

As we continued lower and lower, the bushes became

full of grasshoppers and praying mantises, and there were hundreds of butterflies, in spite of its being the very end of October. We saw several harmless snakes, too, and the tracks of bears, serow, musk-deer, and pig ; and, on the way to Dablha, there were many ripe lichees to be picked along the path. At one spot there were more than sixty ant-lion craters in a space of a yard and a half, and it seemed to us that either the ant-lions must be on very short commons, or else the supply of ants in that neighbourhood must be stupendous. However, it was not for us to criticize their domestic arrangements, even though ours were now as perfect as they could be ; for everywhere we had the choice of meat, milk, butter, wheat, barley, rice, buckwheat, maize, turnips, marrows, beans, chillies, millet, peaches, and pears. The blister-flies and sand-flies were like old cronies (in any case, there were not many), and, as for horse-flies, we saw never a one. The high light of the journey to Shikathang was at Treba. Our house there was new, on ten-foot piles ; but, contrary to usual custom, there was no railed balcony for threshing outside, nor anything better than a narrow landing stage, a yard wide at the top of the ladder. I wandered from the room after dinner to look at the night, and, forgetting all about this, stepped out of the door in the darkness and straight off the platform into the air. There was plenty of time as I fell to wonder how many bones were doomed to be broken, but luck was with me, in a way. I landed with a hideous squelch in a quagmire of semi-liquid manure, or, to be more accurate, on the back of the family hog, which was taking its pastime therein ; and the screams of this unhappy beast (not seriously hurt, I am glad to say) were the

first indication of the catastrophe to reach the populace. I clambered gloomily back again, receiving no sympathy from John, but only shouts of delighted laughter, and was scraped off by Lewa with a table knife; and, considering the fragrance of my late resting place, which clave to me closer than a brother, this unheeding mockery astounded me. Needless to say, it was presently exchanged for outspoken complaints, and vain requests for me to sleep in the open.

Another seven miles over a poor path for a mule-track, and we arrived in Shikathang on November the 1st. The march had been incredibly insectiferous, for there were swarms of butterflies, bees, wasps, great brown hornets with orange heads and tails, spiders, beetles, and flies; and collecting kept us so busy that we just failed to complete the mapping before it was too dark to see. We polished it off triumphantly the next morning—the last piece of field work of the journey—and settled into Kharn-dempa's house to wait for coolies to be rounded up. The Nyeba went up the Rontö on the 3rd to collect them, but it was not until the 20th that we were able to move on again. None the less, we were perfectly content to rest there for a while, with enough to keep us pleasantly occupied and no more, because (except for our sojourn in Nakshö Biru) we had been working eleven and twelve hours a day since May 1935, and, by the time we had come down the Zayul River, we were mentally rather tired, though physically in tremendous form.

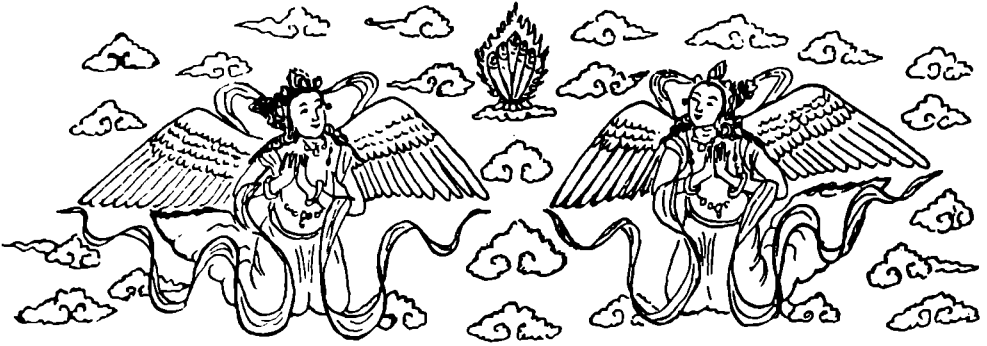
We passed a good deal of the time writing letters in the sun by the rope bridge, which was also being turned into a toll bridge by the addition of a small hut at the eastern end, where the tax collector could

roost. It was going to be a cheaper affair than that at Drowa Gompa, however, for the charge was six-pence per six loads or part of six loads, imposed on traders from Chamdo on their way up the Rongtö Valley. There was always something to see at the rope bridge, even if it was only a man sliding over ; but it was not every day that we had the chance of witnessing such an historic crossing as that of the praying mantis. He was a fine, well-built fellow some four and a half inches long, pale green in colour, and with a most insolent expression ; and we sat enthralled while he slowly crept along the rope, hanging upside down and constantly in jeopardy from a gusty wind which threatened every minute to tear him from his hold. How long the whole crossing had lasted remains sunk in mystery, but the last ten yards of the seventy took a good half-hour, and several years off our lives ; for each moment we expected somebody else to start over, and we knew that they would never wait for Percival to get clear. Weary though he was, when he reached our end he still had spirit enough to show fight, so we picked him up tenderly and put him into a convenient bush to recover. It would have been a sin to have collected and slain such a hero. We stayed to see him have a meal, but, although many luscious insects settled within an inch of his nose, he showed no interest in them, and we left him to his own devices.

Talking of eating, it is sad to record that once again we were discontented with our lot. For twenty months we had had a nightly plate of a singularly nauseating liquid, euphemistically called "soup" by the servants, and in Shikathang, our stomachs finally revolted, and we followed Augustus's praiseworthy

example. Soup was off the menu for good, but we wished we could say the same of chicken. Apart from the sheep at Gotsong, we seemed to have had little but stringy fowls from Lho Dzong on ; and our hearts sank when we considered the prospect of wading through another fifteen or twenty before coming to the fleshpots of Sadiya. It was only now that we found out, quite by accident, that the chickens in Zayul are kept for sacrificial purposes—as among the Khanungs and Mishmis—to ward off the devils of sickness, and induce the gods to effect cures. It is, of course, entirely contrary to Buddhist, or, for that matter, to Lamaist doctrine, and is one of the things the Tibetan Government are trying to stamp out by encouraging well-taught strangers to settle in the district.





ཤར་ཤར་ལྷོ་བུ།

*The crane jewel*

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“ The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep ” :

*The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.*

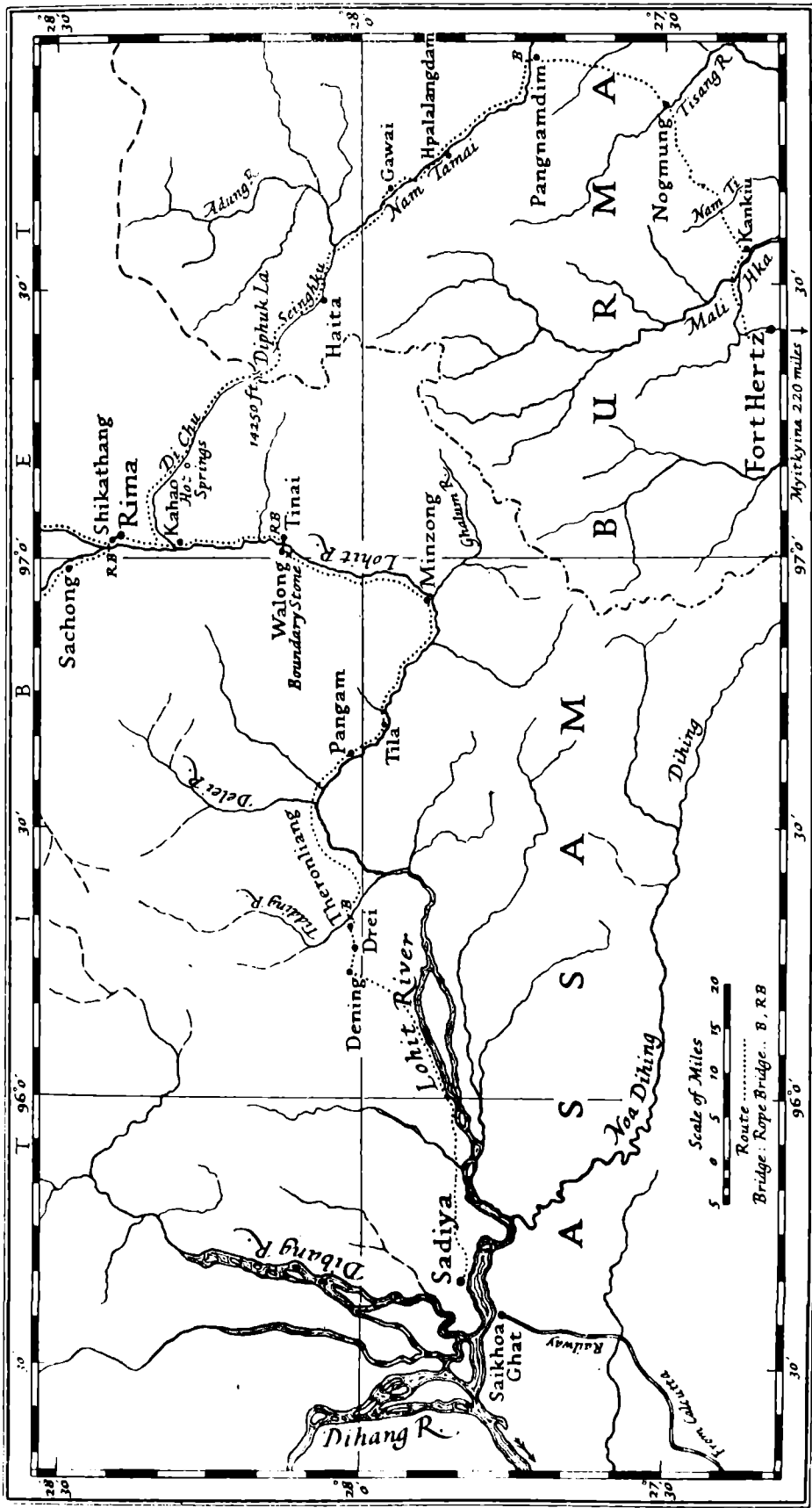
WE had a grave setback on November the 5th, for, in the early morning, a woman, remarkable more for her greed than for her intelligence, stole into the room between ours and the kitchen to take the honey from the swarm of wild bees, which had previously occupied it in peace. The bees were sleepy at that time, but by eight o'clock they had woken to a full realization of their loss, and very shortly after, life became insupportable anywhere near the house. We fought a spirited action for a couple of hours against overwhelming odds, with swats and smoke smudges ; but then we were forced to flee into the wilderness, where we remained until the evening, mournfully perching on the hill tops. The worst of it was that we had nothing whatever to do, as our evacuation had been in considerable disorder (headed, I regret to say, by me), and all our belongings had been abandoned—the

watchdog alone being taken, to save it from a terrible fate. At half-past five the bees began to go to bed, and we returned with caution, hoping that all might be over by the morning ; but it was not to be. The enemy showed no signs of having either forgiven or forgotten, and, without attempting to kick against the pricks, we deserted the ship again, and spent the day baking in a hot sun near the rope bridge. After being driven out for a third time, we had a woeful feeling that it was going to be a regular event, and this had a happy result which repaid me for some of the jeers I had suffered on falling into the dung-hill ; for on the fourth day after the Hegira, a single bee flew into the room, and buzzed viciously round John's head. With an oath, he packed up his goods and immediately removed into the country, till the shades of night were falling fast. The fact that it was the one solitary invader, and that I was able to have a good lunch in our own abode, gave me untold pleasure ; but that was because he had had the laugh on me twice lately, and the only genuine comfort was that the cause of our exile had been grievously, and very properly, stung each day.

There were commercial disputes even in Shikathang and the capitalist seemed to be getting the worst of them. A merchant arrived from the Mekong Valley, bringing salt in vast quantities to trade for rice. The rate which had been in use for years was one measure of salt to two of rice, but this year the Zayulis had gone on strike—very reasonably we thought. They said, “ No thanks ! We don't want your salt at that price. Formerly lots of you fellows have come down from the north, and we've been left with our houses full of salt. which we can't eat, and with very little rice, which is

our staple food down here. Now we've come to our senses, and we're not trading at anything less than even weights." So the merchant was stuck, in a state of fearful indecision whether to knuckle under and lose fifty per cent. of his profits, or to hang on in the hope of forcing the Zayulis to trade on better terms later. His difficulty was that, although there is no salt in Zayul and it all has to be bought, before long other merchants would turn up ; and, if some of them decided to take the new price, not only would he then be forced to follow suit, but, by returning home later in the year, he would have lost the best prices for the rice. As a desperate throw against fate, he went so far as to argue that we ought to snatch at the chance of buying up his stock ourselves, to barter with the Mishmis along our route.

On November the 11th, Trakba came in from Purtsang, having done the entire distance in two days, with a present of eggs, twenty packets of cigarettes, and a bamboo of chang. He handed over a letter from Calvert to say that the snake-box and our mail had been sent off at once, and then he sat down to make a full report of his journey from Shopando. It was a thrilling account : how he had been refused transport at Shari Dzong, as an unauthorized traveller, and had browbeaten the magistrate there until it was forthcoming : how his friends and relatives had begged him to remain with them in Purtsang for a while, and he had refused, saying that his lords had entrusted him with a mission of importance and that it was not for him to tarry by the way : how he had reached Sadiya with the precious box, and had been denied access to Calvert for four days by Lala Babu, the Tibetan interpreter : how, on the fourth day, he had



By permission of The Royal Geographical Society.

## The Lohit Valley route from Shikathang to Sadiya.



seized the box, declaring that he was going to see the Burra Sahib at all costs, upon which Lala Babu had seized it also : how Calvert had come out, hearing the noise of the struggle, and had immediately treated him with honour, taking possession of the goods : how the Burra Sahib had then given him as rations eighty pounds of rice, ninety pounds of lentils, and twenty packets of cigarettes : how he had gone to Calcutta to sell his musk for six and seven times its weight in silver, and had there visited Mrs. Townend and greeted her from us : how, on his return to Sadiya, Calvert had given him more rations to see him through the Mishmi Hills—not a detail was forgotten. He was just the same as ever, except that he had a new hat, and he took service with us again for as long as we were in Shikathang. It was very convenient having him, for we had paid off Pulak and his wife, as it appeared that Sönam was seven months pregnant, and we felt bound to warn her that the Lohit Valley path was enough to cause an ape to miscarry. Wearing a long full gown, like all Khampa women, we had imagined up till then that her plumpness was possibly the result of our healthy feeding ; and to hear that a happy event was due to take place in January came as something of a shock. Not all women are enduring as the nun (of pious memory), and it was better that they should leave us. In any case, after his flash of excellence on the way to the Trakge La, Pulak had become more or less useless, and Sönam had grown steadily more inefficient for the last month ; so they were no loss, and we saw them go without a tear.

When we had arrived in Shikathang, both the Zayul River and the Rongtö Chu (which is mainly glacial) had been running clear and green ; but, on the day

we first saw Trakba again, the latter was as milky as it is in the summer, while the Zayul River was unchanged. This must have been due to rain falling in the Rongtö Valley and washing the silt down from the banks, especially at the head of the Zayul Ngü Chu where there is much glacier mud ; and it clearly indicated the difference in climate between the two valleys. Most of the moisture which falls in the Rongtö is blocked by the mountain mass containing Lepa, so that the Zayul River Valley is comparatively dry.

The old A.D.C. had died on the road to Shikathang, and, rather to our dismay, the brother we had disliked so much in Shopando arrived to take his place as magistrate—the crop-haired man with the uneasy smile. We had expected a certain amount of bargaining with the coolies, when they were brought in, for it was a long way to go, and the usual wages did not apply ; but it was odd that, after being quite ready to go to Dening, they should suddenly say that they did not intend to take us more than five marches. The Nyeba was afraid to do anything, he said, so we counted him out, and wasted a couple of days in arguing with them to try to discover what was wrong. We were pretty certain that the trouble was brought about by the magistrate, so as to extort a heavy bribe from us if he induced the coolies to behave ; and this was confirmed when at length he came along as mediator, explaining that they were never meant to go further than the border of the Mishmi country, but that he might be able to persuade them to reconsider their decision. We produced Kharndempa's letter for him to read, which he did, aloud and correctly, until he came to the statement that forty men were to be provided for the journey right through

to Dening. For Dening he substituted Sati, the name of the first Mishmi village, and then I blessed the good Chamba Söpa, who had taught me the rudiments of reading, for we had him on toast. I pointed out the word Dening, and suggested that, although we did not for a moment think that he was deliberately misreading the Governor's official letters to his own advantage, it might look like that to others less well disposed in his favour. He agreed that it was a sad mistake, and apologized profusely, adding that under the circumstances there would be no more difficulty; that the coolies had not fully understood; and so on. We parted with mutual expressions of esteem, and, having arranged the wage question satisfactorily to both sides, we left Shikathang on November the 20th. Trakba's final act was to write a farewell letter to Kharndempa, who had now arrived in Sangachö Dzong.

In 1933 we had come up the left bank of the Lohit (or Rongme Chu) for the last three days to Shikathang, and so, for a change, we went down the other, crossing the river at the big rope bridge, and taking four days to cover the same distance. This had nothing to do with the path, which was a fairly respectable mule-track on that stretch, but was because of the gigantic loads the coolies were carrying—making it impossible to march more than eight miles at a time. There is just about enough food in the Lohit Valley to supply the Mishmis, without much over, and only an occasional chicken or a few eggs can be bought by travellers passing through. Accordingly our forty men had to take all their rations for more than a fortnight on top of our boxes, which, by themselves, were not light; and, though we did not realize it when we started, we



found that they must have been going along under something like a hundred and ten pounds each. This is a huge weight in the type of country we were later to go through, and it says a great deal for their strength and endurance that only two of them gave up, both on account of accidents.

Having crossed the rope bridge, there was a discussion of an hour as to who should take which loads, and then we made a short march of five and a half miles to a large village some six hundred feet above the river. We slept in the queerest little room, ten feet by six, which was entered by a hole in the side ; and the coolies celebrated their departure with chang, song, and dance, aided and abetted by the majority of the villagers. The men were very drunk and sang most hideously, while the women, being moderately sober, did extremely well, especially when they were performing on their own. Some things never fail to fill me with such a tremendous feeling of happiness that I could almost burst, no matter how often they are repeated. The blue-black sky was powdered with stars, flashing like essence of diamonds ; now and again there came a volley of barks, or a sleepy squeal from a pig ; and, in the glow of a dozen camp fires, we could see the dim figures of the revellers, laughing, shouting, or breaking into snatches of strange high-pitched songs. I met an old acquaintance that evening, in the shape of the more cadaverous of the two supposed slavers who had tried to come into Burma with Brooks Carrington and myself in 1933. He presented six turnips, and was so eager to tell us he had not been over the pass since then that we felt certain that he had.

Both sides of the valley were thickly wooded with

pinces, but, for the next three days, the path ran mostly through low bushes and grass ; and we were met by several parties of Mishmis on their way north to spend the winter in the Rongtö Valley, a number of whom could speak a little Assamese. They were very surprised to see us, and each band stopped us to have a chat and find out who we were. The women were dressed in dark red skirts reaching nearly to their ankles, and an abbreviated bodice which was fastened by one button between their breasts, and decorated with eight-anna pieces. They had large trumpet-shaped earrings of silver, coils of thick silver wire round their necks, and tiara-like bands of silver over their foreheads, embossed with a simple pattern of dots. And, as if that were not enough, they wore two heavy silver pins stuck through their top-knots. Mishmi men are also striking, in a quieter style, with open sleeveless jackets to below their buttocks, made in the same homespun cloth as the women's skirts, but with a strip of green and red embroidery round the edge ; a tiny apron ; a big fur bag hanging at one side by a two-inch leather strap, and a dao at the other in a half-scabbard. Often they carry a sword as well, with a plume of scarlet hair at the hilt. These were Miju Mishmis, from the eastern half of the Lohit, and, like their wives, they wore their hair in a bun on top, with a couple of yards of black cotton twisted around, as a primitive turban. The western clans (the Digaru, who extend right down to Dening and beyond ; and the Chulikata and Bebejiya from the Dibang), seem to be far more truculent, and nearly all their men wear cane helmets rather like " tin hats," which can easily defeat a sword. They were not for sale, for they take about ten days to make ; and one

whom I asked gave me to understand that, if he sold me his, it would give a certain enemy the very chance he had been wanting for years ; and then what good would the rupees be? The sight of the Mishmis reminded our coolies of an important matter which they had forgotten up till then, and they sent a deputation to ask if we would arrange for them to be given a letter of safe conduct by the Burra Sahib in Sadiya, to see them home when they left us. They confessed that last year a pig had somehow been killed by Zayulis in the Lohit Valley, and, as a result, the Mishmis had sent word that they would have no Tibetans going through their land from either direction. Hunting rights are very strictly preserved, and any poaching causes much bitterness; but we promised to tell Calvert about the tragedy, and they were quite contented.

We reached Walong, the last Tibetan village, on November the 23rd, on a bluff immediately opposite Tinai, the place where I had had my first experience of a rope bridge. Nothing much had happened on the way, except that I had twice met musk-hunters when I was some distance in front of the baggage. The first time, I went up a gulley to investigate a wisp of smoke, and came on a Zayuli sitting by a fire on the bank of a small stream. The rush of water deadened any other noise, and on seeing me standing beside him, he leapt for his ancient gun and kept me covered to the end of our conversation. It was my own fault, because I asked him how things were going and if he had much musk to show for his pains, which convinced him that I was a robber. The other time I met two, separately, coming along the path, and they were also afraid that I was going to attack them.

Number One was quick to tell me that he had a friend, with a musket, only a very short way back ; and his companion never let go of his knife until I had said good-bye and passed on. They were poor specimens to be so timorous, for they were all armed while I had nothing more than a light stick ; but it served to show that musk hunting was a pretty risky business in those parts. There was a large grove of citrus trees in Walong, with fruit like a cross between oranges and lemons. Although they were dropping off the branches with ripeness, they were too sour for eating ; and, hearing us grumbling about this, Lewa conceived the idea of cheering us up by putting shreds of the peel into our chicken pulao. It was so delicious that we congratulated him at length, feeling, even as we did so, that we were being rash ; and the following day about half our stew was peel, and the mess altogether uneatable. Enormous enthusiasm was Lewa's besetting sin, and, unless we wanted to have something *ad nauseam* it was a mistake ever to say how good we thought it.

Below Walong the track rapidly became bad, with many stretches over the great boulders in the river bed, and on most days there was cutting to be done before the coolies could get along with their loads. Thick forest, with many oaks and various kinds of fig trees, now came right down to the river ; interspersed with patches of tall reeds, and sometimes broken by clearings near the villages ; and an occasional view of a couple of miles to the next bend in the valley was all we could hope to get. Because of my depressing memories of the Lohit, we had not been looking forward to the trip from Shikathang ; but, as time went on, we discovered, to our surprise, that we

were really enjoying it. Between Walong and Theronliang we had no rain at all ; there was not a leech to be seen ; and, better than anything, we grew to have quite an affection for the Mishmi—a thing I would not have believed possible three years, or even three weeks, earlier. He has a bad reputation in India and Tibet, but, although he does misbehave himself from time to time, I believe his unpopularity is directly owing to the fact that he gives a bad impression of offhand surliness. People are then inclined to treat him abruptly, and at once he becomes obstructive. It is all because he is so admirably independent, and does not care a hoot for anyone, either European or Asiatic ; not in the flamboyant manner of the gentleman who sang “ I care for nobody ! No, not I,” but silently cynical, as if he weighed everybody in the balance (though with some humour) and found them very considerably wanting, but rather to be pitied than blamed. When you get to know him, however, he generally turns out to be extremely friendly, kind and willing—the Miju more so than the Digaru. We were met on the morning of November the 28th by Madanglam, the son of the chief of Tila, and a couple of retainers, who had been sent two marches out to welcome us. He was a smartly dressed, good-looking youth, with a long silver pipe and an old muzzle-loading hammer gun ; and when we left our lunch-halt at eleven-thirty, he offered to act as guide to John and me. John refused to have anything to do with the scheme, saying that he was feeling too old that day, so Madanglam and I set off together. In ordinary open country, a Mishmi does not move particularly fast, for he is small and takes shortish strides ; but, in his own mountainous forests he can

keep up exactly the same speed without apparent effort, being as sure-footed as a goat and very light and springy. We finished the last six miles in two hours, and even though I was half dead and running with sweat, while Madanglam was hardly even damp, I felt proud to have kept up with him at all. The only thing is, he could certainly have gone faster, I think, and I, just as certainly, could not. Three miles an hour does not sound like a record, but the average slope of the hills in the Lohit Valley is sixty degrees ; there are innumerable ravines to scramble in and out of, and many streams to ford ; and the narrow, broken slippery path climbs up and down, up and down, the whole way, overhung with branches and creepers, and often blocked by fallen trees. The coolies arrived at five o'clock, three and a half hours later.

The following evening we reached Tila, a village of ten bamboo-and-thatch huts, some five hundred feet above the river ; and night came on with no sign of Nyima Töndrup, who was at the end of the baggage line to discourage straggling. He turned up at last, weary, but grinning as ever, in the company of the Mishmi we had sent back to find out what had happened, and told us his story. Not long after the start of the march, one of the men had stopped to readjust the fastenings of his load, and Nyima Töndrup had stayed with him to hurry him on when all was ready. By the time they set off again, the others were far out of sight on the twisting path, and, as luck would have it, the coolie's foot slipped and he fell twenty feet down a cliff. By a miracle no bones were broken, but he was badly bruised and, with no one to help, it took them more than an hour to get his box on to the road, as their rope was not long

enough to reach down from the top. The coolie could not continue without a rest, so Nyima Töndrup told him to stay where he was till the morning, took the burden on himself, and came staggering after us over a difficult path he had never seen before and much of which was in darkness. It was no wonder he was late. That he arrived at all was amazing, for he was getting on in years and had long been superannuated from coolie work; but when the Mishmi found him and relieved him of the box, he was still plodding along only a quarter of a mile from Tila. The injured porter came in before we left, hobbling on two sticks, and looking so aged that we heartlessly christened him "Ninety-nine," because John said that he expected him to quaver, "Oi be nointy-noine coom Michaelmas, young man," at any moment. He was doubled up with stiffness, and for the next few days we took on a substitute from Tila—a Miju, with the most tremendously developed legs we had ever dreamt possible.

Tila was the first Mishmi village we had seen at really close quarters, and what struck us at once was the amount of Tibetan influence to be seen everywhere. The Mishmis are nominally animists, and in the middle there was a small chorten, surrounded by a clump of prayer flags, and the women were wearing silver charm-boxes. As for the men, we had not seen many between Walong and Tila, but below that, where there are many villages, jackets of Tibetan cloth were at least as common as those of Mishmi homespun, and Tibetan swords and tinder-boxes were very much in vogue. More of them could speak Zayuli than Assamese, and it is perhaps only natural that they should be leaning towards Tibet

rather than India ; for, east of Theronliang, their country is Unadministered (though it actually belongs to Assam) and it is the rarest event for an Englishman to enter it, while Tibetans pass through as a matter of course every year. Furthermore, the British lost prestige heavily at the beginning of the Great War, when, having built a road up the Lohit Valley almost to the Tibetan frontier, in order to administer the whole of the eastern Mishmi Hills, they then withdrew to Theronliang on the grounds of retrenchment, and allowed the road to decay. And finally, Mishmis are made welcome in the Rongtö Valley during the winter, and given employment (largely as basket makers), whereas the tea gardens in Assam now scarcely engage any at all.

From Tila to Pangam, almost the whole of the lower hills had been cleared and cultivated with mountain rice, maize, buckwheat, millet, and, in some places, potatoes, peas, and opium ; and until we came to these open spaces, we had no idea of what a magnificent country we were in—a land of steep grassy slopes, deep valleys, cliffs, ravines, torrents, waterfalls, small fields at incredible angles, little villages set high up on shoulders, and, once out of the village boundaries, sweep after sweep of dense forest up to ten thousand feet above the river. We saw my old friend Jaglum at Pangam, and he offered to come along to Dening to see that we had no trouble on the way ; but he was relieved when we told him not to bother, and in the end he compromised by walking with us for the first two miles and sending one of his men, with a long ceremonial spear, for the next three, so that all honour was done us. Up till now we had been moving like the patriarchs, with



one sheep and a goat, the property of the coolies, who intended to sell them in Sadiya. In less than a day, however, our flock vanished like snow ; for in the evening the sheep was executed for our sustenance (we gave a larger sum than they would have received in Assam), and in the morning the goat, now bereft and lonely was sold to a Mishmi on the path for four rupees. After great fumbling in the depths of his bag, he was two annas short, and we earned his undying gratitude by giving them to him as a token of appreciation.

Below Pangam the track ran mostly through forest again ; and, on December the 4th, we crossed the Tidding River by a new, and very good, suspension bridge, and reached the bungalow at Theronliang. It contained beds, a bathroom, tables, china plates, and oil lamps, and there were oranges growing in the garden ; but the greatest thrill of all was to discover that Calvert had left four pints of beer with the caretaker, in case we came back to India that way. Decorations have been given for many lesser acts, and, there being about six huts and a telephone at Theronliang, we went along to ring him up and tell him so. He was away on tour, and we were answered by Mr. Walker, the Assistant Political Officer, who very kindly said that he would bring a car to meet us at Dening on the 6th, and would order some sort of conveyance for the baggage and servants. The beer was the nearest approach to nectar I ever expect to taste (one bottle was sufficient to put us at the top of our form), and we spent the rest of the day in easy chairs reading "Punches" of from 1920 to 1927, and marvelling at the ugliness of female dress at that period.

The weather broke as we left Theronliang, and the rain came down in sheets, soaking us to the skin in a second or two. With a bungalow waiting for us at the end, however, it did not matter in the least, and we felt only gratitude that it had held off for so long. There is a mule-track winding up to the Tidding Saddle (6,000 feet high, or 4,070 feet above Theronliang) and down to Drei the other side—a total of eleven miles—but we all chose the Mishmi path of about six miles, which runs practically straight up the hill ; and at that low altitude climbing was so little effort that we got to the top, without hurrying, in one and three-quarter hours—not ten minutes ahead of the coolies, who had started barely a quarter of an hour before us. The rain ruined what is usually a grand view from the Saddle across the plains of Assam, with rivers and streams meandering through the jungle ; and, without wasting time, we dropped quickly down to Drei, where we sat, stripped to the waist, in front of a roaring fire, while a terrific thunderstorm raged and crashed overhead. It was no more than a flash in the pan, though, for the morning was bright and sunny when we went down to Dening on the last stage of our journey. Not only Walker, but Captain G. H. W. Bond, the Assistant Commandant, had come up, and they had brought a lavish amount of food, more beer, our mail, and all the news of the last two years with them. They were rather taken aback when we told them we knew nothing, except that the King had died, but they rallied magnificently, and emulating the Gya Lam, the bungalow sounded like Reuter's, with information from all over the world being flung from one to the other. We paid off the coolies, who had served us faithfully, in spite of

dissensions at Shikathang ; and, on December the 7th, John engaged a barber to remove his beard, and we motored the remaining forty-seven miles to Sadiya. The servants came wheezing and clattering behind in the local bus, some fifteen years past its prime, with every spare nook among the boxes filled with our ex-coolies—or as many of them as could get on board.

In addition to being the chief city of the Sadiya Frontier Tract, Sadiya's one claim to fame is that each year, in the rains, it stands in imminent danger of being swept away by the flooded Lohit, which is now within a few yards of the end of the bazaar. Otherwise it is an uninteresting little place with some tin-roofed native shops, barracks for the Assam Rifles, a tiny hospital, a golf course, and houses for the twelve Europeans who are stationed there. It is not the place, but the people, however, which make or mar one's enjoyment ; and they gave us the most glorious time for nearly a fortnight. George Bond insisted on putting us up, although our clothes and bedding were so impregnated with the smell of rancid butter and smoke that it was an even more noble gesture than appears at first sight ; and whenever we wanted it, he lent us his fishing tackle to try for mahseer in the Dibang. We went out several times, but there was only one day on which we ought to have caught fish, and then I spoilt our chances by trying to be too clever. The best place was a deep pool at the junction of the river with a large stream, and, as we drifted down in a dug-out canoe, I remembered how I had been taught to cast from one of these at Nawng Hkai in 1933. I stood up, made an uncertain movement with the rod, and vanished into the green depths with a mighty splash, only just failing to wreck the canoe.

My last sight was of John, clinging frantically to the sides, with a face of mingled delight and apprehension. We flailed the water till the evening out of sheer optimism, but every fish had been scared for miles, and we caught nothing but snags on the bed of the river, and, in my case, a severe cold in the nose.

Normally, our daily exercise was in the hands of Amy, the small daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Gloria, who adopted us as temporary possessions, and entertained us unflaggingly with everything from elementary badminton to a peculiarly energetic form of hide-and-seek ; but we did play some golf (being more of a handicap than a help to our luckless partners), with Colonel Wright, the Commandant, George Bond, and Calvert. We were really pleased that the latter was able to spend three or four days in Sadiya in between tours, for we had been looking forward to meeting him ever since we had known that we were to come out through Assam, and it gave us the chance of trying to thank him for all he had done for us. Having drinks one evening with Colonel and Mrs. Wright, we met Leslie Lithgow, a tea-planter from Dum Dum, who insisted on our spending Christmas with him ; so that was our next harbour until after Boxing Day. He treated us like old and disreputable acquaintances from the start, and, as in Sadiya, we had so many invitations, and were shown so many kindnesses, that our heads were in a whirl. So much so, in fact, that my clearest memory of Dum Dum is of the children's party at the club. Father Christmas was to appear in a chariot drawn by two bullocks (reindeer being scarce at that time), and Leslie was deputed to give it a trial run. He got in, full of *joie de vivre*, waved his whip, and the next thing

we knew was that the bullocks were careering over the ground at a mad gallop, to the frantic yells of their would-be driver. A sudden swerve, and he shot out through the back, chair and all, making the trial the biggest success of the party. We felt he had no cause for complaint, and tried to persuade Father Christmas to repeat the performance, for the benefit of the children, but he was adamant, and was eventually dragged into place by man-power.

Before continuing on our way to Calcutta, we stopped a night at Jorhat with J. H. Crace, who had been Political Officer in Sadiya when I went through with Kingdon Ward. Mrs. Crace was in England at the time, and I am deeply thankful that we did go up to see him, even though it was only for a few hours. We must have been among the last of his friends to visit him before he died, very suddenly, shortly afterwards.

So our journey of twenty-two months, of which we had spent eighteen in Tibet, was finished. We had covered rather less than three thousand miles in that country, most of it entirely unexplored until then, but we had failed to reach our main objective, the source of the Salween. It is a comfort to think that it still remains to be found by someone, and I hope very much that one of these days I may have the good fortune to start out again on the same quest, with the three who between them made it possible for us to do as much as we did : Lewa, Nyima Töndrup, and—best of good companions—John Hanbury-Tracy, my bearded pard.

THE END

## APPENDIX

This is not in any way intended to be complete, and I have omitted insects altogether, as being of insufficient general interest ; but, having spared " my public " all but one Latin name in the book itself, it may be that some will wish to know more exactly what the various creatures were. Hence this appendix on the more exciting of the animals, birds, reptiles and flowers.

(i) *Mammals Recorded.*

Barking Deer	..	..	<i>Muntiacus sp.</i>
Bear, Himalayan	..	..	<i>Selenarctos tibetanus.</i>
Bison	..	..	<i>Bibos gaurus.</i>
Burhel	..	..	<i>Pseudois nayaur.</i>
Gibbon	..	..	<i>Hylobates hoolock.</i>
Goral	..	..	<i>Nemorhaedus sp.</i>
Jungle Pig	..	..	<i>Sus cristatus.</i>
Langur	..	..	<i>Pithecus pyrrhus.</i>
Leopard	..	..	<i>Panthera pardus fusca.</i>
Leopard, Snow	..	..	<i>Uncia uncia.</i>
Macaque	..	..	<i>Macaca mulatta mulatta ; M. nemestrina.</i>
Marmot	..	..	<i>Arctomys.</i>
Musk Deer	..	..	<i>Moschus moschferus.</i>
Panther	..	..	<i>Panthera pardus fusca.</i>
Pygmy Hare	..	..	<i>Ochotona roylei.</i>
Saing	..	..	<i>Bibos banteng birmanicus.</i>
Sambur	..	..	<i>Rusa unicolor equinus.</i>
Serow	..	..	<i>Capricornis sumatraensis.</i>
Stoat	..	..	<i>Mustela sibirica.</i>
Takin	..	..	<i>Budorcas taxicolor.</i>
Wolf (Trakge La)	..	..	<i>Canis lupus laniger.</i>
Yak	..	..	<i>Bos grunniens.</i>

(ii) *Birds Recorded.*

Chough (Yellow-billed) ..	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus.</i>
Hoopoe .. .. .	<i>Upupa epops.</i>
Hornbill .. .. .	<i>Dichoceros bicornis.</i>
Ibis-bill .. .. .	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersi.</i>
Jungle Fowl .. .. .	<i>Gallus bankiva robinsoni.</i>
Partridge (Salween Valley)	<i>Perdix hodgsoniae.</i>
Partridge (Thamtsa La) ..	<i>Tetraophasis szechenyii.</i>
Pea fowl .. .. .	<i>Pavo muticus.</i>
Pheasant (Blood) .. .. .	<i>Ithaginis cruentus geoffroyi.</i>
Pheasant (White) .. .. .	<i>Crossoptilon crossoptilon.</i>

(iii) *Fish Recorded.*

Mahseer (Upper Burma) ..	<i>Barbus sp.</i>
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(iv) *Reptiles and Amphibia.*

Collected in the Nam Tamai Valley :—

*Snakes.*

Boulenger's Keelback ..	<i>N. nuchalis.</i>
Chinese Keelback ..	<i>N. percarinata.</i>
Collared Snake .. .. .	<i>Sibynophis collaris.</i>
Cope's Coluber .. .. .	<i>E. taeniura.</i>
Hooded Grass-Snake ..	<i>Pseudoxenodon macrops.</i>
Jerdon's Pit-Viper ..	<i>T. jerdoni.</i>
Jerdon's Smooth-Snake ..	<i>Ablabes frenatus.</i>
Mandarin Snake .. .. .	<i>Elaphe mandarina.</i>
Mountain Pit-Viper ..	<i>Trimeresurus monticola.</i>
Orange-collared Keelback	<i>N. himalayana.</i>
Stejneger's Pit-Viper ..	<i>T. Stejnegeri.</i>
Venning's Keelback ..	<i>Natrix venningi.</i>

Collected in Tibet :—

Cope's Coluber (Situkha)	
Cope's Coluber (Zayul River Valley) .. .. .	<i>Elaphe taeniura.</i>
Halys Pit-Viper .. .. .	<i>Agkistrodon halys.</i>
Mountain Pit-Viper ..	<i>Trimeresurus monticola.</i>

Collected in the Nam Tamai Valley :—

*Lizards.*

*Hemidactylus bowringi*; *Calotes jerdoni*; *Japalura kaulbacki* sp. nov.; *Lygosoma indicum*.

*Frogs.*

*Rana livida*, *R. afghana*, *R. himalayana*, *R. alticola*; *Megophrys feae*.

(v) Among the flowers collected were the following :—

AT LEPA : the pale mauve orchid, *Pleione scopulorum*; *Primula melanodonta*.

AT LHO DZONG : *Orchis hetagirea*; *Iris tigridia*, *I. goniocarpa*; *Lancea tibetica*; *Scopolia lurida*; *Primula tibetica*, *P. articulata*, var. nov.; *Incarvillea younghusbandii*; *Rhododendron vellereum*, *R. cephalanthoides*, *R. paludosum*.

AT SANGÖNANG : *Salweenia wardii*.

AT SHARI DZONG : *Cypripedium tibeticum*; *Iris potaninii*; *Microula sikkimensis*; *Cynoglossum*; *Didissandra grandis*; *Ajuga ovalifolia*; *Primula sikkimensis*, *P. vittata*, *P. geminifera*; *Rhododendron aganniphum*, *R. cephalanthoides*.

AT DZONGRA : *Primula advena*; *Lagotis*.

AT WA : *Meconopsis integrifolia*.

AT RANGBU GOMPA : *Dracocephalum tanguticum*.

AT JEPÄ : *Boerhaavia*.

AT GOTSÖNG : *Primula crispata*.





