

ASIA

SIBERIAN WAR CLOUD
TIBETAN PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
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AIRPLANE FROM THE U.S.S.R.
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BROTHER MALAYS

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This Year of Reckoning — 1942

TIBETAN PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Here Begins the Adventurous But True Tale of Seven Days on the Trail to the Yellow River Crossing, Where Lamas and Laymen Meet to Travel in Caravan on the Three Months' Journey to Holy Lhasa—The Greatest Event in the Life of Every Tibetan, As Is the Mecca Pilgrimage to the Devout Muslim

By ROBERT B. EKVALL

THE waters of northeast Tibet, rising in a thousand springs and rivulets, flow eastward into the basins of the Yellow and Yangtze rivers and so to the waiting sea. But the pilgrim tide of the land, welling from a thousand villages and encampments, flows strongly upward, southward and westward across the high passes and bleak plateaus of the Bod—high Bod—until it finds its rest and fulfillment in the holy city of Lhasa—the place of gods—where the rock and walls of the Potala mark the end of the pilgrim trail.

The pilgrimage to Lhasa—place of gods, prostrations and offerings—is the supreme fact and event in the life of the people of northeast Tibet. It crowns religious aspiration and endeavor with one final effort and a tangible benediction and fulfillment as the pilgrim, at the end of the three months' journey, first sights the golden roofs of the Potala, finds his way with prayers and prostrations to every holy place and makes the offering of a lifetime at the shrine of Jo-wo—the holiest of all.

It is also the trade opportunity of a lifetime. In Lhasa British broadcloth, Indian cottons, Lhasa *pulu*, coral, amber and the highly prized, beautifully marked leopard skins of the Indian jungle are to be bought at what seem like bargain prices to the nomads of the north. Transportation over the trail either going or returning costs nothing since the yak of the caravan live off the country. Since food stocks are taken to

last the round trip, half of the baggage animals can carry goods on the way back. No pilgrim is so poor that he does not set aside a sum for trade even though it may lessen the total of his offerings. Indeed, Lhasa, with its shrines and shops, offers a unique battleground for the conflict of the two outstanding interests of Tibetan life—trade and religion.

And where neither religion nor trade furnishes the ultimate motive the pilgrimage is yet the final adventure of life. Young monks bored with lamasery routine, or rebellious against the discipline of some stern higher monk, wipe out all scores by starting for Lhasa with small packs on their backs and the comforting assurance, as they beg their way, that no Tibetan will let a pilgrim starve. Even girls in their teens or early twenties may run away from home and work secure in the knowledge that when they come back a year later, with all the thrills of a lifetime packed into twelve months, they will not only be received, but will have achieved the status of heroines in the home community.

There are a score or more trysting places in northeast Tibet where community and tribal pilgrim bands meet and coalesce until all merge into the great pilgrim caravan that once a year follows the Lhasa trail, but one of the most important rendezvous is at the crossing of the Yellow River some distance below its upper knee at Soghtsong. Here it is that the caravan finally becomes organized under the leadership of whatever noteworthy lama or chief is making the pilgrimage that year. Here it is that the friends and relatives who have escorted the pilgrims so far say the last farewells and, having seen them safely over the river, turn homeward, and the caravan, now a homogenous unit, goes on.

ROBERT B. EKVALL has been spending several months in Hong Kong, but will soon return to his missionary post at Takhsang Lhamo, in northeastern Tibet, where he has been stationed for some years.

During years spent among the tent dwellers of Amdo—the northeastern district of Tibet—opportunity and incentive have a number of times seemed about to set me too on the pilgrim trail, at least as far as the crossing of the river, for year after year I said good-by to many friends that I well might have escorted to that rendezvous, but always something intervened. This year such a trip was farthest from my thoughts until Gomchok, between sips of an interminable tea drinking, made the suggestion that we go together to give a proper send-off to many mutual friends.

Gomchok, my host in the Samtsa encampments, is a monk who broke his monkish vows in a love affair with the Ngawa queen and, though still wearing priestly robes, has been a man of the world for over twenty years. He has been the steward of the Gurdu Lamasery, prime minister for the king of Ngawa, then on his own as a trader, and now is the acknowledged leader of a dozen families who have rebelled from under the control of the Gurdu Lamasery and, though moving with the Samtsa tribe, seem on their way to becoming the nucleus of a new tribe under his leadership.

Now, his dark face suddenly alight with a bright new thought and plan, he brought forward reasons for what at first had been a casual suggestion.

"I have to escort the Tha-la lama to the crossing and see him safely over, so I must go," he said. "But you come too. We'll take five or six of the best rifles in the encampment and have a good time. You are the foreigner. You have your collapsible boat, and we'll show all the pilgrims who gather from ten or more tribes how to cross the Yellow River without their old ferry. And then, coming back, we'll come through that rough country at the source of the Tao River where there are wild sheep, deer and maybe even wapiti. And everywhere the meadows are thick with flowers."

My face must have shown something of the various objections rising in my mind; for he went on more insistently: "Think of all the friends we'll meet. The Tawng Lowng chief is heading the caravan this year and you should send him off. He is a friend. Yes, I know he has never cared much for the foreigner. He is afraid of your religion. But take your boat and show him your worth. Then, too, you can take pictures. We'll go, what?"

He had utterly persuaded himself, but, half intoxicated with the flow of his own eloquence—for was he not a famous orator—went on to climax his argument and, incidentally, win my

agreement. "And think of all the people you can preach to. Not just a few as in this encampment, but hundreds. We'll put the lama's tent beside our tent. He will chant and beat his drum. You will sing and preach. The pilgrims will come and listen to you, and you can tell them they do not need to go on pilgrimage but to believe your religion. The lama will chant and go on pilgrimage but he will have to trust to your boat to get across the river although he doesn't trust your faith."

The keen sense of the incongruous, together with the odd mixture of reverence and a cynical tendency to make up for that reverence by indulging in the most irreverent jibes and jokes which is common to most Tibetans, got the better of even Gomchok's oratory and he laughed till the tears came at the pictures his own words called up.

Then he went on to the final point: "Maybe, though, your boat is no good, and you couldn't cross the river. In which case I have been boasting of you without good reason. Yes, if that is the case, perhaps you had better stay at home. That would be best if you are afraid of the river or afraid to preach your religion to pilgrims when the lama can argue you down."

That dare was the last word in Tibetan argument, and Gomchok's eyes, serious, friendly, skeptical and somewhat reckless, searched my face for my answer.

So it was that I came to spend seven days on the pilgrim trail.

The First Day

We were to start at dawn, but Tibetan travel, even that of a holy lama on pilgrimage, seldom keeps to schedule. Just the slipping of the hobble anklet on one of the lama's mounts, but that meant that a horse, naturally wild, defied every attempt to catch him and finally vanished in the distance, the riders of the encampment straggling in to report their failure. Gomchok in sheer chagrin—for had he not slyly hinted that I should have to get up early to travel with his lama and himself—alternately prayed savagely and cursed with remarkable inclusiveness and invention as he directed operations.

He finally ordered a start and we moved off into the heat waves that dance across the steppe at noon of a cloudless day. He and two others would stay over and see whether they could track and catch the horse, for they could easily catch up to the slow moving yak caravan on the second day.

As we headed toward the nearest range of

mountains, whistling to the oxen and retying loads as a matter of course (always there are some loads that have to be roped), it was time to take a mental roll-call of the party. The "kettle" of pilgrims numbered only four; the lama, two young priests as servants, and a little acolyte of twelve, quite pop-eyed with the thrill of really starting for Lhasa, and also carefully keeping as far away from me as the exigencies of the trail would permit, catching his breath with a half-choking gasp whenever my horse came near his, for he had been solemnly assured by the wags of the party that I would cut off his ears at the first favorable opportunity.

The lama was smiling and utterly friendly but rather handicapped when it came to making conversation, for he had taken a vow that imposed silence all the hours that he traveled toward Lhasa. That meant that in camp he could talk but on the trail could only make signs and talk without opening his lips. It is assumed linguistically that speech is impossible under such circumstances yet the Tibetans often get on quite well keeping a vow and cheating too.

Of our own kettle three of the five rifles Gomchok had promised rode with us; men who took all the routine of travel as a picnic. Gomchok not being due until the next day, the acting leader was seventy-year-old A-ku Jamtso, who had come for the pure fun of the trip. He had the face of a Buddhist saint, the mind and utterance of a casuist, but the irrepressible soul of a born wit and comedian. Much of that, however, was in abeyance on that first day as he solemnly gave advice to the lama's men.

My Chinese servant and myself completed the roll of kettle mates.

We sighted riders across the plain but it was assumed that they were the herders of the Tawng Lowng chief's party which we were to meet the next day at the Medicine Spring. We also saw gazelle but, though we were meatless, the etiquette of escorting pilgrims forbade hunting, and early in the afternoon we turned into the mountains, leaving the plain and sunshine for a narrow valley and low hanging clouds that soon brought rain, which the Tibetans, however, serenely ignored, disdaining even to untie their felt raincoats. Camp was made in that same downpour but, once the tents were up and all the loads stacked, the rain too gave it up, though the night was thick and black as we scattered to sleeping places on the edge of camp, exhorting one and all to call each other whenever waking. The lama chanted, beating his drum and blowing his horn, far into the night, while we hallooed to one another around the rim of camp to keep

hypothetical or real—one never really knows—thieves away. So ended the first day on the pilgrim trail.

The Second Day

We broke camp and moved up the valley under the constant threat of rain that never came, though the heavy clouds pressed close to the pass and the mountainsides were dark patterns of dull green with sullen gray where scree and outcroppings of rock broke through. Yet by the time we reached the Medicine Springs the sky was cloudlessly blue from one far horizon to the other. The Yellow River was not far away and the plain or open valley of its course, marked by benches or terraces of different levels, showed where our route lay.

It was still early in the forenoon and there was much argument as to whether we should make camp or wait and see whether the Tawng Lowng chief's caravan would really stop or go on. But the arrival of his advance guard settled all doubts and we made camp, easily finishing in time to help our friends in the big caravan get settled.

The pilgrim party consisted of twenty-seven kettles with an aggregate of nearly five hundred yak. That made one big circle of tents. In addition to that there were three hundred horsemen of the chief's tribe who had come as escort to the crossing of the Yellow River. Cattle and horses scattered to graze, and all throughout a cloudless afternoon friends and acquaintances wandered from tent to tent and campfire to campfire retailing news, gossip and endless conjecture about the sum of things under the sun. One item of news was that the runaway horse had been caught the day before by the chief's herders and the lama need no longer worry.

"Yes, days like this the pilgrim trail to Lhasa is one long picnic," pronounced old A-ku Jamtso as we drank bowl after bowl of tea and watched it all from the door of our tent. "But then think when it rains for ten days without a let-up on the upper plateau and there is no more dry fuel anywhere. Then there is bitterness that is real and hard to swallow."

Much of the time was taken up in candid discussion of the size of the presents we were each giving to our friends the pilgrims, from the Tawng Lowng chief on down. Of course prestige and "face" are considerations, but in truth there is little of pure helpfulness involved, for the pilgrim recipient is duty bound to bring back a gift from Lhasa that is at least the full value of what he receives. Indeed somewhat more than

equal measure is expected; for after all there is the interest that would accrue in twelve months' time. So we discussed our prospective investments, making visit after visit to the firesides of our pilgrim friends. But by general agreement we deferred our visit to the tent of the chief until Gomchok should come to introduce his protégé the lama to the 'Tawng Lowng chief and make suitable oration for us all.

A visit to the Medicine Spring showed it to rise in an outcropping of yellowish sandstone that looked rather odd in a perfectly flat and marshlike plain. To the pilgrims gathered around, it was peculiarly holy, having been called into existence two hundred years ago by a famous lama. To me the brown bubbling waters were fizzy and tasting strongly and unmistakably of iron with something else I could not identify.

To my kettle mates my known skepticism about all things holy was such a matter of course that they were greatly surprised that I drank any of the water, and when I ventured the opinion that the waters were undoubtedly beneficial to one's internal economy that pronouncement started a regular stampede to the spring where they all drank largely and then came back to sit around the fire and compare notes as to how it affected them, all expecting immediate and astonishingly beneficial results. From what did happen I rather think that the mineral I could not identify was Epsom salts.

Near sunset Gomchok arrived with a long tale of hours of fruitless search and the equally baffling results of consulting various oracles as to the horse's whereabouts. None had agreed and, consigning one after another to perdition, they had yet consulted all they could reach. Now, with the knowledge that the chief's herders had found and caught the horse, came also the remembrance that one oracle had said something about the west—though all knew that the horse had visibly vanished into the west—and much credit was given to that particular oracle although Gomchok continued to pour maledictions on the rest as he told his tale.

The visit to the chief's tent and presentation of gifts was brief and offhand as many Tibetan transactions are. We filed into the tent, the lama ahead, for Gomchok must introduce him to the chief and commend him to his care. The rest of us counted out our gifts in Chinese silver dollars, while Gomchok droned breathlessly through his speech and the chief's secretary wrote down the amount of each and the name of the donor. "Mustn't get them mixed or some one would feel bad," grunted the chief. Then, refusing tea,

we all left as abruptly as we had come, stalking off without a backward look although the old chief did get near enough to slap me on the back and urge me to frequent his fireside for the next few days.

Back at our own fireside the three-cornered battle of wits and words between Gomchok and A-ku Jamtso, with myself as a poor third, which was to rage with but short intermissions for the next five days, began and helped to season the evening meal.

Despite our keen interest in the happenings of the day, much of our talk was of world politics and warfare. Every move of the continuing crisis, though on a scale the magnitude of which made the Tibetans gasp, was utterly familiar; for, in their little world, forty or more tribes fought and treated for peace with changes of fortune and combinations that were an exact miniature of everything from League of Nations to *Blitzkrieg*. In fact, when Gomchok suddenly attacked A-ku Jamtso with a volley of persiflage, the old debater countered with the epithet "Hitler," and thereafter that was the first cuss word hurled in every argument.

Darkness closed in after a time, and the shouting of the pilgrims as they made evening offerings came somewhat faintly up the wind. Near by, the lama began his nightly chant and it seemed to remind Gomchok of a sort of promise he had made.

"Come, we'll have a service too. Shes-rab-brdzon-grus, begin your gospel stories and sing and pray while we listen."

Who could tell what he thought as with a distinctly enigmatic expression he faced the flickering fire and listened, but his hands were spread wide in the most honorific of gestures when I finished and he thanked me in courtly phrases.

Then his mood changed.

"Look at me," he wisecracked. "The 'Tawng Lowng chief hasn't a single priest in his camp of twenty-seven or more tents, but in my little camp of two tents I have a Tibetan lama of high repute and a foreign lama of even higher standing. How blest are we all."

The stars seemed hung close enough to touch as we scattered to our sleeping places on the edges of the camp surrounding the cattle and horses, but we forbore to urge each other to call and shout. Nearly four hundred Tibetans were already hallooing to one another and taunting suppositious thieves in the darkness. We might as well enjoy a carefree sleep at the end of our second day on the Lhasa trail.

(To be concluded in the February ASIA.)

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HAWAII IN THE CRISIS

by MARGARET M. MACKAY

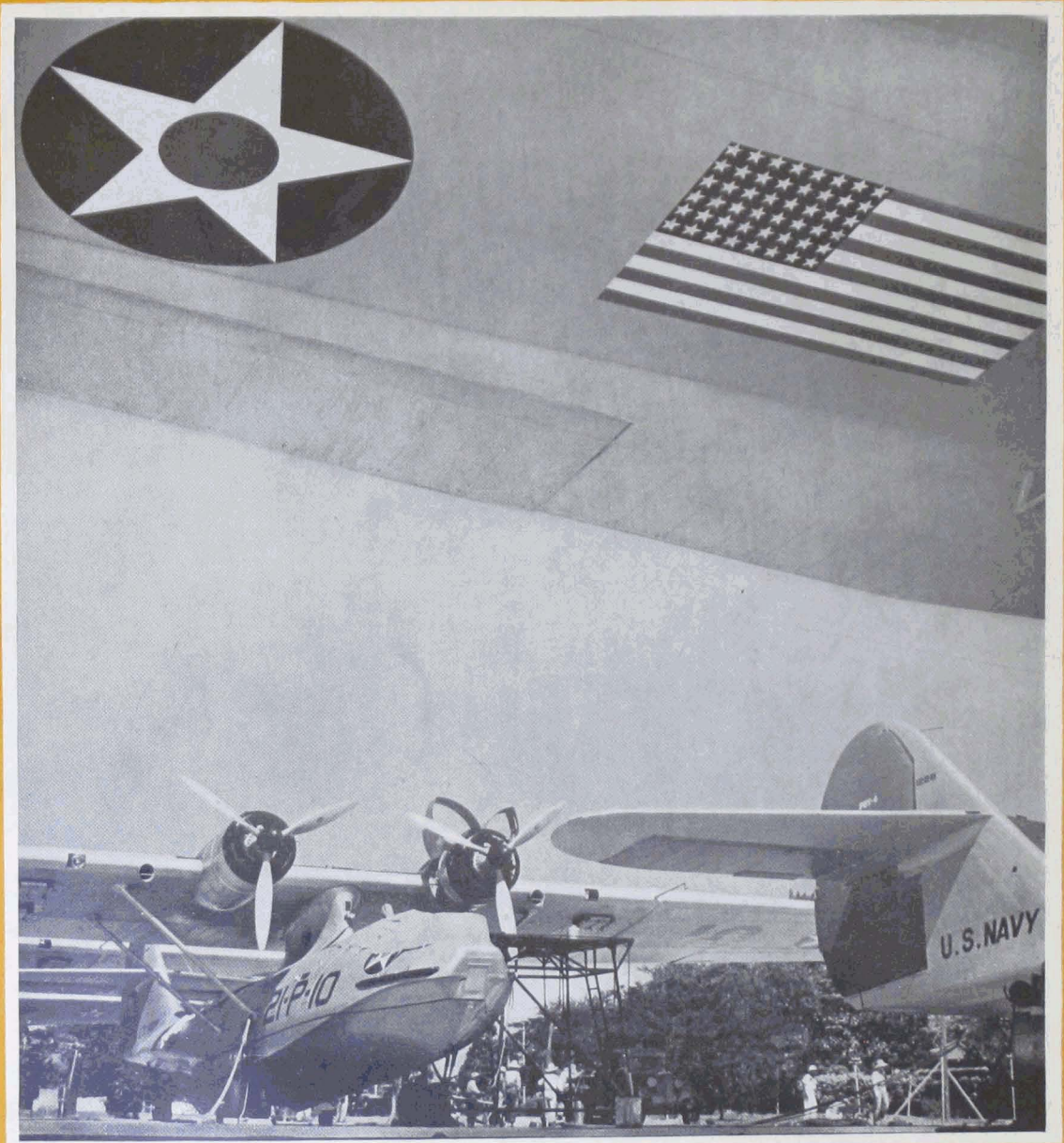
AFTER THE FINAL VICTORY

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REPEAL CHINESE EXCLUSION!

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TIBETAN PILGRIM'S PROGRESS—II

By ROBERT B. EKVALL

ON the third day our progress was much like a parade or tour of inspection. However Canterbury pilgrims may have dressed as they told their tales, Lhasa pilgrims put on their gayest and best. Especially colorful was the party of the chief, for his two wives carried thousands of dollars' worth of brocade, otter fur, amber and silver on their persons. His daughter with her two children—a boy of about twelve and a little girl of seven just able to sit her horse—were also along; the daughter dressed the most richly of all and flirting outrageously. Gradually all the riders who could be spared from driving the cattle forged to the front and, like a troop of cavalry, we came down on a deserted winter camp-site, with the Yellow River only a mile or two away.

We had scarcely finished making camp before Gomchok and his two companions arrived with a mutton, and much of the afternoon was spent in making various kinds of sausage and eating such delicacies as tripe, liver, lights, eyes and sinews, as fast as they could be cooked. But even such activity was halted when clouds of dust warned us of riders and herds in motion and word was passed around that a large band of refugees was coming up the trail.

It was the old Tibetan story of a tribe getting into trouble because of lawlessness. This time it had been the murder of forty soldiers and officers of the Chinghai provincial government. After months of warfare most of the tribe had surrendered, but these were the irreconcilables—seventy or eighty families moving with all their belongings and livestock into strange country and hoping to find refuge and pasture somewhere. With all the record of wounds and alarms plain to be seen, they were desperate and truculent; monks with but scraps of their monkish robes left, now carrying rifles and swords, old men balancing long lances, boys carrying

matchlocks two sizes too big for them, and women swearing hoarsely at the herds as they bore the brunt of keeping the cattle moving and loads straight while the menfolks scouted far ahead or behind. Some of the old and sick inquired feebly if good camp-sites were near, but most asked their way with more than a chip on both shoulders. Recklessness had made them past caring. One woman, her hair tightly bound without ornament, dust-covered and hoarse of voice, argued with me some minutes about the trail until suddenly on her preoccupied consciousness dawned the fact of light hair and blue eyes, for all of a Tibetan cloak, and, as I quickly brought a camera to focus, she cried out, "Say prayers to all the holy Buddhas, but what devil is this on the way!" and rode off in confusion as roars of laughter followed her up the trail.

The Fourth Day

We made the day's short stage to the crossing under low hanging clouds and misty curtains of rain, and set up camp within a hundred yards of the river—here jade green and about three hundred yards wide. Almost at once the rain ceased and all drowsed in the bright sunshine. Gomchok and A-ku Jamtso settled down to a quizzical inspection of camp and everybody's business through my binoculars. Nothing was sacrosanct—not even the genuflections of one of the pilgrims who, having evidently a daily stint of several hundred to perform, had chosen a slope that helped lessen the effort as she faced uphill. But, though she had compromised on location, every prostration was a complicated ritual, with added motions that Gomchok and A-ku Jamtso had evidently never seen, since their comments were marvels of contradiction; lauding her zeal, joking at her flourishes and going to all lengths as they speculated on the number and variety of sins that required such novel expiation.

But, even with binoculars and gossip, the time dragged, so I started for a swim, to be halted by a storm of protest from Gomchok. I was his guest, he was responsible for me, the river was not only swift and dangerous but full

ROBERT B. EKVALL continues in this issue the story begun last month. Mr. Ekvall has lived among the Tibetans for many years. By his gift for the telling of tales, he makes these friends of his seem very live acquaintances of ASIA readers who have followed his series of stories.

of fearsome creatures—some flesh and some spiteful spirit. Swimming is mostly an unknown art to the Tibetans, and for some time his opposition was most resolute. Finally a compromise was reached and, grim of face, he and the other kettle mates followed me to the river to see that I kept my promise not to cross and not to go farther than a rope's length from the bank.

When we returned to camp Gomchok boasted endlessly to one and all about the human otter he had with him, but was convinced that I had airbladders like a fish in my insides.

So the fourth day passed—an idle day in camp, yet a pilgrim's day on the Lhasa trail.

The Fifth Day

Again we drowsed in the heat, sleeping late and killing time over the morning meal. Some hitch had occurred about arranging for the ferry, and no one knew when the crossing would take place. Also, the report had leaked out that the two canvas bags piled in our tent contained a boat, and several of Gomchok's special friends appeared to see if they too, loads and all, might not get a lift across.

"What, take loads over? Oh, no—that is only a plaything. You know how the foreigner likes to play—yes, like an otter. Well, he has brought it to play in. The lama and party going across? Oh, no. They'll cross in the regular ferry. We wouldn't dare risk anything valuable in a plaything like that."

So Gomchok went on, his usually rather saturnine face alight with the joy of invention. I stayed out of it but thought that if we did make a specially quick and successful crossing he would have some rather difficult explaining to do to some of his friends. Yet, knowing the deceptive smallness and seeming fragility of the King collapsible boat, we assembled it and were bothered with no more requests. It was obviously nothing more than a plaything.

Again I went for a swim; for the early afternoon sun was hot and I had promised to start teaching one or two of the bolder spirits something about swimming. I was still shaking the water from my ears after the first plunge when every one started running toward camp at the sound of continuous rifle fire downstream. In the midst of all the excitement, the Tawng Lowng chief arrived, coolly matter of fact—though his poise was a trifle overdone—and asked me if I would go with him to make contact with the firing troops and secure status and protection for the camp.

Gomchok felt sure he now held a winning hand. "It is all right," he assured the crowd;

"our foreigner has only to see the commander and it will be quite all right." I was not so sure, and of course the joker in his statement was that I might get shot before I ever got to see the commander—but at least I could speak Chinese, once we got near enough to call.

Our first glimpse of horsemen was when they were only about a quarter of a mile away. At the last minute the old chief balked. "You meet them and talk with them—then come back to me," he said. It was too late to argue; so, waving a white handkerchief and hoping for the best, I rode forward. The nearer I went the clearer it became that at least five rifles and a Mauser pistol were trained on me, and I began shouting my identity. Still the guns did not shift and I was almost there. As a final measure I pulled off my hat, crying, "Don't you recognize the yellow hair of a foreigner?" and a belated smile of courtesy replaced the blank amazement on the face of the officer holding the Mauser pistol.

So we made contact and, shortly after, the chief, his companions and I rode to see the C O, escorted by this officer and a troop of cavalry. We found Brigadier General Ma a polite, non-committal person who assured us our camp was in no danger from his men and thanked us for coming to call. But he obviously regarded me as an inexplicable phenomenon until I had written down all the details of my identity, together with references for him to use in his nightly radio communication with the military headquarters of Chinghai Province.

There was little more to say; so we sat and watched the battle. The expedition consisted of about five hundred magnificently mounted, hard-faced troopers who—as far as we could gather—had made a dash into Tibetan country to cut off the flight of the refugees we had seen the day before and about whom we carefully said nothing. The troops had come out of the hills and down to the river at this point and, having been fired on by the Tibetans from the other side of the river, had returned the fire and launched an attack. As we watched, some two hundred soldiers swam the river on their horses under fire but covered by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the bluff on which we sat. They drove the Tibetans back into the hills and began to round up the herds of cattle and sheep on the flats as lawful booty.

Our arrival back in camp was a great triumph; and inside our tent I found a packed wall of faces and waiting ears all around. All afternoon Bkra-shis-don-grub, the Tawng Lowng chief's right-hand man—a famous orator and diplomat—had said not a word: the still tongue

in the wise head. But now he took his place in the center of camp. Those wishing for the best story instinctively made a great circle around him, but the crowd at our tent seemed none the less determined to stay. It was late and I was hungry, but first immemorial Tibetan custom must be obeyed. It is thus that legends start and epic poetry has its beginnings. I did my best, trying to tell all, but was through long before Bkra-shis-don-grub, and many got to hear the latter half of his much better tale, after mine.

The Sixth Day

The morning was full of rain and the bluffs were lost in the mist, but the chief and I again rode to the camp of the Muslim troops. All night long, messengers from near-by tribes had been finding their way to the chief's tent. So we were riding for two reasons; the obvious one being that we might bring the present to General Ma which the old chief had promised the night before, and the real one that we might ascertain whether the troops were turning back or going farther on into Tibetan country. If the latter, the tribes were desirous of using our good offices to establish contact, present gifts and be listed as good citizens. No one, however, cared to waste presents if the troops were turning back.

We found the troops ready to start but waiting until all crossed back to the near bank. Evidently the poorer cattle and the sheep could not be induced to cross, and with tired horses, in the driving rain, the troopers were finding it a somewhat different matter from crossing in the heat of battle. But the Turki raftsmen among the troops had butchered some beeves and made skin rafts and were ferrying men and equipment while the horses swam. The general assured us he was starting back immediately, word having come from headquarters to return since the expedition was a success. We congratulated him. Then the old chief made his speech and presented his gift. The sight of the cattle and sheep on the far bank was a rather potent inspiration; for he included in his speech the unexpected proposal that on his face and mine the general give back those cattle and sheep. The general blinked in amazement but gestured gracefully "anything to oblige old friends—certainly." Of course he would have had to leave them anyway unless he had butchered them in sheer spite, so maybe it was a way out for him. We thanked him and then left.

About three miles upstream we made contact with the Tibetans on the far bank and the old chief shouted his instructions. "We persuaded the Chinese general to give back half the cattle

and all the sheep, but you are not to go near until after the troops have left." A chorus of thanks and congratulation came back faintly over the wide river. The chief turned in an aside to me, "Are you sure they are starting back?" I was reasonably sure. "And we have persuaded him to turn back and do no more damage in Tibetan country. The foreigner and I talked with him and persuaded him."

He winked broadly at the astonishment my face must have shown and remarked conversationally, "That was a big skin that I blew up, but to be a successful chief among the Tibetans one must blow up big ones whenever there is opportunity. And since you won't blow a big one for yourself I'll have to do it for you. I have come to trust and like you these last two days."

Even that was not the limit of his approbation; for before we had reached camp he had urged that I go with the caravan all the way to Lhasa. He would even wait a month on the far side of the stream while I got ready. "You see," he finished, "I always distrusted you about the religion part of it. I don't know yet how that will turn out but if, as our priests say, it is written in the holy books that some time in the future all of Tibet must turn to your religion, maybe even now the time has about come and you are an advance guard. But you don't need to try to persuade me; I'm too old."

We exchanged courtesy calls throughout the afternoon and in fact were so very chummy that when he was sipping tea at our fireside and discussing the crossing of the river the next day I was almost forced to make the gesture. "Of course with our very little boat we really could not help much in the matter of getting your fifty or sixty loads across, but if you wish to send an advance guard over or have anything specially valuable you would like us to take we will be glad to do what we can."

He took one look at the "very little boat" and declined with utter finality. "No, no, I shouldn't think of troubling you. Not at all."

With darkness came the order shouted throughout the pilgrim camp that from each kettle at least one must come to the big offering and burning the chief was making. We were hardly pilgrims, but quite a discussion started at our kettle whether some one should go or not. Gomchok, however, settled the argument in his own way. "The chief must have the foreigner save him from the Chinese troops, and the lama must cross in the foreigner's boat—if it really is any good; we'll wait and see about that. So tonight, until the troops are really gone and the river has been crossed, we'll all be

Christians. Shes-rab, get out your books and sing and pray."

The flame of a great burning lit the camp with a strange red glare and the shouting of the pilgrims tramping around the blaze showed in its intensity the extent of their worries about the crossing that must be ventured. But we stayed in the tent to hear about a boat on the sea of Galilee. It was the end of the sixth day.

The Seventh Day

Nine o'clock came and no sign of the ferry being drawn to the near side and the chief getting started. Gomchok could keep still no longer, and, though it was rather bad form to start crossing before the chief, we took our little boat to the stream. There it looked smaller than ever and Gomchok's doubts redoubled. "No, the lama shall not cross in that. Let him go in the big ferry. And you, Shes-rab, leave off your cloak, so you can swim easily if anything happens."

The river had changed from jade green to olive and snatched angrily at the oars as I made the first trip, with a grim and serious-faced Tibetan in the stern and another in the bow. They were to do the unloading on the far side. The current was swift, but there were eddies that helped and with a little practice it became merely a matter of routine work to put load after load across. After the fifth trip I found the lama waiting. The little boy was put in the bow and we started. With the rush of water along the side as the current fought with the oars, the lama's lips opened with a rush of praying, but halfway over he again was smiling and asked me if we were midway. I nodded and he dipped into the current and drank from his hand; for water from the center of the Yellow River—"Peacock Waters" in Tibetan—is supposed to be medicinal in its powers. Then we caught up with and passed the great bargelike horse-drawn ferry in which the first boatload of pilgrims were crossing and were greeted with wild hallooing by the braver ones, although many with tight lips merely clung to the sides pop-eyed with fright. And indeed it did tip dangerously. As I brought the boat to the bank with a special flourish of the oars, the lama grinned and spread his palms. "I'd rather ride in your boat than in that. Thank you—a thousand thanks."

On the next trip I found two tents and two men awaiting me—the chief's men. And, wishing that he had kept to his refusal, I was yet forced to keep to my offer, while Gomchok grinned impishly. The sun was high and hot, the river had risen two feet in two hours and

had begun to show its tawny strength, and unmistakably blisters were beginning to rise on my palms. The loading and unloading at each bank was a riot of helpfulness, but there was no one else to take the oars and I was heartily glad when the last load of the lama's things was across. I rowed back with fancy strokes, for it was the last trip and I was racing the horses of the ferry—only to find a new pile at the loading place. The old chief was waiting.

"Just four boatloads, Shes-rab; be a sport and take them across as you promised. They are my money and best things that I'd rather trust to your boat." I caught a glimpse of Gomchok's face as he ducked behind the pile and knew he was laughing at me. So indeed I *had* offered, but the old chief had refused. A voice near the boat, belonging to one of the men who been most helpful in the loading, urged smoothly: "Take this one load across and then rest and drink. The chief's wife is waiting for you, with buttermilk just for you." After all, it was on the road to Lhasa and the time of pilgrimages. Trying to go easy on the blisters, I pulled for the far shore where, sure enough, the chief's wife was waiting with buttermilk and other refreshment.

By the time the last load was over, the river was freshly yellow with a truly angry crest. We took the boat quickly to camp to let it dry. While the others packed, I roamed the shore watching the pilgrims crossing, and always at my heels was the chief's little granddaughter, a serious-eyed little figure, talking most companionably, much to the amusement of Gomchok and my kettle mates, who insisted that I had won one convert from the Lhasa trail.

We broke camp late that afternoon and rode into the mountains, our rifles at the ready, toward the haunts of blue sheep, deer and maybe even wapiti, until long after nightfall, when we made a dark camp in a hidden hollow.

It was the end of the seventh day on the Lhasa trail and, if the other ninety or more days before the pilgrims see the mighty ramp and golden pinnacle of the Potala are equally full, no wonder they come back with the rapt look of Argonauts in eyes that have seen enough excitement and adventure to last a lifetime. Small wonder too that the pilgrim tide of the land rises yearly toward that faraway place of gods, prostrations and prayer, to ebb again with the fulfillment of the dreams of a lifetime.

Sometimes I speculate idly as to what sort of present the Tawng Lowng chief will bring back to me next year, and, remembering my blistered palms, I feel it should be a good one.