

EDMUND CANDLER

THE UNVEILING
OF LHASA

Edmund Candler

The Unveiling of Lhasa

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The Unveiling of Lhasa

PREFACE

The recent expedition to Lhasa was full of interest, not only on account of the political issues involved and the physical difficulties overcome, but owing to the many dramatic incidents which attended the Mission's progress. It was my good fortune to witness nearly all these stirring events, and I have written the following narrative of what I saw in the hope that a continuous story of the affair may interest readers who have hitherto been able to form an idea of it only from the telegrams in the daily Press. The greater part of the book was written on the spot, while the impressions of events and scenery were still fresh. Owing to wounds I was not present at the bombardment and relief of Gyantse, but this phase of the operations is dealt with by Mr. Henry Newman, *Reuter's* correspondent, who was an eye-witness. I am especially indebted to him for his account, which was written in Lhasa, and occupied many mornings that might have been devoted to well-earned rest.

My thanks are also due to the Proprietors of the *Daily Mail* for permission to use material of which they hold the copyright; and I am indebted to the Editors of the *Graphic* and *Black and White* for allowing me to reproduce certain photographs by Lieutenant Bailey.

The illustrations are from sketches by Lieutenant Rybot, and photographs by Lieutenants Bailey, Bethell, and Lewis, to whom I owe my cordial thanks.

EDMUND CANDLER.

London,
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CHAPTER I

THE CAUSES OF THE EXPEDITION

The conduct of Great Britain in her relations with Tibet puts me in mind of the dilemma of a big boy at school who submits to the attacks of a precocious youngster rather than incur the imputation of 'bully.' At last the situation becomes intolerable, and the big boy, bully if you will, turns on the youth and administers the deserved thrashing. There is naturally a good deal of remonstrance from spectators who have not observed the byplay which led to the encounter. But sympathy must be sacrificed to the restitution of fitting and respectful relations.

The aim of this record of an individual's impressions of the recent Tibetan expedition is to convey some idea of the life we led in Tibet, the scenes through which we passed, and the strange people we fought and conquered. We killed several thousand of these brave, ill-armed men; and as the story of the fighting is not always pleasant reading, I think it right before describing the punitive side of the expedition to make it quite clear that military operations were unavoidable – that we were drawn into the vortex of war against our will by the folly and obstinacy of the Tibetans.

The briefest review of the rebuffs Great Britain has submitted to during the last twenty years will suffice to show that, so far from being to blame in adopting punitive measures, she is open to the charge of unpardonable weakness in allowing affairs to reach the crisis which made such punishment necessary.

It must be remembered that Tibet has not always been closed to strangers. The history of European travellers in Lhasa forms a literature to itself. Until the end of the eighteenth century only physical obstacles stood in the way of an entry to the capital. Jesuits and Capuchins reached Lhasa, made long stays there, and were even encouraged by the Tibetan Government. The first¹ Europeans to visit the city and leave an authentic record of their journey were the Fathers Grueber and d'Orville, who penetrated Tibet from China in 1661 by the Sining route, and stayed in Lhasa two months. In 1715 the Jesuits Desideri and Freyre reached Lhasa; Desideri stayed there thirteen years. In 1719 arrived Horace de la Penna and the Capuchin Mission, who built a chapel and a hospice, made several converts, and were not finally expelled till 1740.² The Dutchman Van der Putte, first layman to penetrate to the capital, arrived in 1720, and stayed there some years. After this we have no record of a European reaching Lhasa until the adventurous journey in 1811 of Thomas Manning, the first and only Englishman to reach the city before this year. Manning arrived in the retinue of a Chinese General whom he had met at Phari Jong, and whose gratitude he had won for medical services. He remained in the capital four months, and during his stay he made the acquaintance of several Chinese and Tibetan officials, and was even presented to the Dalai Lama himself. The influence of his patron, however, was not strong enough to insure his safety in the city. He was warned that his life was endangered, and returned to India by the same way he came. In 1846 the Lazarist missionaries Huc and Gabet reached Lhasa in the disguise of Lamas after eighteen months' wanderings through China and Mongolia, during which they must have suffered as much from privations and hardships as any travellers who have survived to tell the tale. They were received kindly by the Amban and Regent, but permission to stay was firmly refused them on the grounds that they were there to subvert the religion of the State. Despite the attempts of several determined travellers, none of whom got within a hundred miles of Lhasa, the Lazarist fathers were the last Europeans to set foot in the city until Colonel Younghusband rode through the Pargo Kaling gate on August 4, 1904.

¹ Friar Oderic of Portenone is supposed to have visited Lhasa in 1325, but the authenticity of this record is open to doubt.

² When in Lhasa I sought in vain for any trace of these buildings. The most enlightened Tibetans are ignorant, or pretend to be so, that Christian missionaries have resided in the city. In the cathedral, however, we found a bell with the inscription, 'TE DEUM LAUDAMUS,' which is probably a relic of the Capuchins.

The records of these travellers to Lhasa, and of others who visited different parts of Tibet before the end of the eighteenth century, do not point to any serious political obstacles to the admission of strangers. Two centuries ago, Europeans might travel in remote parts of Asia with greater safety than is possible to-day. Suspicions have naturally increased with our encroachments, and the white man now inspires fear where he used only to awake interest.³

The policy of strict exclusion in Tibet seems to have been synchronous with Chinese ascendancy. At the end of the eighteenth century the Nepalese invaded and overran the country. The Lamas turned to China for help, and a force of 70,000 men was sent to their assistance. The Chinese drove the Gurkhas over their frontier, and practically annihilated their army within a day's march of Khatmandu. From this date China has virtually or nominally ruled in Lhasa, and an important result of her intervention has been to sow distrust of the British. She represented that we had instigated the Nepalese invasion, and warned the Lamas that the only way to obviate our designs on Tibet was to avoid all communication with India, and keep the passes strictly closed to foreigners.

Shortly before the Nepalese War, Warren Hastings had sent the two missions of Bogle and Turner to Shigatze. Bogle was cordially received by the Grand Teshu Lama, and an intimate friendship was established between the two men. On his return to India he reported that the only bar to a complete understanding with Tibet was the obstinacy of the Regent and the Chinese agents at Lhasa, who were inspired by Peking. An attempt was arranged to influence the Chinese Government in the matter, but both Bogle and the Teshu Lama died before it could be carried out. Ten years later Turner was despatched to Tibet, and received the same welcome as his predecessor. Everything pointed to the continuance of a steady and consistent policy by which the barrier of obstruction might have been broken down. But Warren Hastings was recalled in 1785, and Lord Cornwallis, the next Governor-General, took no steps to approach and conciliate the Tibetans. It was in 1792 that the Tibetan-Nepalese War broke out, which, owing to the misrepresentations of China, precluded any possibility of an understanding between India and Tibet. Such was the uncompromising spirit of the Lamas that, until Lord Dufferin sanctioned the commercial mission of Mr. Colman Macaulay in 1886, no succeeding Viceroy after Warren Hastings thought it worth while to renew the attempt to enter into friendly relations with the country.

The Macaulay Mission incident was the beginning of that weak and abortive policy which lost us the respect of the Tibetans, and led to the succession of affronts and indignities which made the recent expedition to Lhasa inevitable. The escort had already advanced into Sikkim, and Mr. Macaulay was about to join it, when orders were received from Government for its return. The withdrawal was a concession to the Chinese, with whom we were then engaged in the delimitation of the Burmese frontier. This display of weakness incited the Tibetans to such a pitch of vanity and insolence that they invaded our territory and established a military post at Lingtu, only seventy miles from Darjeeling.

We allowed the invaders to remain in the protected State of Sikkim two years before we made any reprisal. In 1888, after several vain appeals to China to use her influence to withdraw the Tibetan troops, we reluctantly decided on a military expedition. The Tibetans were driven from their position, defeated in three separate engagements, and pursued over the frontier as far as Chumbi. We ought to have concluded a treaty with them on the spot, when we were in a position to enforce it, but we were afraid of offending the susceptibilities of China, whose suzerainty over Tibet we still recognised, though she had acknowledged her inability to restrain the Tibetans from invading our territory. At

³ Suspicion and jealousy of foreigners seems to have been the guiding principle both of Tibetans and Chinese even in the earlier history of the country. The attitude is well illustrated by a letter written in 1774 by the Regent at Lhasa to the Teshu Lama with reference to Bogle's mission: 'He had heard of two Fringies being arrived in the Deb Raja's dominions, with a great retinue of servants; that the Fringies were fond of war, and after insinuating themselves into a country raised disturbances and made themselves masters of it; that as no Fringies had ever been admitted into Tibet, he advised the Lama to find some method of sending them back, either on account of the violence of the small-pox or on any other pretence.'

the conclusion of the campaign, in which the Tibetans showed no military instincts whatever, we returned to our post at Gnatong, on the Sikkim frontier.

After two years of fruitless discussion, a convention was drawn up between Great Britain and China, by which Great Britain's exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of Sikkim was recognised, the Sikkim-Tibet boundary was defined, and both Powers undertook to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier. The questions of pasturage, trade facilities, and the method in which official communications should be conducted between the Government of India and the authorities at Lhasa were deferred for future discussion. Nearly three more years passed before the trade regulations were drawn up in Darjeeling – in December, 1903. The negotiations were characterized by the same shuffling and equivocation on the part of the Chinese, and the same weak-kneed policy of forbearance and conciliation on the part of the British. Treaty and regulations were alike impotent, and our concessions went so far that we exacted nothing as the fruit of our victory over the Tibetans – not even a fraction of the cost of the campaign.

Our ignorance of the Tibetans, their Government, and their relations with China was at this time so profound that we took our cue from the Chinese, who always referred to the Lhasa authorities as 'the barbarians.' The Shata Shapé, the most influential of the four members of Council, attended the negotiations on behalf of the Tibetans. He was officially ignored, and no one thought of asking him to attach his signature to the treaty. The omission was a blunder of far-reaching consequences. Had we realized that Chinese authority was practically non-existent in Lhasa, and that the temporal affairs of Tibet were mainly directed by the four Shapés and the Tsong-du (the very existence of which, by the way, was unknown to us), we might have secured a diplomatic agent in the Shata Shapé who would have proved invaluable to us in our future relations with the country. Unfortunately, during his stay in Darjeeling the Shapé's feelings were lacerated by ill-treatment as well as neglect. In an unfortunate encounter with British youth, which was said to have arisen from his jostling an English lady off the path, he was taken by the scruff of the neck and ducked in the public fountain. So he returned to Tibet with no love for the English, and after certain courteous overtures from the agents of 'another Power,' became a confirmed, though more or less accidental, Russophile. Though deposed,⁴ he has at the present moment a large following among the monks of the Gaden monastery.

In the regulations of 1893 it was stipulated that a trade mart should be established at Yatung, a small hamlet six miles beyond our frontier. The place is obviously unsuitable, situated as it is in a narrow pine-clad ravine, where one can throw a stone from cliff to cliff across the valley. No traders have ever resorted there, and the Tibetans have studiously boycotted the place. To show their contempt for the treaty, and their determination to ignore it, they built a wall a quarter of a mile beyond the Customs House, through which no Tibetan or British subject was allowed to pass, and, to nullify the object of the mart, a tax of 10 per cent. on Indian goods was levied at Phari. Every attempt was made by Sheng Tai, the late Amban, to induce the Tibetans to substitute Phari for Yatung as a trade mart. But, as an official report admits, 'it was found impossible to overcome their reluctance. Yatung was eventually accepted both by the Chinese and British Governments as the only alternative to breaking off the negotiations altogether.' This confession of weakness appears to me abject enough to quote as typical of our attitude throughout. In deference to Tibetan wishes, we allowed nearly every clause of the treaty to be separately stultified.

The Tibetans, as might be expected, met our forbearance by further rebuffs. Not content with evading their treaty obligations in respect to trade, they proceeded to overthrow our boundary pillars, violate grazing rights, and erect guard-houses at Giagong, in Sikkim territory. When called to question they repudiated the treaty, and said that it had never been shown them by the Amban. It had not been sealed or confirmed by any Tibetan representative, and they had no intention of observing it.

⁴ The Shata Shapé and his three colleagues were deposed by the Dalai Lama in October, 1903.

Once more the 'solemn farce' was enacted of an appeal to China to use her influence with the Lhasa authorities. And it was only after repeated representations had been made by the Indian Government to the Secretary of State that the Home Government realized the seriousness of the situation, and the hopelessness of making any progress through the agency of China. 'We seem,' said Lord Curzon, 'in respect to our policy in Tibet, to be moving in a vicious circle. If we apply to Tibet we either receive no reply or are referred to the Chinese Resident; if we apply to the latter, he excuses his failure by his inability to put any pressure upon Tibet.' In the famous despatch of January 8, 1903, the Viceroy described the Chinese suzerainty as 'a political fiction,' only maintained because of its convenience to both parties. China no doubt is capable of sending sufficient troops to Lhasa to coerce the Tibetans. But it has suited her book to maintain the present elusive and anomalous relations with Tibet, which are a securer buttress to her western dependencies against encroachment than the strongest army corps. For many years we have been the butt of the Tibetans, and China their stalking-horse.

The Tibetan attitude was clearly expressed by the Shigatze officials at Khamba Jong in September last year, when they openly boasted that 'where Chinese policy was in accordance with their own views they were ready enough to accept the Amban's advice; but if this advice ran counter in any respect to their national prejudices, the Chinese Emperor himself would be powerless to influence them.' China has on several occasions confessed her inability to coerce the Tibetans. She has proved herself unable to enforce the observance of treaties or even to restrain her subjects from invading our territory, and during the recent attempts at negotiations she had to admit that her representative in Lhasa was officially ignored, and not even allowed transport to travel in the country. In the face of these facts her exceedingly shadowy suzerainty may be said to have entirely evaporated, and it is unreasonable to expect us to continue our relations with Tibet through the medium of Peking.

It was not until nine years after the signing of the convention that we made any attempt to open direct communications with the Tibetans themselves. It is astonishing that we allowed ourselves to be hoodwinked so long. But this policy of drift and waiting is characteristic of our foreign relations all over the world. British Cabinets seem to believe that cure is better than prevention, and when faced by a dilemma have seldom been known to act on the initiative, or take any decided course until the very existence of their dependency is imperilled.

In 1901 Lord Curzon was permitted to send a despatch to the Dalai Lama in which it was pointed out that his Government had consistently defied and ignored treaty rights; and in view of the continued occupation of British territory, the destruction of frontier pillars, and the restrictions imposed on Indian trade, we should be compelled to resort to more practical measures to enforce the observance of the treaty, should he remain obstinate in his refusal to enter into friendly relations. The letter was returned unopened, with the verbal excuse that the Chinese did not permit him to receive communications from any foreign Power. Yet so great was our reluctance to resort to military coercion that we might even at this point have let things drift, and submitted to the rebuffs of these impossible Tibetans, had not the Dalai Lama chosen this moment for publicly flaunting his relations with Russia.

The second⁵ Tibetan Mission reached St. Petersburg in June, 1901, carrying autograph letters and presents to the Czar from the Dalai Lama. Count Lamsdorff declared that the mission had no political significance whatever. We were asked to believe that these Lamas travelled many thousand miles to convey a letter that expressed the hope that the Russian Foreign Minister was in good health and prosperous, and informed him that the Dalai Lama was happy to be able to say that he himself enjoyed excellent health.

It is possible that the mission to St. Petersburg was of a purely religious character, and that there was no secret understanding at the time between the Lhasa authorities and Russia. Yet the fact

⁵ A previous mission had been received by the Czar at Livadia in October, 1900.

that the mission was despatched in direct contradiction to the national policy of isolation that had been respected for over a century, and at a time when the Tibetans were aware of impending British activity to exact fulfilment of the treaty obligations so long ignored by them, points to some secret influence working in Lhasa in favour of Russia, and opposed to British interests. The process of Russification that has been carried on with such marked success in Persia and Turkestan, Merv and Bokhara, was being applied in Tibet. It has long been known to our Intelligence Department that certain Buriat Lamas, subjects of the Czar, and educated in Russia, have been acting as intermediaries between Lhasa and St. Petersburg. The chief of these, one Dorjjeff, headed the so-called religious mission of 1901, and has been employed more than once as the Dalai Lama's ambassador to St. Petersburg. Dorjjeff is a man of fifty-eight, who has spent some twenty years of his life in Lhasa, and is known to be the right-hand adviser of the Dalai Lama. No doubt Dorjjeff played on the fears of the Buddhist Pope until he really believed that Tibet was in danger of an invasion from India, in which eventuality the Czar, the great Pan-Buddhist Protector, would descend on the British and drive them back over the frontier. The Lamas of Tibet imagine that Russia is a Buddhist country, and this belief has been fostered by adventurers like Dorjjeff, Tsibikoff, and others, who have inspired dreams of a consolidated Buddhist church under the spiritual control of the Dalai Lama and the military ægis of the Czar of All the Russias.

These dreams, full of political menace to ourselves, have, I think, been dispelled by Lord Curzon's timely expedition to Lhasa. The presence of the British in the capital and the helplessness of Russia to lend any aid in such a crisis are facts convincing enough to stultify the effects of Russian intrigue in Buddhist Central Asia during the last half-century.

The fact that the first Dalai Lama who has been allowed to reach maturity has plunged his country into war by intrigue with a foreign Power proves the astuteness of the cold-blooded policy of removing the infant Pope, and the investiture of power in the hands of a Regent inspired by Peking. It is believed that the present Dalai Lama was permitted to come of age in order to throw off the Chinese yoke. This aim has been secured, but it has involved other issues that the Lamas could not foresee.

And here it must be observed that the Dalai Lama's inclination towards Russia does not represent any considerable national movement. The desire for a rapprochement was largely a matter of personal ambition inspired by that arch-intriguer Dorjjeff, whose ascendancy over the Dalai Lama was proved beyond a doubt when the latter joined him in his flight to Mongolia on hearing the news of the British advance on Lhasa. Dorjjeff had a certain amount of popularity with the priest population of the capital, and the monks of the three great monasteries, amongst whom he is known to have distributed largess royally. But the traditional policy of isolation is so inveterately ingrained in the Tibetan character that it is doubtful if he could have organized a popular party of any strength.

It may be asked, then, What is, or was, the nature of the Russian menace in Tibet? It is true that a Russian invasion on the North-East frontier is out of the question. For to reach the Indian passes the Russians would have to traverse nearly 1,500 miles of almost uninhabited country, presenting difficulties as great as any we had to contend with during the recent campaign. But the establishment of Russian influence in Lhasa might mean military danger of another kind. It would be easy for her to stir up the Tibetans, spread disaffection among the Bhutanese, send secret agents into Nepal, and generally undermine our prestige. Her aim would be to create a diversion on the Tibet frontier at any time she might have designs on the North-West. The pioneers of the movement had begun their work. They were men of the usual type – astute, insidious, to be disavowed in case of premature discovery, or publicly flaunted when they had prepared any ground on which to stand.

Our countermove – the Tibet Expedition – must have been a crushing and unexpected blow to Russia. For the first time in modern history Great Britain had taken a decisive, almost high-handed, step to obviate a danger that was far from imminent. We had all the best cards in our hands. Russia's designs in Lhasa became obvious at a time when we could point to open defiance on the part of the Tibetans, and provocation such as would have goaded any other European nation to a punitive

expedition years before. We could go to Lhasa, apparently without a thought of Russia, and yet undo all the effects of her scheming there, and deal her prestige a blow that would be felt throughout the whole of Central Asia. Such was Lord Curzon's policy. It was adopted in a half-hearted way by the Home Government, and eventually forced on them by the conduct of the Tibetans themselves. Needless to say, the discovery of Russian designs was the real and prime cause of the despatch of the mission, while Tibet's violation of treaty rights and refusal to enter into any relations with us were convenient as ostensible motives. It cannot be denied that these grievances were valid enough to justify the strongest measures.

In June, 1903, came the announcement of Colonel Younghusband's mission to Khamba Jong. I do not think that the Indian Government ever expected that the Tibetans would come to any agreement with us at Khamba Jong. It is to their credit that they waited patiently several months in order to give them every chance of settling things amicably. However, as might have been expected, the Commission was boycotted. Irresponsible delegates of inferior rank were sent by the Tibetans and Chinese, and the Lhasa delegates, after some fruitless parleyings, shut themselves up in the fort, and declined all intercourse, official or social, with the Commissioners.⁶

At the end of August news came that the Tibetans were arming. Colonel Younghusband learnt that they had made up their minds to have no negotiations with us *inside* Tibet. They had decided to leave us alone at Khamba Jong, and to oppose us by force if we attempted to advance further. They believed themselves fully equal to the English, and far from our getting anything out of them, they thought that they would be able to force something out of us. This is not surprising when we consider the spirit of concession in which we had met them on previous occasions.

At Khamba Jong the Commissioners were informed by Colonel Chao, the Chinese delegate, that the Tibetans were relying on Russian assistance. This was confirmed later at Guru by the Tibetan officials, who boasted that if they were defeated they would fall back on another Power.

In September the Tibetans aggravated the situation by seizing and beating at Shigatze two British subjects of the Lachung Valley in Sikkim. These men were not restored to liberty until we had forced our way to Lhasa and demanded their liberation, twelve months afterwards.

The mission remained in its ignominious position at Khamba Jong until its recall in November. Almost at the same time the expedition to Gyantse was announced.⁷

In the face of the gross and deliberate affront to which we had been subjected at Khamba Jong it was now, of course, impossible to withdraw from Tibetan territory until we had impressed on the Lamas the necessity of meeting us in a reasonable spirit. It was clear that the Tibetans meant fighting, and the escort had to be increased to 2,500 men. The patience of Government was at last exhausted, and it was decided that the mission was to proceed into Tibet, dictate terms to the Lamas, and, if necessary, enforce compliance. The advance to Gyantse was sanctioned in the first place. But it was quite expected that the obstinacy of the Tibetans would make it necessary to push on to Lhasa.

Colonel Younghusband crossed the Jelap la into Tibet on December 13, meeting with no opposition. Phari Jong was reached on the 20th, and the fort surrendered without a shot being fired. Thence the mission proceeded on January 7 across the Tang Pass, and took up its quarters on the cold, wind-swept plateau of Tuna, at an elevation of 15,300 feet. Here it remained for three months, while

⁶ Their attitude was thus summed up by Captain O'Connor, secretary to the mission: 'We cannot accept letters; we cannot write letters; we cannot let you into our zone; we cannot let you travel; we cannot discuss matters, because this is not the proper place; go back to Giogong and send away all your soldiers, and we will come to an agreement' (Tibetan Blue-Book).

⁷ The situation was thus eloquently summarized by the Government of India in a despatch to Mr. Brodrick, November 5, 1903: 'It is not possible that the Tibet Government should be allowed to ignore its treaty obligations, thwart trade, encroach upon our territory, destroy our boundary pillars, and refuse even to receive our communications. Still less do we think that when an amicable conference has been arranged for the settlement of these difficulties we should acquiesce in our mission being boycotted by the very persons who have been deputed to meet it, our officers insulted, our subjects arrested and ill-used, and our authority despised by a petty Power which only mistakes our forbearance for weakness, and which thinks that by an attitude of obstinate inertia it can once again compel us, as it has done in the past, to desist from our intentions.'

preparations were being made for an advance in the spring. Four companies of the 23rd Pioneers, a machine-gun section of the Norfolk Regiment, and twenty Madras sappers, were left to garrison the place, and General Macdonald, with the remainder of the force, returned to Chumbi for winter quarters. Chumbi (10,060 feet) is well within the wood belt, but even here the thermometer falls to 15° below zero.

A more miserable place to winter in than Tuna cannot be imagined. But for political reasons, it was inadvisable that the mission should spend the winter in the Chumbi Valley, which is not geographically a part of Tibet proper. A retrograde movement from Khamba Jong to Chumbi would be interpreted by the Tibetans as a sign of yielding, and strengthen them in their opinion that we had no serious intention of penetrating to Gyantse.

With this brief account of the facts that led to the expedition I abandon politics for the present, and in the succeeding chapters will attempt to give a description of the Chumbi Valley, which, I believe, was untrodden by any European before Colonel Younghusband's arrival in December, 1903.

I was in India when I received permission to join the force. I took the train to Darjeeling without losing a day, and rode into Chumbi in less than forty-eight hours, reaching the British camp on January 10.

CHAPTER II

OVER THE FRONTIER

*Chumbi,
January 13.*

From Darjeeling to Lhasa is 380 miles. These, as in the dominions of Namgay Doola's Raja, are mostly on end. The road crosses the Tibetan frontier at the Jelap la (14,350 feet) eighty miles to the north-east. From Observatory Hill in Darjeeling one looks over the bleak hog-backed ranges of Sikkim to the snows. To the north and north-west lie Kinchenjunga and the tremendous chain of mountains that embraces Everest. To the north-east stretches a lower line of dazzling rifts and spires, in which one can see a thin gray wedge, like a slice in a Christmas cake. That is the Jelap. Beyond it lies Tibet.

There is a good military road from Siliguri, the base station in the plains to Rungpo, forty-eight miles along the Teesta Valley. By following the river-bed it avoids the two steep ascents to Kalimpong and Ari. The new route saves at least a day, and conveys one to Rungli, nearly seventy miles from the base, without compassing a single tedious incline. It has also the advantage of being practicable for bullock-carts and ekkas as far as Rungpo. After that the path is a 6-foot mule-track, at its best a rough, dusty incline, at its worst a succession of broken rocks and frozen puddles, which give no foothold to transport animals. From Rungpo the road skirts the stream for sixteen miles to Rungli, along a fertile valley of some 2,000 feet, through rice-fields and orange-groves and peaceful villages, now the scene of military bustle and preparation. From Rungli it follows a winding mountain torrent, whose banks are sometimes sheer precipitous crags. Then it strikes up the mountain side, and becomes a ladder of stone steps over which no animal in the world can make more than a mile and a half an hour. From the valley to Gnatong is a climb of some 10,000 feet without a break. The scenery is most magnificent, and I doubt if it is possible to find anywhere in the same compass the characteristics of the different zones of vegetation – from tropical to temperate, from temperate to alpine – so beautifully exhibited.

At ordinary seasons transport is easy, and one can take the road in comfort; but now every mule and pony in Sikkim and the Terai is employed on the lines of communication, and one has to pay 300 rupees for an animal of the most modest pretensions. It is reckoned eight days from Darjeeling to Chumbi, but, riding all day and most of the night, I completed the journey in two. Newspaper correspondents are proverbially in a hurry. To send the first wire from Chumbi I had to leave my kit behind, and ride with poshteen⁸ and sleeping-bag tied to my saddle. I was racing another correspondent. At Rungpo I found that he was five hours ahead of me, but he rested on the road, and I had gained three hours on him before he left the next stage at Rora Thang. Here I learnt that he intended to camp at Lingtam, twelve miles further on, in a tent lent him by a transport officer. I made up my mind to wait outside Lingtam until it was dark, and then to steal a march on him unobserved. But I believed no one. Wayside reports were probably intended to deceive me, and no doubt my informant was his unconscious confederate.

Outside Rungli, six miles further on, I stopped at a little Bhutia's hut, where he had been resting. They told me he had gone on only half an hour before me. I loitered on the road, and passed Lingtam in the dark. The moon did not rise till three, and riding in the dark was exciting. At first the white dusty road showed clearly enough a few yards ahead, but after passing Lingtam it became a narrow path cut out of a thickly-wooded cliff above a torrent, a wall of rock on one side, a precipice on the other. Here the darkness was intense. A white stone a few yards ahead looked like the branch of a

⁸ Sheepskin.

tree overhead. A dim shapeless object to the left might be a house, a rock, a bear – anything. Uphill and downhill could only be distinguished by the angle of the saddle. Every now and then a firefly lit up the white precipice an arm's-length to the right. Once when my pony stopped panting with exhaustion I struck a match and found that we had come to a sharp zigzag. Part of the revetment had fallen; there was a yard of broken path covered with fern and bracken, then a drop of some hundred feet to the torrent below. After that I led my beast for a mile until we came to a charcoal-burner's hut. Two or three Bhutias were sitting round a log fire, and I persuaded one to go in front of me with a lighted brand. So we came to Sedongchen, where I left my beast dead beat, rested a few hours, bought a good mule, and pressed on in the early morning by moonlight. The road to Gnatong lies through a magnificent forest of oak and chestnut. For five miles it is nothing but the ascent of stone steps I have described. Then the rhododendron zone is reached, and one passes through a forest of gnarled and twisted trunks, writhing and contorted as if they had been thrust there for some penance. The place suggested a scene from Dante's 'Inferno.' As I reached the saddle of Lingtu the moon was paling, and the eastern sky-line became a faint violet screen. In a few minutes Kinchenjunga and Kabru on the north-west caught the first rays of the sun, and were suffused with the delicate rosy glow of dawn.

I reached Gnatong in time to breakfast with the 8th Gurkhas. The camp lies in a little cleft in the hills at an elevation of 12,200 feet. When I last visited the place I thought it one of the most desolate spots I had seen. My first impressions were a wilderness of gray stones and gray, uninhabited houses, felled tree-trunks denuded of bark, white and spectral on the hillside. There was no life, no children's voices or chattering women, no bazaar apparently, no dogs barking, not even a pariah to greet you. If there was a sound of life it was the bray of some discontented mule searching for stray blades of grass among the stones. There were some fifty houses nearly all smokeless and vacant. Some had been barracks at the time of the last Sikkim War, and of the soldiers who inhabited them fifteen still lay in Gnatong in a little gray cemetery, which was the first indication of the nearness of human life. The inscriptions over the graves were all dated 1888, 1889, or 1890, and though but fourteen years had passed, many of them were barely decipherable. The houses were scattered about promiscuously, with no thought of neighbourliness or convenience, as though the people were living there under protest, which was very probably the case. But the place had its picturesque feature. You might mistake some of the houses for tumbledown Swiss *châlets* of the poorer sort were it not for the miniature fir-trees planted on the roofs, with their burdens of prayers hanging from the branches like parcels on a Christmas-tree.

These were my impressions a year or two ago, but now Gnatong is all life and bustle. In the bazaar a convoy of 300 mules was being loaded. The place was crowded with Nepalese coolies and Tibetan drivers, picturesque in their woollen knee-boots of red and green patterns, with a white star at the foot, long russet cloaks bound tightly at the waist and bulging out with cooking-utensils and changes of dress, embroidered caps of every variety and description, as often as not tied to the head by a wisp of hair. In Rotten Row – the inscription of 1889 still remains – I met a subaltern with a pair of skates. He showed me to the mess-room, where I enjoyed a warm breakfast and a good deal of chaff about correspondents who 'were in such a devil of a hurry to get to a God-forsaken hole where there wasn't going to be the ghost of a show.'

I left Gnatong early on a borrowed pony. A mile and a half from the camp the road crosses the Tuko Pass, and one descends again for another two miles to Kapup, a temporary transport stage. The path lies to the west of the Bidang Tso, a beautiful lake with a moraine at the north-west side. The mountains were strangely silent, and the only sound of wild life was the whistling of the red-billed choughs, the commonest of the *Corvidæ* at these heights. They were flying round and round the lake in an unsettled manner, whistling querulously, as though in complaint at the intrusion of their solitude.

I reached the Jelap soon after noon. No snow had fallen. The approach was over broken rock and shale. At the summit was a row of cairns, from which fluttered praying-flags and tattered bits of votive raiment. Behind us and on both sides was a thin mist, but in front my eyes explored a

deep narrow valley bathed in sunshine. Here, then, was Tibet, the forbidden, the mysterious. In the distance all the land was that yellow and brick-dust colour I had often seen in pictures and thought exaggerated and unreal. Far to the north-east Chumulari (23,930 feet), with its magnificent white spire rising from the roof-like mass behind, looked like an immense cathedral of snow. Far below on a yellow hillside hung the Kanjut Lamasery above Rinchengong. In the valley beneath lay Chumbi and the road to Lhasa.

There is a descent of over 4,000 feet in six miles from the summit of the Jelap. The valley is perfectly straight, without a bend, so that one can look down from the pass upon the Kanjut monastery on the hillside immediately above Yatung. The pass would afford an impregnable military position to a people with the rudiments of science and martial spirit. A few riflemen on the cliffs that command it might annihilate a column with perfect safety, and escape into Bhutan before any flanking movement could be made. Yet miles of straggling convoy are allowed to pass daily with the supplies that are necessary for the existence of the force ahead. The road to Phari Jong passes through two military walls. The first at Yatung, six miles below the pass, is a senseless obstruction, and any able-bodied Tommy with hobnailed boots might very easily kick it down. It has no block-houses, and would be useless against a flank attack. Before our advance to Chumbi the wall was inhabited by three Chinese officials, a dingpon, or Tibetan sergeant, and twenty Tibetan soldiers. It served as a barrier beyond which no British subject was allowed to pass. The second wall lies across the valley at Gob-sorg, four miles beyond our camp at Chumbi. It is roofed and loop-holed like the Yatung barrier, and is defended by block-houses. This fortification and every mile of valley between the Jelap and Gautsa might be held by a single company against an invading force. Yet there are not half a dozen Chinese or Tibetan soldiers in the valley. No opposition is expected this side of the Tang la, but nondescript troops armed with matchlocks and bows hover round the mission on the open plateau beyond. Our evacuation of Khamba Jong and occupation of Chumbi were so rapid and unexpected that it is thought the Tibetans had no time to bring troops into the valley; but to anyone who knows their strategical incompetence, no explanation is necessary.

Yatung is reached by one of the worst sections of road on the march; one comes across a dead transport mule at almost every zigzag of the descent. For ten years the village has enjoyed the distinction of being the only place in Southern Tibet accessible to Europeans. Not that many Europeans avail themselves of its accessibility, for it is a dreary enough place to live in, shrouded as it is in cloud more than half the year round, and embedded in a valley so deep and narrow that in winter-time the sun has hardly risen above one cliff when it sinks behind another. The privilege of access to Yatung was the result of the agreement between Great Britain and China with regard to trade communications between India and Tibet drawn up in Darjeeling in 1893, subsequently to the Sikkim Convention. It was then stipulated that there should be a trade mart at Yatung to which British subjects should have free access, and that there should be special trade facilities between Sikkim and Tibet. It is reported that the Chinese Amban took good care that Great Britain should not benefit by these new regulations, for after signing the agreement which was to give the Indian tea-merchants a market in Tibet, he introduced new regulations the other side of the frontier, which prohibited the purchase of Indian tea. Whether the story is true or not, it is certainly characteristic of the evasion and duplicity which have brought about the present armed mission into Tibet.

To-day, as one rides through the cobbled street of Yatung, the only visible effects of the Convention are the Chinese Customs House with its single European officer, and the residence of a lady missionary, or trader, as the exigencies of international diplomacy oblige her to term herself. The Customs House, which was opened on May 1, 1894, was first established with the object of estimating the trade between India and Tibet – traffic is not permitted by any other route than the Jelap – and with a view to taxation when the trade should make it worth while. It was stipulated that no duties should be levied for the period of five years. Up to the present no tariff has been imposed, and the only apparent use the Customs House serves is to collect statistics, and perhaps to remind Tibet

of the shadowy suzerainty of China. The natives have boycotted the place, and refuse to trade there, and no European or native of India has thought it worth while to open a market. Phari is the real trade mart on the frontier, and Kalimpong, in British Bhutan, is the foreign trade mart. But the whole trade between India and Tibet is on such a small scale that it might be in the hands of a single merchant.

The Customs House, the missionary house, and the houses of the clerks and servants of the Customs and of the headman, form a little block. Beyond it there is a quarter of a mile of barren stony ground, and then the wall with military pretensions. I rode through the gate unchallenged.

At Rinchengong, a mile beyond the barrier, the Yatung stream flows into the Ammo Chu. The road follows the eastern bank of the river, passing through Cheuma and Old Chumbi, where it crosses the stream. After crossing the bridge, a mile of almost level ground takes one into Chumbi camp. I reached Chumbi on the evening of January 12, and was able to send the *Daily Mail* the first cable from Tibet, having completed the journey from Darjeeling in two days' hard riding.

The camp lies in a shallow basin in the hills, and is flanked by brown fir-clad hills which rise some 1,500 feet above the river-bed, and preclude a view of the mountains on all sides. The situation is by no means the best from the view of comfort, but strategic reasons make it necessary, for if the camp were pitched half a mile further up the valley, the gorge of the stream which debouches into the Ammo River to the north of Chumbi would give the Tibetans an opportunity of attacking us in the rear. Despite the protection of almost Arctic clothing, one shivers until the sun rises over the eastern hill at ten o'clock, and shivers again when it sinks behind the opposite one at three. Icy winds sweep the valley, and hurricanes of dust invade one's tent. Against this cold one clothes one's self in flannel vest and shirt, sweater, flannel-lined coat, poshteen or Cashmere sheepskin, wool-lined Gilgit boots, and fur or woollen cap with flaps meeting under the chin. The general effect is barbaric and picturesque. In after-days the trimness of a military club may recall the scene – officers clad in gold-embroidered poshteen, yellow boots, and fur caps, bearded like wild Kerghizes, and huddling round the camp fire in this black cauldron-like valley under the stars.

Officers are settling down in Chumbi as comfortably as possible for winter quarters. Primitive dens have been dug out of the ground, walled up with boulders, and roofed in with green fir-branches. In some cases a natural rock affords a whole wall. The den where I am now writing is warmed by a cheerful pinewood blaze, a luxury after the *angeiti* in one's tent. I write at an operating-table after a dinner of minal (pheasant) and yak's heart. A gramophone is dinning in my ears. It is destined, I hope, to resound in the palace of Potala, where the Dalai Lama and his suite may wonder what heathen ritual is accompanied by 'A jovial monk am I,' and 'Her golden hair was hanging down her back.'

Both at home and in India one hears the Tibet Mission spoken of enviously as a picnic. There is an idea of an encampment in a smiling valley, and easy marches towards the mysterious city. In reality, there is plenty of hard and uninteresting work. The expedition is attended with all the discomforts of a campaign, and very little of the excitement. Colonel Younghusband is now at Tuna, a desolate hamlet on the Tibetan plateau, exposed to the coldest winds of Asia, where the thermometer falls to 25° below zero. Detachments of the escort are scattered along the line of communications in places of varying cold and discomfort, where they must wait until the necessary supplies have been carried through to Phari. It is not likely that Colonel Younghusband will be able to proceed to Gyantse before March. In the meanwhile, imagine the Pioneers and Gurkhas, too cold to wash or shave, shivering in a dirty Tibetan fort, half suffocated with smoke from a yak-dung fire. Then there is the transport officer shut up in some narrow valley of Sikkim, trying to make half a dozen out of three with his camp of sick beasts and sheaf of urgent telegrams calling for supplies. He hopes there will be 'a show,' and that he may be in it. Certainly if anyone deserves to go to Lhasa and get a medal for it, it is the supply and transport man. But he will be left behind.

CHAPTER III

THE CHUMBI VALLEY

*Chumbi,
February, 1904.*

The Chumbi Valley is inhabited by the Tomos, who are said to be descendants of ancient cross-marriages between the Bhutanese and Lepchas. They only intermarry among themselves, and speak a language which would not be understood in other parts of Tibet. As no Tibetan proper is allowed to pass the Yatung barrier, the Tomos have the monopoly of the carrying trade between Phari and Kalimpong. They are voluntarily under the protection of the Tibetans, who treat them liberally, as the Lamas realize the danger of their geographical position as a buffer state, and are shrewd enough to recognise that any ill treatment or oppression would drive them to seek protection from the Bhutanese or British.

The Tomos are merry people, hearty, and good-natured. They are wonderfully hardy and enduring. In the coldest winter months, when the thermometer is 20° below zero, they will camp out at night in the snow, forming a circle of their loads, and sleep contentedly inside with no tent or roofing. The women would be comely if it were not for the catch that they smear over their faces. The practice is common to the Tibetans and Bhutanese, but no satisfactory reason has been found for it. The Jesuit Father, Johann Grueber, who visited Tibet in 1661, attributed the custom to a religious whim: – 'The women, out of a religious whim, never wash, but daub themselves with a nasty kind of oil, which not only causes them to stink intolerably, but renders them extremely ugly and deformed.' A hundred and eighty years afterwards Huc noticed the same habit, and attributed it to an edict issued by the Dalai Lama early in the seventeenth century. 'The women of Tibet in those days were much given to dress, and libertinage, and corrupted the Lamas to a degree to bring their holy order into a bad repute.' The then Nome Khan (deputy of the Dalai Lama), accordingly issued an order that the women should never appear in public without smearing their faces with a black disfiguring paste. Huc recorded that though the order was still obeyed, the practice was observed without much benefit to morals. If you ask a Tomo or Tibetan to-day why their women smear and daub themselves in this unbecoming manner, they invariably reply, like the Mussulman or Hindu, that it is custom. Mongolians do not bother themselves about causes.

The Tomo women wear a flat green distinctive cap, with a red badge in the front, which harmonizes with their complexion – a coarse, brick red, of which the primal ingredients are dirt and catch, erroneously called pig's blood, and the natural ruddiness of a healthy outdoor life in a cold climate. A procession of these sirens is comely and picturesque – at a hundred yards. They wrap themselves round and round with a thick woollen blanket of pleasing colour and pattern, and wear on their feet high woollen boots with leather or rope soles. If it was not for their disfiguring toilet many of them would be handsome. The children are generally pretty, and I have seen one or two that were really beautiful. When we left a camp the villagers would generally get wind of it, and come down for loot. Old newspapers, tins, bottles, string, and cardboard boxes were treasured prizes. We threw these out of our cave, and the children scrambled for them, and even the women made dives at anything particularly tempting. My last impression of Lingmathang was a group of women giggling and gesticulating over the fashion plates and advertisements in a number of the *Lady*, which somebody's *memsahib* had used for the packing of a ham.

The Tomos, though not naturally given to cleanliness, realize the hygienic value of their hot springs. There are resorts in the neighbourhood of Chumbi as fashionable as Homburg or Salsomaggiore; mixed bathing is the rule, without costumes. These healthy folk are not morbidly conscious of sex. The springs contain sulphur and iron, and are undoubtedly efficacious. Where they

are not hot enough, the Tomos bake large boulders in the ashes of a log fire, and roll them into the water to increase the temperature.

Tomos and Tibetans are fond of smoking. They dry the leaves of the wild rhubarb, and mix them with tobacco leaves. The mixture is called *dopta*, and was the favourite blend of the country. Now hundreds of thousands of cheap American cigarettes are being introduced, and a lucrative tobacco-trade has sprung up. Boxes of ten, which are sold at a pice in Darjeeling, fetch an anna at Chumbi, and two annas at Phari. Sahibs smoke them, sepoy smoke them, drivers and followers smoke them, and the Tomo coolies smoke nothing else. Tibetan children of three appreciate them hugely, and the road from Phari to Rungpo is literally strewn with the empty boxes.

There is a considerable Chinese element in the Chumbi Valley – a frontier officer, with the local rank of the Fourth Button, a colonel, clerks of the Customs House, and troops numbering from one to two hundred. These, of course, were not in evidence when we occupied the valley in December. The Chinese are not accompanied by their wives, but take to themselves women of the country, whose offspring people the so-called Chinese villages. The pure Chinaman does not remain in the country after his term of office. Life at Chumbi is the most tedious exile to him, and he looks down on the Tomos as barbarous savages. He is as unhappy as a Frenchman in Tonquin, cut off from all the diversions of social and intellectual life. The frontier officer at Bibi-thang told me that he had brought his wife with him, and the poor lady had never left the house, but cried incessantly for China and civilization. Yet to the uninitiated the Chinese villages of Gob-sorg and Bibi-thang might have been taken from the far East and plumped down on the Indian frontier. There is the same far-Eastern smell, the same doss-house, the same hanging lamps, the same red lucky paper over the lintels of the doors, and the same red and green abortions on the walls.

Much has been written and duly contradicted about the fertility of the Chumbi Valley. If one does not expect orange-groves and rice-fields at 12,000 feet, it must be admitted that the valley is, relatively speaking, fertile – that is to say, its produce is sufficient to support its three or four thousand inhabitants.

The lower valley produces buckwheat, turnips, potatoes, radishes, and barley. The latter, the staple food of the Tibetans, has, when ground, an appetizing smell very like oatmeal. The upper valley is quite sterile, and produces nothing but barley, which does not ripen; it is gathered for fodder when green, and the straw is sold at high prices to the merchants who visit Phari from Tibet and Bhutan. This year the Tibetan merchants are afraid to come, and the commissariat benefits by a very large supply of fodder which ought to see them through the summer.

The idea that the valley is unusually fertile probably arose from the well-to-do appearance of the natives of Rinchengong and Chumbi, and their almost palatial houses, which give evidence of a prosperity due to trade rather than agriculture.

The hillsides around Chumbi produce wild strawberries, raspberries, currants, and cherries; but these are quite insipid in this sunless climate.

The Chinese Custom's officer at Yatung tells me that the summer months, though not hot, are relaxing and enervating. The thermometer never rises above 70°. The rainfall does not average quite 50 inches; but almost daily at noon a mist creeps up from Bhutan, and a constant drizzle falls. In June, July, and August, 1901, there were only three days without rain.

At Phari I met a venerable old gentleman who gave me some statistics. The old man, Katsak Kasi by name, was a Tibetan from the Kham province, acting at Phari as trade agent for the Bhutanese Government. His face was seared and parchment-like from long exposure to cold winds and rough weather. His features were comparatively aquiline – that is to say, they did not look as if they had been flattened out in youth. He wore a very large pair of green spectacles, with a gold bulb at each end and a red tassel in the middle, which gave him an air of wisdom and distinction. He answered my rather inquisitive questions with courtesy and decision, and yet with such a serious care for details that I felt quite sure his figures must be accurate.

If statistics were any gauge of the benefits Indian trade would derive from an open market with Tibet, the present mission, as far as commercial interests are concerned, would be wasted. According to Kasi's statistics, the cost of two dozen or thirty mules would balance the whole of the annual revenue on Indian imports into the country. The idea that duties are levied at the Yatung and Gobsorg barriers is a mistake. The only Customs House is at Phari, where the Indian and Bhutanese trade-routes meet. The Customs are under the supervision of the two jongpens, who send the revenue to Lhasa twice a year.

The annual income on imports from India, Kasi assured me, is only 6,000 rupees, whereas the income on exports amounts to 20,000. Tibetan trade with India consists almost entirely of wool, yaks'-tails, and ponies. There is a tax of 2 rupees 8 annas on ponies, 1 rupee a maund on wool, and 1 rupee 8 annas a maund on yaks'-tails. Our imports into Tibet, according to Kasi's statistics, are practically nil. Some piece goods, iron vessels, and tobacco leaves find their way over the Jelap, but it is a common sight to see mules returning into Tibet with nothing but their drivers' cooking utensils and warm clothing.⁹

At present no Indian tea passes Yatung. That none is sold at Phari confirms the rumour I mentioned that the Chinese Amban, after signing the trade regulations between India and Tibet in Darjeeling, 1893, crossed the frontier to introduce new laws, virtually annulling the regulations. Indian tea might be carried into Tibet, but not sold there. Tibet has consistently broken all her promises and treaty obligations. She has placed every obstacle in the way of Indian trade, and insulted our Commissioners; yet the despatch of the present mission with its armed escort has been called an act of aggression.

When I asked Kasi if the Tibetans would be angry with him for helping us, he said they would certainly cut off his head if he remained in the fort after we had left. There is some foundation in travellers' stories about the punishment inflicted on the guards of the passes and other officials who fail to prevent Europeans entering Tibet or pushing on towards Lhasa.

Some Chumbi traders who were in Lhasa when we entered the valley are still detained there, as far as I can gather, as hostages for the good behaviour of their neighbours. In Tibet the punishment does not fit the crime. The guards of a pass are punished for letting white men through, quite irrespective of the opposing odds.

The commonest punishment in Tibet is flogging, but the ordeal is so severe that it often proves fatal. I asked Kasi some questions about the magisterial powers of the two jongpens, or district officers, who remained in the fort some days after we occupied it. He told me that they could not pass capital sentence, but they might flog the prisoners, and if they died, nothing was said. Several victims have died of flogging at Phari.

The natives in Darjeeling have a story of Tibetan methods, which have always seemed to me the refinement of cruelty. At Gyantse, they say, the criminal is flung into a dark pit, where he cannot tell whether it is night or day. Cobras and scorpions and reptiles of various degrees of venom are his companions; these he may hear in the darkness, for it is still enough, and seek or avoid as he has courage. Food is sometimes thrown in to tempt any faint-hearted wretch to prolong his agony. I asked Kasi if there were any truth in the tale. He told me that there were no venomous snakes in Tibet, but he had heard that there was a dark prison in Gyantse, where criminals sometimes died of scorpion bites; he added that only the worst offenders were punished in this way. The modified version of the story is gruesome enough.

It is usual for Tibetan and Bhutanese officials to receive their pay in grain, it being understood that their position puts them in the way of obtaining the other necessities of life, and perhaps a few

⁹ The only articles imported to the value of £1,000 are cotton goods, woollen cloths, metals, chinaware, coral, indigo, maize, silk, fur, and tobacco. The only exports to the value of £1,000 are musk, ponies, skins, wool, and yaks'-tails. Appended are the returns for the years 1895-1902: Customs House Returns, Yatung.

of its luxuries. Kasi, being an important official, receives from the Bhutan Government forty maunds of barley and forty maunds of rice annually. He receives, in addition, a commission on the trade disputes that he decides in proportion to their importance. He is now an invaluable servant of the British Government. At his nod the barren solitudes round Phari are wakening into life. From the fort bastions one sees sometimes on the hills opposite an indistinct black line, like a caterpillar gradually assuming shape. They are Kasi's yaks coming from some blind valley which no one but a hunter or mountaineer would have imagined to exist. Ponies, grain, and fodder are also imported from Bhutan and sold to the mutual gratification of the Bhutanese and ourselves. The yaks are hired and employed on the line of communications.

It is to be hoped that the Bhutanese, when they hear of our good prices, will send supplies over the frontier to hasten our advance. But we must take care that no harm befalls Kasi for his good services. When I asked him how he stood with the Tibetan Government, he laid his hand in a significant manner across his throat.

*LINGMATHANG,
February.*

Before entering the bare, unsheltered plateau of Tibet, the road to Lhasa winds through seven miles of pine forest, which recalls some of the most beautiful valleys of Switzerland.

The wood-line ends abruptly. After that there is nothing but barrenness and desolation. The country round Chumbi is not very thickly forested. There are long strips of arable land on each side of the road, and villages every two or three miles. The fields are terraced and enclosed within stone walls. Scattered on the hillside are stone-built houses, with low, over-hanging eaves, and long wooden tiles, each weighed down with a gray boulder. One might imagine one's self in Kandersteg or Lauterbrunnen; only lofty praying flags and *mani*-walls brightly painted with Buddhistic pictures and inscriptions dispel the illusion.

There is no lack of colour. In the winter months a brier with large red berries and a low, foxy-brown thornbush, like a young osier in March, lend a russet hue to the landscape. Higher on the hills the withered grass is yellow, and the blending of these quiet tints, russet, brown, and yellow, gives the valley a restful beauty; but in cloud it is sombre enough.

Three years ago I visited Yatung in May. In springtime there is a profusion of colour. The valley is beautiful, beyond the beauty of the grandest Alpine scenery, carpeted underfoot with spring flowers, and ablaze overhead with flowering rhododendrons. To try to describe mountains and forests is a most unprofitable task; all the adjectives of scenic description are exhausted; the coinage has been too long debased. For my own part, it has been almost a pain to visit the most beautiful parts of the earth and to know that one's sensations are incommunicable, that it is impossible to make people believe and understand. To those who have not seen, scenery is either good, bad, or indifferent; there are no degrees. Ruskin, the greatest master of description, is most entertaining when he is telling us about the domestic circle at Herne Hill. But mountain scenery is of all the most difficult to describe. The sense of the Himalayas is intangible. There are elusive lights and shades, and sounds and whispers, and unfamiliar scents, and a thousand fleeting manifestations of the genius of the place that are impossible to arrest. Magnificent, majestic, splendid, are weak, colourless words that depict nothing. It is the poets who have described what they have not seen who have been most successful. Milton's hell is as real as any landscape of Byron's, and the country through which Childe Roland rode to the Dark Tower is more vivid and present to us than any of Wordsworth's Westmoreland tarns and valleys. So it is a poem of the imagination – 'Kubla Khan' – that seems to me to breathe something of the spirit of the Yatung and Chumbi Valleys, only there is a little less of mystery and gloom here, and a little more of sunshine and brightness than in the dream poem. Instead of attempting to describe the valley – Paradise would be easier to describe – I will try to explain as logically as possible why it fascinated me more than any scenery I have seen.

I had often wondered if there were any place in the East where flowers grow in the same profusion as in Europe – in England, or in Switzerland. The nearest approach I had seen was in the plateau of the Southern Shan States, at about 4,000 feet, where the flora is very homelike. But the ground is not *carpeted*; one could tread without crushing a blossom. Flowers are plentiful, too, on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, and on the hills on the Siamese side of the Tennasserim frontier, but I had seen nothing like a field of marsh-marigolds and cuckoo-flowers in May, or a meadow of buttercups and daisies, or a bank of primroses, or a wood carpeted with bluebells, or a hillside with heather, or an Alpine slope with gentians and ranunculus. I had been told that in Persia in springtime the valleys of the Shapur River and the Karun are covered profusely with lilies, also the forests of Manchuria in the neighbourhood of the Great White Mountain; but until I crossed the Jelapla and struck down the valley to Yatung I thought I would have to go West to see such things again. Never was such profusion. Besides the primulas¹⁰ – I counted eight different kinds of them – and gentians and anemones and celandines and wood sorrel and wild strawberries and irises, there were the rhododendrons glowing like coals through the pine forest. As one descended the scenery became more fascinating; the valley narrowed, and the stream was more boisterous. Often the cliffs hung sheer over the water's edge; the rocks were coated with green and yellow moss, which formed a bed for the dwarf rhododendron bushes, now in full flower, white and crimson and cream, and every hue between a dark reddish brown and a light sulphury yellow – not here and there, but everywhere, jostling one another for nooks and crannies in the rock.¹¹

These delicate flowers are very different from their dowdy cousin, the coarse red rhododendron of the English shrubbery. At a little distance they resemble more hothouse azaleas, and equal them in wealth of blossom.

The great moss-grown rocks in the bed of the stream were covered with equal profusion. Looking behind, the snows crowned the pine-trees, and over them rested the blue sky. And here is the second reason – as I am determined to be logical in my preference – why I found the valley so fascinating. In contrasting the Himalayas with the Alps, there is always something that the former is without. Never the snows, and the water, and the greenery at the same time; if the greenery is at your feet, the snows are far distant; where the Himalayas gain in grandeur they lose in beauty. So I thought the wild valley of Lauterbrunnen, lying at the foot of the Jungfrau, the perfection of Alpine scenery until I saw the valley of Yatung, a pine-clad mountain glen, green as a hawthorn hedge in May, as brilliantly variegated as a beechwood copse in autumn, and culminating in the snowy peak that overhangs the Jelapla. The valley has besides an intangible fascination, indescribable because it is illogical. Certainly the light that played upon all these colours seemed to me softer than everyday sunshine; and the opening spring foliage of larch and birch and mountain ash seemed more delicate and varied than on common ground. Perhaps it was that I was approaching the forbidden land. But what irony, that this seductive valley should be the approach to the most bare and unsheltered country in Asia!

Even now, in February, I can detect a few salmon-coloured leaf-buds, which remind me that the month of May will be a revelation to the mission force, when their veins are quickened by the unfamiliar warmth, and their eyes dazzled by this unexpected treasure which is now germinating in the brown earth.

Four miles beyond Chumbi the road passes through the second military wall at the Chinese village of Gob-sorg. Riding through the quiet gateway beneath the grim, hideous figure of the goddess

¹⁰ Between Gnatong and Gautsa, thirteen different species of primulas are found. They are: *Primula Petiolaris*, *P. glabra*, *P. Sapphirina*, *P. pusilla*, *P. Kingii*, *P. Elwesiana*, *P. Capitata*, *P. Sikkimensis*, *P. Involucra*, *P. Denticulata*, *P. Stuartii*, *P. Soldanelloides*, *P. Stirtonia*.

¹¹ The species are: *Rhododendron campanulatum*, purple flowers; *R. Fulgens*, scarlet; *R. Hodgsonii*, rose-coloured; *R. Anthopogon*, white; *R. Virgatum*, purple; *R. Nivale*, rose-red; *R. Wightii*, yellow; *R. Falconeri*, cream-coloured; *R. cinndbarinum*, brick-red ('The Gates of Tibet,' Appendix I., J. A. H. Louis).

Dolma carved on the rock above, one feels a silent menace. One is part of more than a material invasion; one has passed the gate that has been closed against the profane for centuries; one has committed an irretrievable step. Goddess and barrier are symbols of Tibet's spiritual and material agencies of opposition. We have challenged and defied both. We have entered the arena now, and are to be drawn into the vortex of all that is most sacred and hidden, to struggle there with an implacable foe, who is protected by the elemental forces of nature.

Inside the wall, above the road, stands the Chinese village of Gob-sorg. The Chinamen come out of their houses and stand on the revetment to watch us pass. They are as quiet and ugly as their gods. They gaze down on our convoys and modern contrivances with a silent contempt that implies a consciousness of immemorial superiority. Who can tell what they think or what they wish, these undivine creatures? They love money, we know, and they love something else that we cannot know. It is not country, or race, or religion, but an inscrutable something that may be allied to these things, that induces a mental obstinacy, an unfathomable reserve which may conceal a wisdom beyond our philosophy or mere callousness and indifference. The thing is there, though it has no European name or definition. It has caused many curious and unexplained outbreaks in different parts of the world, and it is no doubt symbolized in their inexpressibly hideous flag. The element is non-conductive, and receives no current from progress, and it is therefore incommunicable to us who are wrapped in the pride of evolution. The question here and elsewhere is whether the Chinese love money more or this inscrutable dragon element. If it is money, their masks must have concealed a satisfaction at the prospect of the increased trade that follows our flag; if the dragon element, a grim hope that we might be cut off in the wilderness and annihilated by Asiatic hordes.

Unlike the Chinese, the Tomos are unaffectedly glad to see us in the valley. The humblest peasant is the richer by our presence, and the landowners and traders are more prosperous than they have been for many years. Their uncompromising reception of us makes a withdrawal from the Chumbi Valley impossible, for the Tibetans would punish them relentlessly for the assistance they have given their enemies.

A mile beyond Gob-sorg is the Tibetan village of Galing-ka, where the praying-flags are as thick as masts in a dockyard, and streams of paper prayers are hung across the valley to prevent the entrance of evil spirits. Chubby little children run out and salute one with a cry of 'Backsheesh!' the first alien word in their infant vocabulary.

A mile further a sudden turn in the valley brings one to a level plain – a phenomenally flat piece of ground where one can race two miles along the straight. No one passes it without remarking that it is the best site for a hill-station in Northern India. Where else can one find a racecourse, polo-ground, fishing, and shooting, and a rainfall that is little more than a third of that of Darjeeling? Three hundred feet above the stream on the west bank is a plateau, apparently intended for building sites. The plain in the valley was naturally designed for the training of mounted infantry, and is now, probably for the first time, being turned to its proper use.

*Lingmathang,
March 18.*

I have left the discomforts of Phari, and am camping now on the Lingmathang Plain. I am writing in a natural cave in the rock. The opening is walled in by a sangar of stones 5 feet high, from which pine-branches support a projecting roof. On fine days the space between the roof and wall is left open, and called the window; but when it snows, gunny-bags are let down as purdahs, and the den becomes very warm and comfortable. There is a natural hearth, a natural chimney-piece, and a natural chimney that draws excellently. The place is sheltered by high cliffs, and it is very pleasant to look out from this snugness on a wintry landscape, and ground covered deep with snow.

Outside, seventy shaggy Tibetan ponies, rough and unshod, averaging 12.2 hands, are tethered under the shelter of a rocky cliff. They are being trained according to the most approved methods of

modern warfare. The Mounted Infantry Corps, mostly volunteers from the 23rd and 32nd Pioneers and 8th Gurkhas, are under the command of Captain Ottley of the 23rd. The corps was raised at Gnatong in December, and though many of the men had not ridden before, after two months' training they cut a very respectable figure in the saddle. A few years ago a proposal was made to the military authorities that the Pioneers, like other regiments, should go in for a course of mounted infantry training. The reply caused much amusement at the time. The suggestion was not adopted, but orders were issued that 'every available opportunity should be taken of teaching the Pioneers to ride in carts.' A wag in the force naturally suggests that the new Ekka Corps, now running between Phari and Tuna, should be utilized to carry out the spirit of this order. Certainly on the road beyond the Tangla the ekkas would require some sitting.

The present mission is the third 'show' on which the 23rd and 32nd have been together during the last nine years. In Chitral and Waziristan they fought side by side. It is no exaggeration to say that these regiments have been on active service three years out of five since they were raised in 1857. The original draft of the 32nd, it will be remembered, was the unarmed volunteer corps of Mazbi Sikhs, who offered themselves as an escort to the convoy from Lahore to Delhi during the siege. The Mazbis were the most lawless and refractory folk in the Punjab, and had long been the despair of Government. On arrival at Delhi they were employed in the trenches, rushing in to fill up the places of the killed and wounded as fast as they fell. It will be remembered that they formed the fatigue party who carried the powder-bags to blow up the Cashmere Gate. A hundred and fifty-seven of them were killed during the siege. With this brilliant opening it is no wonder that they have been on active service almost continually since.

A frontier campaign would be incomplete without the 32nd or 23rd. It was the 32nd who cut their way through 5 feet of snow, and carried the battery guns to the relief of Chitral. The 23rd Pioneers were also raised from the Mazbi Sikhs in the same year of the Mutiny, 1857. The history of the two regiments is very similar. The 23rd distinguished themselves in China, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, and numerous frontier campaigns. One of the most brilliant exploits was when, with the Gordon Highlanders under Major (now Sir George) White, they captured the Afghan guns at Kandahar. To-day the men of the two regiments meet again as members of the same corps on the Lingmathang Plain. Naturally the most cordial relations exist between the men, and one can hear them discussing old campaigns as they sit round their pinewood fires in the evenings. They and the twenty men of the 8th Gurkhas (of Manipur fame) turn out together every morning for exercise on their diminutive steeds. They ride without saddle or stirrups, and though they have only been horsemen for two months, they seldom fall off at the jumps. The other day, when a Mazbi Sikh took a voluntary into the hedge, a genial Gurkha reminded him of the eccentric order 'to practise riding in carts.'

At Lingmathang we have had a fair amount of sport of a desultory kind. The neighbouring forests are the home of that very rare and little-known animal, the shao, or Sikkim stag. The first animal of the species to fall to a European gun was shot by Major Wallace Dunlop on the Lingmathang Hills in January. A month later Captain Ottley wounded a buck which he was not able to follow up on account of a heavy fall of snow. Lately one or two shao – does in all cases – have come down to visit the plain. While we were breakfasting on the morning of the 16th, we heard a great deal of shouting and halloaing, and a Gurkha jemadar ran up to tell us that a female shao, pursued by village dogs, had broken through the jungle on the hillside and emerged on the plain a hundred yards from our camp. We mounted at once, and Ottley deployed the mounted infantry, who were ready for parade, to head the beast from the hills. The shao jinked like a hare, and crossed and recrossed the stream several times, but the poor beast was exhausted, and, after twenty minutes' exciting chase, we surrounded it. Captain Ottley threw himself on the animal's neck and held it down until a sepoy arrived with ropes to bind its hind-legs. The chase was certainly a unique incident in the history of sport – a field of seventy in the Himalayas, a clear spurt in the open, no dogs, and the quarry the rarest zoological specimen in the world. The beast stood nearly 14 hands, and was remarkable for its long ears and

elongated jaw. The sequel was sad. Besides the fright and exhaustion, the captured shao sustained an injury in the loin; it pined, barely nibbled at its food, and, after ten days, died.

Sikkim stags are sometimes shot by native shikaris, and there is great rivalry among members of the mission force in buying their heads. They are shy, inaccessible beasts, and they are not met with beyond the wood limit.

The shooting in the Chumbi Valley is interesting to anyone fond of natural history, though it is a little disappointing from the sportsman's point of view. When officers go out for a day's shooting, they think they have done well if they bring home a brace of pheasants. When the sappers and miners began to work on the road below Gautsa, the blood-pheasants used to come down to the stream to watch the operations, but now one sees very few game-birds in the valley. The minal is occasionally shot. The cock-bird, as all sportsmen know, is, with the exception of the Argus-eye, the most beautiful pheasant in the world. There is a lamasery in the neighbourhood, where the birds are almost tame. The monks who feed them think that they are inhabited by the spirits of the blest. Where the snow melts in the pine-forests and leaves soft patches and moist earth, you will find the blood-pheasant. When you disturb them they will run up the hillside and call vociferously from their new hiding-place, so that you may get another shot. Pheasant-shooting here is not sport; the birds seldom rise, and when they do it is almost impossible to get a shot at them in the thick jungle. One must shoot them running for the pot. Ten or a dozen is not a bad bag for one gun later in the year, when more snow has fallen.

At a distance the blood-pheasant appears a dowdy bird. The hen is quite insignificant, but, on a closer acquaintance, the cock shows a delicate colour-scheme of mauve, pink, and green, which is quite different from the plumage of any other bird I have seen. The skins fetch a good price at home, as fishermen find them useful for making flies. A sportsman who has shot in the Yatung Valley regularly for four years tells me that the cock-bird of this species is very much more numerous than the hen. Another Chumbi pheasant is the tracopan, a smaller bird than the minal, and very beautifully marked. I have not heard of a tracopan being shot this season; the bird is not at all common anywhere on this side of the Himalayas.

Snow-partridge sometimes come down to the Lingmathang hills; in the adjacent Kongbu Valley they are plentiful. These birds are gregarious, and are found among the large, loose boulders on the hill-tops. In appearance they are a cross between the British grouse and the red-legged partridge, having red feet and legs uncovered with feathers, and a red bill and chocolate breast. The feathers of the back and rump are white, with broad, defined bars of rich black.

Another common bird is the snow-pigeon. Large flocks of them may be seen circling about the valley anywhere between Phari and Chumbi. Sometimes, when we are sitting in our cave after dinner, we hear the tweek of solitary snipe flying overhead, but we have never flushed any. Every morning before breakfast I stroll along the river bank with a gun, and often put up a stray duck. I have frequently seen goosanders on the river, but not more than two or three in a party. They never leave the Himalayas. The only migratory duck I have observed are the common teal and Brahminy or ruddy sheldrake, and these only in pairs. The latter, though despised on the plains, are quite edible up here. I discredit the statement that they feed on carrion, as I have never seen one near the carcasses of the dead transport animals that are only too plentiful in the valley just now. After comparing notes with other sportsmen, I conclude that the Ammo Chu Valley is not a regular route for migratory duck. The odd teal that I shot in February were probably loiterers that were not strong enough to join in the flight southwards.

Near Lingmathang I shot the ibis bill (*Ibidorhynchus Struthersi*), a bird which is allied to the oyster catchers. This was the first Central Asian species I met.

Gautsa,
February.

Gautsa, which lies five miles north of Lingmathang, nearly half-way between Chumbi and Phari, must be added to the map. A week or two ago the place was deserted and unnamed; it did not boast a single cowherd's hut. Now it is a busy camp, and likely to be a permanent halting-place on the road to Phari. The camp lies in a deep, moss-carpeted hollow, with no apparent egress. On three sides it is flanked by rocky cliffs, densely forested with pine and silver birch; on the fourth rises an abrupt wall of rock, which is suffused with a glow of amber light an hour before sunset. The Ammo Chu, which is here nothing but a 20-foot stream frozen over at night, bisects the camp. The valley is warm and sheltered, and escapes much of the bitter wind that never spares Chumbi. After dinner one prefers the open-air and a camp fire. Officers who have been up the line before turn into their tents regretfully, for they know that they are saying good-bye to comfort, and will not enjoy the genial warmth of a good fire again until they have crossed the bleak Tibetan tablelands and reached the sparsely-wooded Valley of Gyantse.

CHAPTER IV

PHARI JONG

February 15.

Icy winds and suffocating smoke are not conducive to a literary style, though they sometimes inspire a rude eloquence that is quite unfit for publication. As I write we are huddling over the mess-room brazier – our youngest optimist would not call it a fire. Men drop in now and then from fatigue duty, and utter an incisive phrase that expresses the general feeling, while we who write for an enlightened public must sacrifice force for euphemism. A week at Phari dispels all illusions; only a bargee could adequately describe the place. Yet the elements, which 'feelingly persuade us' what we are, sometimes inspire us with the eloquence of discomfort.

At Gautsa the air was scented with the fragrance of warm pine-trees, and there was no indication of winter save the ice on the Ammo Chu. The torrent roared boisterously beneath its frozen surface, and threw up little tentacles of frozen spray, which glistened fantastically in the sun. Three miles further up the stream the wood-belt ends abruptly; then, after another three miles, one passes the last stunted bush; after that there is nothing but brown earth and yellow withered grass.

Five miles above Gautsa is Dotah, the most cheerless camp on the march. The wind blows through the gorge unceasingly, and penetrates to the bone. On the left bank of the stream is the frozen waterfall, which might be worshipped by the fanciful and superstitious as embodying the genius of the place, hard and resistless, a crystallized monument of the implacable spirit of Nature in these high places.

At Kamparab, where we camped, two miles higher up the stream, the thermometer fell to 14° below zero. Close by is the meeting-place of the sources of the Ammo Chu. All the plain is undermined with the warrens of the long-haired marmots and voles, who sit on their thresholds like a thousand little spies, and curiously watch our approach, then dive down into their burrows to tell their wives of the strange bearded invaders. They are the despair of their rivals, the sappers and miners, who are trying to make a level road for the new light ekkas. One envies them their warmth and snugness as one rides against the bitter penetrating winds.

Twelve miles from Gautsa a turn in the valley brings one into view of Phari Jong. At first sight it might be a huge isolated rock, but as one approaches the bastions and battlements become more distinct. Distances are deceptive in this rarefied air, and objects that one imagines to be quite close are sometimes found to be several miles distant.

The fort is built on a natural mound in the plain. It is a huge rambling building six stories high, surrounded by a courtyard, where mules and ponies are stabled. As a military fortification Phari Jong is by no means contemptible. The walls are of massive stonework which would take heavy guns to demolish. The angles are protected from attacking parties by machicolated galleries, and three enormous bastions project from each flank. These are crumbling in places, and the Pioneers might destroy the bastion and breach the wall with a bag or two of guncotton. On the eastern side there is a square courtyard like an Arab caravanserai, where cattle are penned. The fortress would hold the whole Tibetan army, with provisions for a year. It was evacuated the night before we reconnoitred the valley.

The interior of the Jong is a warren of stairs, landings, and dark cavernous rooms, which would take a whole day to explore. The walls are built of stone and mud, and coated with century-old smoke. There are no chimneys or adequate windows, and the filth is indescribable. When Phari was first occupied, eighty coolies were employed a whole week clearing away refuse. Judging by the accretion of dirt, a new-comer might class the building as medieval; but filth is no criterion of age, for everything left in the same place becomes quickly coated with grime an inch thick. The dust that invades one's

tent at Chumbi is clean and wholesome compared to the Phari dirt, which is the filth of human habitation, the secretion of centuries of foul living. It falls from the roof on one's head, sticks to one's clothes as one brushes against the wall, and is blown up into one's eyes and throat from the floor.

The fort is most insanitary, but a military occupation is necessary. The hacking coughs which are prevalent among officers and men are due to impurities of the air which affect the lungs. Cartloads of dirt are being scraped away every day, but gusts of wind from the lower stories blow up more dust, which penetrates every nook and cranny of the draughty rooms, so that there is a fresh layer by nightfall. To clear the lower stories and cellars would be a hopeless task; even now rooms are found in unexpected places which emit clouds of dust whenever the wind eddies round the basement.

I explored the ground-floor with a lantern, and was completely lost in the maze of passages and dark chambers. When we first occupied the fort, they were filled with straw, gunpowder, and old arms. A hundred and forty maunds of inferior gunpowder was destroyed, and the arms now litter the courtyard. These the Tibetans themselves abandoned as rubbish. The rusty helmets, shields, and breastplates are made of the thinnest iron plates interlaced with leathern thongs, and would not stop an arrow. The old bell-mouthed matchlocks, with their wooden ground-rests, would be more dangerous to the Tibetan marksmen than the enemy. The slings and bows and arrows are reckoned obsolete even by these primitive warriors. Perhaps they attribute more efficacy to the praying-wheels which one encounters at every corner of the fort. The largest are in niches in the wall to left and right of the gateway; rows of smaller ones are attached to the banisters on the landings and to the battlements of the roof. The wheels are covered with grime – the grime of Lamas' hands. Dirt and religion are inseparable in Tibet. The Lamas themselves are the most filthy and malodorous folk I have met in the country. From this it must not be inferred that one class is more cleanly in its habits than another, for nobody ever thinks of washing. Soap is not included in the list of sundries that pass the Customs House at Yatung. If the Lamas are dirtier than the yak-herds and itinerant merchants it is because they lead an indoor life, whereas the pastoral folk are continually exposed to the purifying winds of the tablelands, which are the nearest equivalent in Tibet to a cold bath.

I once read of a Tibetan saint, one of the pupils of Naropa, who was credited with a hundred miraculous gifts, one of which was that he could dive into the water like a fish. Wherein the miracle lay had often puzzled me, but when I met the Lamas of the Kanjut Gompa I understood at once that it was the holy man's contact with the water.

Phari is eloquent of piety, as it is understood in Tibet. The better rooms are frescoed with Buddhistic paintings, and on the third floor is a library, now used as a hospital, where xylograph editions of the Lamaist scriptures and lives of the saints are pigeon-holed in lockers in the wall. The books are printed on thin oblong sheets of Chinese paper, enclosed in boards, and illuminated with quaint coloured tailpieces of holy men in devotional attitudes. Phari fort, with its casual blending of East and West, is full of incongruous effects, but the oddest and most pathetic incongruity is the chorten on the roof, from which, amidst praying-flags and pious offerings of coloured raiment, flutters the Union Jack.

February 18.

The troops are so busy making roads that they have very little time for amusements. The 8th Gurkhas have already constructed some eight miles of road on each side of Phari for the ekka transport. Companies of the 23rd Pioneers are repairing the road at Dotah, Chumbi, and Rinchengong. The 32nd are working at Rinchengong, and the sappers and miners on the Nathula and at Gautsa.

We have started football, and the Gurkhas have a very good idea of the game. One loses one's wind completely at this elevation after every spurt of twenty yards, but recovers it again in a wonderfully short time. Other amusements are sliding and tobogganing, which are a little disappointing to enthusiasts. The ice is lumpy and broken, and the streamlets that run down to the

plain are so tortuous that fifty yards without a spill is considered a good run for a toboggan. The funniest sight is to see the Gurkha soldiers trying to drag the toboggan uphill, slipping and tumbling and sprawling on the ice, and immensely enjoying one another's discomfiture.

To clear the dust from one's throat and shake off the depression caused by weeks of waiting in the same place, there is nothing like a day's shooting or exploring in the neighbourhood of Phari. I get up sometimes before daybreak, and spend the whole day reconnoitring with a small party of mounted infantry. Yesterday we crossed a pass which looked down into the Kongbu Valley – a likely camping-ground for the Tibetan troops. The valley is connected to the north with the Tuna plateau, and is almost as fertile in its lower stretches as Chumbi. A gray fortress hangs over the cliff on the western side of the valley, and above it tower the glaciers of Shudu-Tsenpa and the Gora Pass into Sikkim. On the eastern side, at a creditable distance from the fort, we could see the Kongbu nunnery, which looked from where we stood like an old Roman viaduct. The nuns, I was told, are rarely celibate; they shave the head and wear no ornaments.

Riding back we saw some burrhel on the opposite hills, too far off to make a successful stalk possible. The valley is full of them, and a week later some officers from Phari on a yak-collecting expedition got several good heads. The Tibetan gazelle, or goa (*Gazella hirticaudata*), is very common on the Phari plateau, and we bagged two that afternoon. When the force first occupied the Jong, they were so tame that a sportsman could walk up to within 100 yards of a herd, and it was not an uncommon thing for three buck to fall to the same gun in a morning. Now one has to manœuvre a great deal to get within 300 yards of them.

Sportsmen who have travelled in other parts of Tibet say the goa are very shy and inaccessible. Perhaps their comparative tameness near Phari may be accounted for by the fact that the old trade route crosses the plateau, and they have never been molested by the itinerant merchants and carriers. Gazelle meat is excellent. It has been a great resource for the garrison. No epicure could wish for anything better.

Another unfamiliar beast that one meets in the neighbourhood of Phari is the kyang, or Tibetan wild ass (*Equus hemionus*), one or two of which have been shot for specimens. The kyang is more like a zebra than a horse or donkey. Its flesh, I believe, is scorned even by camp-followers. Hare are fairly plentiful, but they are quite flavourless. A huge solitary gray wolf (*Canis laniger*) was shot the other day, the only one of its kind I have seen. Occasionally one puts up a fox. The Tibetan species has a very fine brush that fetches a fancy price in the bazaar. At present there is too much ice on the plain to hunt them, but they ought to give good sport in the spring.

It was dark when we rode into the Jong. After a long day in the saddle, dinner is good, even though it is of yak's flesh, and it is good to sit in front of a fire even though the smoke chokes you. I went so far as to pity the cave-dwellers at Chumbi. Phari is certainly very much colder, but it has its diversions and interests. There is still some shooting to be had, and the place has a quaint old-world individuality of its own, which seasons the monotony of life to a contemplative man. One is on the borderland, and one has a Micawber-like feeling that something may turn up. After dinner there is bridge, which fleets the time considerably, but at Chumbi there were no diversions of any kind – nothing but dull, blank, uninterrupted monotony.

February 20.

For two days half a blizzard has been blowing, and expeditions have been impossible. Everything one eats and drinks has the same taste of argol smoke. At breakfast this morning we had to put our *chapatties* in our pockets to keep them clean, and kept our meat covered with a soup-plate, making surreptitious dives at it with a fork. After a few seconds' exposure it was covered with grime. Sausages and bully beef, which had just been boiled, were found to be frozen inside. The smoke in the mess-room was suffocating. So to bed, wrapped in sheepskins and a sleeping-bag. Under these

depressing conditions I have been reading the narratives of Bogle and Manning, old English worthies who have left on record the most vivid impressions of the dirt and cold and misery of Phari.

It is ninety years since Thomas Manning passed through Phari on his way to Lhasa. Previously to his visit we only know of two Englishmen who have set foot in Phari – Bogle in 1774, and Turner in 1783, both emissaries of Warren Hastings. Manning's journal is mostly taken up with complaints of his Chinese servant, who seems to have gained some mysterious ascendancy over him, and to have exercised it most unhandsomely. As a traveller Manning had a genius for missing effects; it is characteristic of him that he spent sixteen days at Phari, yet except for a casual footnote, evidently inserted in his journal after his return, he makes no mention of the Jong. Were it not for Bogle's account of thirty years before, we might conclude that the building was not then in existence.

On October 21, 1811, Manning writes in his diary: 'We arrived at Phari Jong. Frost. Frost also two days before. I was lodged in a strange place, but so were the natives.' On the 27th he summarized his impressions of Phari: – 'Dirt, dirt, grease, smoke, misery, but good mutton.'

Manning's journal is expressive, if monosyllabic. He was of the class of subjective travellers, who visit the ends of the earth to record their own personal discomforts. Sensitive, neurotic, ever on the look-out for slights, he could not have been a happy vagabond. A dozen lines record the impressions of his first week at Phari. He was cheated; he was treated civilly; he slighted the magistrates, mistaking them for idle fellows; he was turned out of his room to make way for Chinese soldiers; he quarrelled with his servant. A single extract portrays the man to the life, as if he were sitting dejectedly by his yak-dung fire at this hour brooding over his wrongs: —

"The Chinaman was cross again." Says I, "Was that a bird at the magistrate's that flapped so loud?" Answer: "What signifies whether it was a bird or not?" Where he sat I thought he might see; and I was curious to know if such large birds frequented the *building*. These are the answers I get. He is always discontented and grumbling, and takes no trouble off my hands. Being younger, and, like all Asiatics, able to stoop and crouch without pain or difficulty, he might assist me in many things without trouble to himself. A younger brother or any English young gentleman would in his place of course lay the cloth, and do other little services when I am tired; but he does not seem to have much of the generous about him, nor does he in any way serve me, or behave to me with any show of affection or goodwill: consequently I grow no more attached to him than the first day I saw him. I could not have thought it possible for me to have lived so long with anyone without either disliking him or caring sixpence for him. He has good qualities, too. The strangeness of his situation may partly excuse him. (I am more attached to my guide, with all his faults, who has been with me but a few days.) My guide has behaved so damnably ill since I wrote that, that I wish it had not come into my mind.'

I give the extract at length, not only as an illuminating portrait of Manning, but as an incidental proof that he visited the Jong, and that it was very much the same building then as it is to-day. But had it not been for the flapping of the bird which occasioned the quarrel with his Chinese servant, Manning would have left Phari without a reference to the wonderful old fortress which is the most romantic feature on the road from India to Gyantse. Appended to the journal is this footnote to the word *building*, which I have italicized in the extract: 'The building is immensely large, six or more stories high, a sort of fortress. At a distance it appears to be all Phari Jong. Indeed, most of it consists of miserable galleries and holes.'

Members of the mission force who have visited Phari will no doubt attribute Manning's evident ill-humour and depression during his stay there to the environments of the place, which have not changed much in the last ninety years. But his spirits improved as he continued his journey to Gyantse and Lhasa, and he reveals himself the kindly, eccentric, and affectionate soul who was the friend and intimate of Charles Lamb.

Bogle arrived at Phari on October 23, 1774. He and Turner and Manning all entered Tibet through Bhutan. 'As we advanced,' he wrote in his journal, 'we came in sight of the castle of Phari Jong, which cuts a good figure from without. It rises into several towers with the balconies, and,

having few windows, has the look of strength; it is surrounded by the town.' The only other reference he makes to the Jong shows us that the fortress was in bad repair so long ago as 1774. 'The two Lhasa officers who have the government of Phari Jong sent me some butter, tea, etc., the day after my arrival; and letting me know that they expected a visit from me, I went. The inside of the castle did not answer the notion I had formed of it. The stairs are ladders worn to the bone, and the rooms are little better than garrets.'

The origin of the fort is unknown. Some of the inhabitants of Phari say that it was built more than a hundred years ago, when the Nepalese were overrunning Sikkim. But this is obviously incorrect, as the Tibetan-Nepalese War, in which the Chinese drove the Gurkhas out of Tibet, and defeated their army within a day's march of Khatmandu, took place in 1788-1792, whereas Bogle's description of the Jong was written fourteen years earlier. A more general impression is that centuries ago orders came from Lhasa to collect stones on the hillsides, and the building was constructed by forced labour in a few months. That is a tale of endurance and suffering that might very likely be passed from father to son for generations.

Bogle's description of the town might have been written by an officer of the garrison to-day, only he wrote from the inmate's point of view. He noticed the houses 'so huddled together that one may chance to overlook them,' and the flat roofs covered with bundles of straw. He knocked his head against the low ceilings, and ran against the pillars that supported the beams. 'In the middle of the roof,' he wrote, 'is a hole to let out smoke, which, however, departs not without making the whole room as black as a chimney. The opening serves also to let in the light; the doors are full of holes and crevices, through which the women and children keep peeping.' Needless to say nothing has changed in the last hundred and thirty years, unless it is that the women are bolder. I looked down from the roof this morning on Phari town, lying like a rabbit-warren beneath the fort. All one can see from the battlement are the flat roofs of low black houses, from which smoke issues in dense fumes. The roofs are stacked with straw, and connected by a web of coloured praying-flags running from house to house, and sometimes over the narrow alleys that serve as streets. Enormous fat ravens perch on the wall, and innumerable flocks of twittering sparrows. For warmth's sake most of the rooms are underground, and in these subterranean dens Tibetans, black as coal-heavers, huddle together with yaks and mules. Tibetan women, equally dirty, go about, their faces smeared and blotched with caoutchouc, wearing a red, hoop-like head-dress, ornamented with alternate turquoises and ruby-coloured stones.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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