kilos. The officials told us the rapids precluded any down-stream traffic, but that there were sixteen points of crossing between this and Tali above, and one a day's march below, at Kang-tang, for Manga-nan.

There were plenty of fish in the river and animals on shore; among the latter, report spoke of a wild mule with short horns. I fancy this to have been the *nemorrhædus*, which we had already heard of at Ta-tsien-lou, under the description of the "rock ass"; but the delay of at least a week on the chance of obtaining a skin did not allow of our verifying it. Peacocks and green paroquets were numerous, though I did not recognise any more of the pretty *palæornis derbyanis* so frequent around Batang.

The Laotian name Mekong was naturally unknown to the natives; the river in this part of Yünnan bearing the generic designation of Ta-kiang, or "great stream." At each point where we touched it we met with a separate title, commonly made by adding the suffix "kiang" to the name of the spot of crossing; thus, here, Kiou-lan-kiang.

Being now upon the right bank, we entered the Lochai Sing (mountain of the Lochais). A few years ago these people were at war with the Chinese, though now reported quiet, and subject to the Tcheuping-ting, or mandarin of Tcheuping, near Mong-yang. After a short stage, on the 19th (April) we passed through the important Chinese village of Dayakeu, where the chief would have constrained us to stop, and our makotou and mafous exhausted every artifice to the same end. To our surprise, and the credit of the Ssumao mandarin, be it recorded that two soldiers overtook us here with our recovered mules —an agreeable and singular contrast to the usual measure of

Chinese assistance. We observed in Dayakeu some blocks of tin brought from Tcho-tchieu, five days westward, and learned that a little less than a ton yearly is disposed of in this district.

A Lochai.

Trade is also carried on in blue linen stuff from Ssumao, pipe tobacco from Canton, and stag horns. Rude implements for the carding of cotton were likewise met with, and a musical

instrument made out of a gourd, into which five bamboo tubes pierced with holes were fitted.

The Lochais are a small race, with retreating foreheads and low cast of countenance. The women dress in a long Chinese robe, divided into three pleats behind over trousers, the sleeves are lined with red, and a couple of red-bordered aprons fall in front, a larger above a smaller. Out of doors they assume a small sleeveless jacket, studded with silver. Their head-gear is a large blue turban. When this is removed, a false impression of height is given to their brows, from the habit of shaving the front and sides of the head like the Chinese.

The "Doctor" had got ahead of us the preceding day, and we now came up with him in great tribulation. A mafou, while sunk in an opium sleep beneath a tree, had allowed the mule to stray that carried all his notes and scientific observations. By this time, of course, the chances were they had been pillaged, and must be recovered at all costs. Leaving him at the spot for this purpose, we moved on slowly, and with frequent halts.

A wooden bridge, over a deep and beautiful river, served as shelter for our midday meal. Two massive diagonal beams, almost meeting in the centre, upheld the thatch-covered way, to which a wicket at either end, occupied by a Chinese janitor, lent access without toll. The bridge, gilded by the sun, framed a lovely picture, where the water flashed between grey-pointed rocks and stunted palms, overhung by the orchid-laden branches of the larger trees. Beneath the bank lay a bamboo raft, on which the descent of the river could be made at flood, in three days, to the Mekong. We threw a couple of dynamite cartridges into the stream, and caught a number of fish, to the

astonishment and delight of our men; it was pleasant to see a little cheerfulness among them for a change.

Roux did not turn up when we paused for the night at Chian-na-liang (?); and now we missed Nam, who had lost his way between our two parties. Villagers were sent out to scour the bush. They styled themselves Lolos, though just like the Lochais of the day before. We employed ourselves in watching one of them milling cotton, for which he used a contrivance consisting of two rollers placed on a frame before which he sat. The upper was of wood revolving with a hand-winch, the under of iron, of less diameter, and made to rotate at great speed by a treadle. Between them the cotton fell into a basket, and the seeds remained above.

Before turning in, I looked in on the sleeping quarters of our men. In the middle of the room were laid the materials for opium-smoking—lamp, snuffers, and pipe. François and the makotou, naked to the waist, reclined with some Lolos upon osier stools, and all were steadily stupefying themselves. In one corner a dishevelled, half-clad woman turned her spinning-wheel with measured creak; presently she desisted, and stretched herself, with a baby at her breast, upon a plank beneath a coarse coverlet, while the men conversed in low tones in Chinese or more guttural Lolo—a strange scene, lit by some bits of resinous wood upon the ground. From below came the chirrup of a cricket, and an occasional impatient shake of a cattle-bell, that spoke the mafous stirring as they tethered the mules tighter against night robbers. Our orders were strict upon this head, for recent experience had taught us watchfulness.

Next morning, the 21st (April), still no news of Nam, and only bad of Roux. He had found the mule; the pack was gone.

We decided on a short stage, to keep going, as far as the Lolo village of La-li-chin. Here, before night-fall, to our no small relief, a search-party brought in poor old Nam, none the worse for his wanderings and a night spent in a tree, save for the terror of panthers and an empty stomach. For the following day we stayed where we were, among an interesting set of people. They said they were Lolos or Chiantines, settlers here from the West two hundred years previous, but declared they had no books, and were not of the same stock as the Lolos who had. Little information, religious or other, could be got out of them, save that to the west there were the Kawas, the Iékawas, who resembled the Païs. (These are, probably, Shans or Laotians of Upper Burmah.) Wandering about their village, I gradually overcame their shyness, and excited their interest in a picture-book of the Abbé David. They also recognised the Lady Amherst pheasant, which they pronounced common in the vicinity, and showed me how they trapped quail by means of a decoy in a wicker basket. The ground is utilised to the hilltops, and after dark the clearing fires were visible creeping up the mountain-sides. The women were weavers after a primitive fashion by means of a shuttle and two wooden pedals for the woof; and all used the familiar spinning-wheel of the country.

At our request, the villagers consented to dance at night, and acquitted themselves in more varied and original sets than the Païs. Men and women joined in a circle round two musicians, who gave time and tune upon their gourd instruments, while an old man regulated the figures from without. The movements were executed in complete harmony with the measure: swaying now this way, now that, waving their arms, poising for a moment on one leg, then, striking the ground in cadence all together,

the ring broke up into *vis-à-vis*, to advance and to retire, or to change sides by intervals. I was struck by the uniformity of the dancers, who would have cut a very respectable figure in any western assemblage. They are passionately fond of the art, and sometimes it takes the form of a regular stampede, a wild saraband accompanied by cries, but ever under control of perfect time. The Lolos seemed indefatigable; they could go on for hours, and, like the generality of uncivilised races, were naturally graceful in their pose. Seen through the haze of dust that rose from the flitting figures in the torchlight, the whole was like a magic-lantern or kaleidoscope.

On the 23rd (April) we left our sociable Lolos, with a few parting gifts. They refused utterly to accept any human likeness, even the most seductive chromo-lithographs, which I attribute to some superstitious fear.

The same day Roux happily rejoined us. He had gained the co-operation of the mandarin of Dayakeu, and with the offer of a reward had the mountain systematically searched by beating-parties of seven men under leaders. To a fellow with a goitre belonged the honour of first discovery of their object, and the firing of guns soon brought the others to the spot. The baggage was hidden in the brake. It was found intact, save for one lens of the astronomic telescope; and great was our companion's joy, for the results of four hundred and thirty-seven miles of exploration were involved. All's well that ends well; but to guard against a similar danger, duplicates and tracings were always made in future.

The country we were passing through was tame by comparison, and the route fair; hillocks with scrub, and hollows with coppice and large trees, but no birds or flowers to note, nor

anything to break the tedious monotony. At midday on the 24th (April) the "Doctor" again left us, with one attendant, for Mong-pan and Mong-ka, down on the right bank of the Mekong. This few days' digression would enable him to settle several points in the course of the river.

On descending from some higher spurs we reached a gently

Roux at Work.

sloping tableland, and the road became more frequented. First we met a caravan of cotton, then some rice grinders, and a soldier carrying his sword in bandolier, and on his shoulder in place of a gun a bamboo, from the end of which dangled a green paroquet in a hoop. The plateau was enclosed by hills and bordered by two ravines, and resembled in its formation a glacier with its moraines. At the farther extremity the big village of

Tachin-lao hung upon the edge of a precipitous gorge. Tachin-lao was surrounded by a rectangular enceinte of mud walls, 10 feet to 15 feet high, loopholed but not embattled. Within, the houses were spacious and built of one storey on a bamboo framework. As the majority of the population was Chinese, we were not a little surprised that they held aloof and left us in peace in our Buddha-daubed pagoda. The government was in the joint hands of a mandarin, who was a Ting, and a toussou for the Lochais.

We heard that a few days before our arrival an Englishman had been here, travelling from Ava in Burmah towards Mong-pan and Mong-ka. He was engaged in marking the mountains and rivers like ourselves, and had been seeking information. This must have been the same that was at Ssumao before us. Here he only crossed our path, and our route to the north was still, as we hoped, untouched. Before leaving in the morning two little mandarins dismounted at our pagoda and entered. An attendant placed scented joss-sticks before the three altars and spread carpets for his masters, who proceeded to prostrate themselves and kneel, while a third personage recited some prayers in a loud voice. This ceremony lasted several minutes, after which the mandarins turned their backs on their gods and settled themselves to the enjoyment of their water pipes with the air of men who had done their duty.

From the heights which we now followed we obtained a good view of the features of the landscape about this part of the Mekong. We looked across a gorge so deep and abrupt that its bottom was not immediately visible, and over the top of the opposite ridge on to a succession of large valleys and chains running in parallel tiers to the glen at our feet. The aspect of the country

sufficed to make us feel the proximity of a large though unseen body of water, and the depression which we skirted may be likened to the mid-rib of a leaf from which the membranes, here represented by the lesser chains, diverged. The left slope was sparsely wooded and thinly peopled; on our side good-sized villages were frequent. We were still among the Lochais, and got on very well with these gentry of the red-stained teeth; at least Briffaud and I had no cause of complaint, save the absence of honey, which the natives do not gather at this season on account of the bees pasturing on an unwholesome white flower. The makotou, however, was found storming and weeping and cursing by turns over the theft of his pipe, which eventually betrayed itself sticking out of a bland native's pocket. The way these Chinese shed tears over trifles was deplorable. They are perfect babies.

A torrent turned us down towards the Mekong again, and we touched it a little below the confluence of a considerable river called the Sé-kiang. The waters of the Mekong here ran low between sandy shores, varying in width from 87 yards to twice that distance, but rocks marked high-water level up to 217 and even 325 yards. The hills had sunk to insignificance, and trees stood out upon them as thin as the bristles on an elephant's forehead. At sundown we observed women from the villages climbing the slopes with boughs in their hands, like the moving wood at Dunsinane. Each had a hollow bamboo filled with stones with which they imitated the sound of the kestrel, and attracted to the branch numbers of grasshoppers, which are here esteemed a delicacy.

On the 28th (April) we made the passage of the Sé-kiang on a triangular raft built of a single layer of bamboo. When loaded

this was warped up stream, and then let go diagonally with the current, a man aft checking it with a large rectangular paddle. Whilst this was in progress I watched the natives at breakfast: the men ate first Chinese fashion, seated on stools round a wicker table, the women after, taking the rice in their fingers.

On the other side of the Sé-kiang we began to ascend again.

Raft on the Sé-kiang.

Now that we were far from towns, the mafous were working creditably. Although very fair walkers, their calves were not much developed. On the march they were just like children, singing and whistling; but their chief joy lay in the pipe, water or ordinary, which they passed from mouth to mouth. One amused us by persistently flourishing in one hand an open umbrella, acquired from Nam in exchange for a hat, and in the other a fan, without preventing his also bearing his fair share of

the burdens. Our own boys proved good body servants: Nam managed with only four hours' regular sleep; but then in his ordinary avocations he took three hours over what anyone else would do in one; his cooking was certainly that of a somnambulist. Briffaud and I generally kept together; and between inventing imaginary feasts, singing trooper ditties, and chatting, in addition to our collections, photographs, and notes, we quickly passed the miles away.

By the 29th (April) we were passing through beautiful scenery, the country of the Pou Mas, near akin to the Païs. Wayfarers were frequent; often we came upon those squares of cut paper that being burnt on roadside altars invoked propitious journeys. Before I came to know them well I used to think the Chinese an indifferent and sceptical race; now they seemed to me particularly superstitious. At four in the afternoon, on my overtaking the caravan, I found it halted. The old guide Panella refused to proceed, and, with many protestations, tried to make us take back the mandarin's village letter of introduction. Finding us obdurate, he laid it down and seated himself sadly on the grass, whence it took three mafous to set him going again. The very next place we entered, the crafty old fox seized on the first young man he met, thrust the letter into his unsuspecting hand, and, without explanation or adieu, stole away. His impromptu successor led us to a small Lochai hamlet on a brow with a splendid prospect. But the Hotel Bellevue, as we christened our hovel, afforded little else but a feast for the eyes, and we went hungry to bed. To bed, but not to sleep; for the inhabitants, to complete their inhospitality, kept on the prowl the livelong night, peering and vanishing and always crouching as they crept about with their resinous torches, till we thought we

had fallen among gnomes or hobgoblins. In the daylight they were less insidious, and testified the greatest interest in our writing and in the leather of our saddles. At the next Lochai village the natives called themselves Lachos, and claimed to have been there ninety years. We wished we could have procured a specimen of Lochai writing, which they told us was in the old

Little Pagoda on Hill.

Chinese characters as used on the mandarins' seals. From Tamano, a place about the same size as Tachin-lao, our men began to step out, scenting an approach to Mienning from afar. Near our sleeping-place we saw the site of two ancient forts, one said to date from a century back. The people gave further interesting particulars about the Lochais, averring that they came, like the Lolos, from near Nang-king ages ago. They made use of a

small yellow immortelle, which grew in quantities, for food; the flower, leaves, and stalk were thrown into a pot, boiled till soft, and eaten.

Villages became thicker along the dale as we advanced. A Chinese horseman, followed by a tattered soldier bearing his pipe and red visiting-card portfolio, joined us on the road and showed us the way. He proved to be the chief of the district of Linguen. His voice was rougher than his manners, and through his instrumentality we enjoyed a degree of relative comfort in our next quarters at Chang-lin-gang, to which we had long been strangers.

May opened propitiously for us in the midst of the most delightful scenery and climate. We were at this time traversing a valley of which the northern slope a little above us rose in an abrupt scarp like a lofty green wall. The panorama, unfolded before each successive eminence, gave us an admirable idea of the lay of the land. The Mekong flowed only a mile or so away, on our right. Between this valley and that of an affluent of the Salwen stood a range of low hills, and we were surprised to find so unimposing a barrier between two such large neighbour rivers. In the course of our stage on the 2nd (May) to Pochan we passed an extensive cemetery in which all the tombs lay facing east, with their entries to the south; they had the appearance of a herd of crouching animals, great and grim. At Pochan, which is a large Chinese village at a part where the valley widens almost to a plain, we found Roux arrived only a few hours before from Tapong, after a successful excursion among the Païs of Mong-pan and Mong-ka.

We reached Mienning on the 3rd (May), pitched, like Ssumao, on rising ground, and surrounded by grey battlements.

Without the walls fruit-trees grew in abundance; peaches, plums, pears, and pomegranates. Although the climate struck us as healthy, and the nights were cool, the inhabitants seemed much afflicted with goitre.

Disagreeable news awaited us at this place, to the effect that the English traveller before mentioned had already been here, coming from Yünchou by the way we had intended to take. This meant that we must seek another line.

Our stay at Mienning, though not of long duration, was quite enough for our enjoyment. We were badly housed in dingy and stifling quarters under the eaves, looking out into a crowded court. Food was scarce, and, if we except some fair Chinese fritters, which we sampled at a pastrycook's, was limited to pork, owing to the prohibition of the slaughter of oxen, which were kept exclusively for labour. The surrounding population was mostly Paï, and a petty village headman was found to give us directions as to the route. He was no better than an old freebooter, and informed us that he had been a leader on the Burmese frontier, but that some English having been killed by the natives, the regrettable occurrence had been laid at his door, and he had had to make himself scarce. This individual showed considerable local familiarity with the country; but when he proceeded to discourse further upon geography, and unfolded a Chinese map to assure us that the Mekong flowed to Canton and Changhaï, we thanked him, and said that would do for the present.

Acting on his instructions, we resolved to make an elbow by the side of the Mekong, thus avoiding the Englishman's tracks. The soldiers lent us by the mandarin could not grasp the idea that we were engaged in "sialon," nor was it worth while to enlist their sympathy with the aims and ambitions of exploration.

The usual difficulties attending a start were increased by the irritating dalliance of the makotou, whose incessant iteration of the words "mai" (buy) and "injen" (money) nearly drove us mad. The avarice of the man was but one of his faults. The chief part of every night he gave up to his besetting vice of opium-smoking, emerging in the morning with blear and swollen eyes to enter upon an arduous march, in which he would have to busy himself, keep the mules going, and superintend the loads, all generally performed with an open sore on his leg. It was marvellous what the dominating greed of gain and self-indulgence would enable such a being to carry through when he was inevitably approaching the premature exhaustion of his vital forces. François and he were two typical real Chinese, and furnished in daily intercourse a perfect sample of what goes to make up the essence of the Chinese character in its few redeeming features, hideous vices, and insurmountable failings. It is narrated of certain *pecaris*, that if a traveller takes refuge from their charge in a tree, they will beleaguer the trunk till he drops among them from exhaustion. The Chinese always gave me the idea of these wild boars. To see them seated below us immovable throughout a whole day, scarce stirring their hands save to fill the water pipe, or their jaws to exchange a few words, they seemed doggedly to await something from our hands which they would not get. If one dispersed them, they immediately reclosed their ranks as before. Like as the people, such are their rulers: what possible impression can our diplomatists, using the methods of civilised nations, make upon this gelatinous mass, or what hold can be taken of that which continually slips through one's fingers?

Throughout the day we followed the valley of the Nan-Ting-ho, which forms a complete basin around Mienning. The rice swamps

were full of women at work, up to their waists in the water, whilst elsewhere men standing upon their harrows with lean legs outstretched, like 'bus conductors, guided their buffaloes as in some ancient Egyptian design. At the end of several hours we discovered that we were not going east towards Kubi-kiang, as we should have been, but were gaily pursuing the main Yünchou route, already traversed by the English party. The caravan was halted, amid the protestations of the mafous that they knew no other road. We were not going to be done in this way—"to a Chinese, a Chinese and a half." Accordingly camp was formed for the night where we were, and the clear moonlight among the rice and trees soothed us for the vexation of two days lost.

Next morning, the 6th (May), back on our tracks almost as far as Mienning to find the little path. The makotou was at his old tricks again, but with Sao's aid his little game was unmasked. He had discharged two mafous and substituted a couple of traders, who, by smuggling their stuff into our train, thus hoped to evade the octroi at Tali. There was no end to their chicanery, and our change of road had nicely upset their calculations.

But retribution of a different sort awaited the makotou before the day was out. Scarcely had we lit our evening pipes and were contemplating the first blue wreaths of smoke, while the fleas began to climb our supine limbs, when a hubbub arose among our men, who came running towards us with cries of "makotou, Lohiang, todzan!" (knife). Hastening down, we found the makotou bleeding profusely from several wounds, and it was some little time ere we could learn the facts of the case. It will be remembered that some time back a mafou called Manhao had been maltreated by the makotou under the suspicion of a theft. A repetition of the robbery having just been traced to a second mafou seemed to indicate the

latter as the perpetrator of both acts. Thereupon Manhao, or Lohiang as he was equally called, heaping reproaches on the makotou for his former brutality, enforced his innocence by driving his knife into his persecutor three times, cutting him up rather badly on his arm and both legs, though luckily without touching an artery. He then fled. Here was another trait of Chinese character—revenge sullenly nursed for a month and a half.

We washed and dressed the wounds with antiseptics, in which operation Sao again acquitted himself with credit. The rest of the Chinese looked on with indifference, if not with satisfaction, notably François, who gave his version of the story as rather entertaining than otherwise. The callousness of these fellows for each other was exasperating. How different from our Turkomans at Lob-Nor, tending old sick Imatou like a child, and showing lively concern for his suffering!

The following morning the scene was even more revolting. The makotou declared that he would go back on horseback at once, but finally yielded with a bad grace to my advice that he should rest a bit. Then he began about payment. This man, reduced as he was by fever, found strength to get up and drag himself before us; and there with blood-smeared face and legs caked with gore, propped against a pack-saddle, he proceeded with palsied hands to haggle over his interests with such greed and tenacity as might have induced one to suppose he had nothing but a shilling-piece in the place where his heart ought to be. First he wanted us to give him the wages for his men. For a long time past we had paid these direct, in consequence of his cheating them: so that cock wouldn't fight. Then he accused them of being in his debt. We made each come singly with an account of the sum claimed. But by this time we were implacable to his subterfuges, and I verily believe that if

we had had much more of this sort of work we should have learned to meet the Chinese upon their own ground. As it was, I was disgusted and tired of having any dealings with these rapacious scoundrels, whose every breath, word, and thought was money, money, money; from those who would see a comrade wounded without a sign of compassion beyond a shrug of the shoulders, down to the interpreter, who, at the makotou's departure, stripped the very cap off his head because it was new, and because "he would have no need of it now that he had ceased to serve the Tajen." The Chinese have a big lesson to learn from themselves. For my own part I now knew more than enough of them, and hastened the time when we should get away from their sordid, contemptible natures to live among lawless savages and brigands, who at least would have one respectable attribute of freedom or personal pride.

Having given the title and functions of makotou to a young fellow in the troop called Lichatan, we resumed our journey, and passed the remainder of the day climbing the larch and oak-covered hills that marked the interval between the Mekong and the Salwen basins. We camped in the open.

The event of the 8th (May) was the meeting with a few sheep. We had not seen any for two months, and our stomachs yearned at the sight. To point out a "pé i ang" (white sheep) to Chantzeu, strike a bargain with the shepherd, and to have it strapped on Fa's shoulders was the work of no time. As when the Aïnos kill a bear they celebrate the event and call it the Bear Feast, so we, almost as hirsute as the "sons of dogs," now held the Feast of Sheep, and revelled in the varied dressings of the unwonted food, which we wetted with Japanese wine and finished with coffee and "real Habanas" of our own manufacture.

As we marched next day still up the Mekong valley the track

deteriorated into gravel and loose stones, among which the mules fell about a good deal. In the glittering sands formed by the detrition of the felspar granite Nam thought he had found gold, to Sao's derision when it proved but mica. By midday we had ascended to a narrow terrace on which we baited. The packs were ranged round the edge like a parapet, within which the men, mostly stripped to the waist, bestirred themselves to hang the big pot and the general tea-kettle upon forked sticks over the crackling fire, where presently the rice began to bubble. In a corner Nam turned a leg of mutton on a bamboo spit, and some natives with an offering of honey sat silent by watching our every movement over their pipes. The scene had for outlook the whole valley of the Mekong, with crests and curves and pine woods of its middle distance swelling further to larger heights that towered on the horizon into a fleecy cloudland. The effect was the grander from the drop which met the eye sharp off our brink into the bottom far below. We found the flora richer as we advanced; beside pine, walnut, and peach trees grew the plantain, pomegranate, and palm, and on the trunks of the hardy northerners clung that beautiful creeper called *Manolerra deliciosa*, which I had first seen in Ceylon. Birds flew among the branches, and afforded varied subjects to the collector's gun. We heard of peacocks even in this latitude. It was an amusing sight of an evening to watch the flocks of paroquets homing in the big trees by some pagoda, the first arrivals calling with shrill clamour to the belated ones as they hurried in from the depths of the woods.

On the 11th (May) we entered the region of Mong Ma, whose people were chiefly Paï, as evidenced at the approach to the large village of Ta-tse-kaï by the lozenge-shaped bamboo erections

against evil spirits. In the streets were to be seen several yellow-robed young bonzes, and as it was market-day a considerable rabble was attracted by our passage; but it was orderly, and in many cases the pedestrians did reverence to us. We could not help laughing at the figure cut by our soldier escort, who, in addition to carrying the traditional parasol in bandolier, wore in guise of martial casque an inverted rice kettle, like Mambrino's helmet, on his pate.

In the midst of the fields hereabouts there often rose circular mounds planted with large trees and occasionally enclosed by walls. The summit usually contained two or three tombs. These barrows were very like the menhirs and dolmens seen in Brittany, where they are called "fairy rings," or like the cromlechs in parts of England.

On riding into camp in the evening I saw Briffaud and Nam coming towards me with evident tidings of annoyance. In defiance of my injunctions, the men, at the instigation of François, had tried to stop in Ta-tse-kaï, which intention Briffaud had frustrated. Shortly after, he had again occasion to tell François to recall some of the mafous from a wrong road, whereupon the interpreter in good round French grossly insulted him. My comrade at once jumped down, tumbled him off his nag, and gave him a drubbing. The rascal called loudly on the mafous for aid, and Briffaud promised that the first man to lay a finger on him would get his head broken. On my arrival François pretended that his abuse had been levelled at a Chinese mafou and not at Briffaud, declared he was my interpreter and no one else's, and concluded by declining to go any farther. "Very good," said I, "make out your account."

Then Lichatan, the new makotou, approached with four mafous

and announced that they could no longer remain with us because we beat the Chinese. At this juncture a new champion entered the lists on our behalf in the person of Sao, who, understanding Chinese, used it to such effect that, having at my suggestion gone among the men and heard their tale, the mutineers were presently brought back to reason and their allegiance. Of course François was at the bottom of it all. He had spread falsehoods that the assault had been unprovoked, and that we were brutes, who were going to lead them into a country of brigands without pay. Sao scattered this fabrication by the contemptuous assurance that it was a bundle of lies, and that if they left us we should simply get others in their place, who would jump at the wages offered. Next morning François came with a discomfited air to be paid, and then asked for a certificate, which I refused point-blank. "But I have worked well," whined he. I rejoined that that was not my experience, and, after judicially summing up his many impertinences to his culminating act of insubordination, dismissed him. So we were well rid of our odious interpreter, and would have to make shift as best we might for the next fortnight till we got to Tali. If our local information should be less, our progress in elementary Chinese would be more.

During the 12th and 13th (May) we passed over a series of unimportant hills from the bed of the Mong-ma-ta-ho, the course of which we followed for a bit, to that of a swifter stream, the Lan-cho-ho. On the 14th, in the morning, I escaped a nasty accident. I was leading my mule over some rough planks that spanned a shut-in torrent, when he slipped and fell into the rocky chasm. I thought he must be killed, as he lay quite still; but these animals fall like cats, and it was not long before we had him on his legs again. The same evening we crossed a strong river

by a wattled bridge, and entered the town of Yünchou. It was night, and the streets were very animated, the people moving about by the glimmer of paper lanterns, and making purchases of fruit, grain, or fritters at shops lit by greasy lamps. In front of most of the houses scented joss-sticks burned in honour of Buddha, and looked from afar like glowing cigar ends. A maimed and nasal beggar trailed himself along the middle of the thoroughfare holding out a wooden bowl, into which an occasional sapeck rattled. Before one door twisted hangings of linen were draped upon a frame, denoting that a wedding was about to take place. Through this bustling scene we wended our way to an unusually retired inn.

From Yünchou, on the morrow, we despatched a courier to Tali. Meanwhile we descended into the town and expended some money and bad Chinese on various purchases. We got on with our bargaining very fairly considering, though the incessant requisitions of our men in their efforts to delay the move necessitated our submitting to a certain amount of fleecing. Still, we were on the road again by the 16th (May), proceeding through a fertile district of maize, sugar-cane, and rice. The grey and white pagodas which we passed disclosed a series of interior courts arranged in rectangular tiers like Thibetan Lamaserais or ancient Jewish temples. But, on the whole, the country was monotonous, and our chief diversion lay in observing the habits of our own troop and of the natives whom we met. Among the former, Sao, in addition to his other services, now helped us after a fashion as an interpreter, and, on inquiry of us if we should have to do with many more Chinese, ejaculated his usual pithy comment, "Plenty stupid!"

Numerous mule caravans crossed us, the leaders' heads adorned

with feathers of the Lady Amherst pheasant. Their loads for the most part consisted of small wedges of iron, like bricks, sometimes of bales of cotton. In one day we counted as many as one hundred and fifty animals. Now and then a rising ground was capped by a mud-built watch-tower, in shape like a three-sided sentry-box, 10 feet high,

Carriers met on the Road.

with loopholes, probably relics of the Mussulman war. At greater distances apart upon the hilltops rose obelisks of dazzling white masonry. I rode up to one, and found it to be quadrilateral, about 40 feet high, surmounted by a ball, to which a prickly pear-tree had by some means attached itself, perhaps seeded by the many black-

birds that flew around the monument. A little farther, to our no small astonishment, we found ourselves face to face with three elephants, busy eating the foliage. We hardly expected to see these beasts in China, but were told they had been sent from Mong-le, Ava way, only a year before.

Chunning-Fou next came in sight upon the lower face of the hills above a torrent. Inside its grey and loopholed walls there appeared but little life: its roomy houses, gardens, and wide streets had the air of a quiet provincial town, and by contrast with commercial Ssumao it suggested in a minor degree the ratio of Washington to New York. The people, too, were civil, and we were positively able to joke with them; so that it was a pleasure to admit that all Chinese even are not cast in the same mould.

Two days more brought us again back to the bed of the Mekong, here steep and deep and wooded in patches. We made our way on the 20th (May) down to a bridge composed of fourteen chains among rocks, which bore surface inscriptions in Chinese. The mules crossed in single file; but notwithstanding that the planks were in fair repair, the oscillation slight, and that two chains served as a handrail, the passage needed a cool head. The locality chosen for this bridge over the Mekong was a constricted reach sixty-seven paces, say from 48 yards to 54 yards across. The river widened again a little lower, but was far from what it had been at Sien-kiang. The difference of altitude, too, was great for its breadth, cliffs of 975 feet falling steeply to the water's edge, with only a streak of sand at their base. The water must be deep under them. As we climbed the farther (eastern) side, I threw a glance back upon the river, which this time we should leave for a considerable space. The bridge emerging from and entering a little white-walled, grey-

roofed Chinese gatehouse at either end had something light and elegant yet withal daring in the way in which it was flung like a gossamer ladder athwart the flood that flowed with sullen force full 60 feet below. Confined as it was, the stream bore on its face the evidence of restrained power, the might of the great water which pours from north to south of Indo-China, to spread with many affluents at last through Cambodia and Cochin China over French territory. Once more, greeting to the vast river, over and again purchased to France by the blood of her soldiers, by the lives of her explorers, and by the achievements of diplomacy!

The march of the 21st (May) was only broken by an incident that might have had a different termination. We were riding along the brink of a sharp declivity, and Briffaud had just remarked on the danger of a slip, when hardly were the words uttered before I saw Sao fall from his mule and roll over and over till caught by a bush 50 feet below. In a moment I was off, and sliding down to his help as best I could. By little short of a miracle he was found to have sustained no lasting hurt: he had fallen asleep in the saddle, and had a wonderful escape. Before halting in the evening we observed by the road-side a sort of gallows, from which was hung a basket with what seemed the queue of a Chinese sticking out of it. An inscription warned the passer-by that this was the head of a pirate.

On the 22nd (May) we reached the Siao-kiang (little river), wrongly called by Europeans the Yang-pi, from a place on its banks. The stream stole along with a singular ruddy tinge that harmonised well with the pale yellow herbage of its grey shores. A neat little village was coquettishly perched half-way up the opposite hillside, and behind it the fields rose to pastures, which yielded in turn to red earth at the margin of the pines. Between

the masses of rock that projected sharp shadows in the hot glare of an afternoon sun, the dale we were threading seemed almost a defile, over the glassy floor of which stately moving cloud shapes slowly travelled. The passage of the river was easily effected on a bamboo raft; after which we gradually left the pleasing scenery, which lost nothing from the approach of evening. Before the stage's end our eyes were arrested by a

On the Banks of the Siao-kiang, or Yang-pi.

limestone cliff rising to a height of 260 feet. The splintered points upon its brow resembled the florets on a crown, and round them a few saplings lifted their slender, almost aërial foliage. To a ledge in mid-face, and actually sustained by iron rivets, clung a little three-storeyed pagoda, Khou-an-yn-Miao, the house of the goddess Khou-an-yn. It was a structure of grey roof upon lighter walls, with broad black bands on which were traced some large white characters. The prickly pear above and yellow

Pagoda Khou-an-yn-Miao.

shrub below sought foothold in the crannies, and the rock buttress that struck abruptly downwards amid the tree tops seemed placed for a pedestal to the edifice. For conscience' sake I visited the temple, to which access was gained by a slanting ladder fully in keeping with its precarious surroundings. The only living inmate of this eyrie was a guardian who maintained the fire and joss-sticks before some very ordinary gilded gods.

From our rest camp of the 24th (May) we had a good view of the Mêng-hua-ting valley. On the map its waters belong to the basin of the Red River. Going on in advance, Roux and I in one day almost reached the head of the valley, which was about two miles wide and filled with corn, then in full tide of harvesting. The peasantry were poor, and called themselves Tchou-cho-hos, and not Chinese; according to our men they were Pe Lolos. We left Mêng-hua-ting on our right, the town seeming unimportant; but the road was broad and paved, and dotted with many caravans, chiefly of salt or cotton under striped coverings that looked like Thibetan stuff.

Ascending the chain that formed the end of the valley, we attained the summit, after some hours' climb, on the 26th (May). Before us lay the lake of Tali. The hills on its eastern shores rested upon its brink, on the west they were separated from it by a strip of land a mile and a half wide, laid out in squares of yellow and green crops, and studded with villages. The lake lengthens out towards the north, and at first sight appears smaller than that of Yünnan-Sen—no doubt because it is narrower. Under the rain clouds in which we viewed it for the first time, it had a disappointing effect, though perhaps a different impression might be conveyed with the mountain-tops clear and a ray of sun to light up the waves. Then one might more easily appreciate the legendary beauty of this

sheet of water, which has such a hold upon the imagination of the untutored native mind. As it was, it required some effort of the fancy to picture the Golden Bird of the Thibetan fables hovering over the face of the sacred waters.

Nevertheless, our men were filled with joy, and sang and shouted as they marched. We descended the hill with lengthened stride, and I called to mind many a strange stage in my former travels, such as when on leaving Thibet we hastened down to Ta-tsien-lou. At the base of the hills, in stony chaos, lay the cemetery—the town of the dead at the gate of the living. We reached the river that forms the outlet of the lake; and here three routes converged: the one from the capital; our own; and that from Burmah, called the Ambassadors' Road. Along the last named stretched into the distance the posts of the new telegraph line from Bhamo—the Future; and here on the right bank of the river—the Past, a grey loopholed wall, with battlements and bastions crumbling to decay, vestiges of the Mussulman war.

After passing the village of Chia-kouan (South-port), the way lay through fields and close-lying hamlets. It was dark by the time we came to the gate of Tali; luckily, it had not yet been closed. A tunnel led under the ramparts, and, once inside, we asked to be brought to the house of the French Father. After a long détour, our guide stopped before a dwelling, and I hailed loudly for admittance; then, finding a side door open, entered. What was our surprise to hear a feminine European voice! The owner at the same moment appeared at the head of the staircase with a companion, both dressed as Chinese, and disclosed herself as a young English lady. I was almost as taken aback as our men, who had probably never seen a European woman before, and stood there rolling their eyes in wonder; but, mutual explanations being

tendered, we found we were in the house of the wife of the Protestant minister, himself away from home, and she politely sent a servant to guide us to the mission. But our adventures were not quite complete; for in their admiration of the European fair sex our men had forgotten the mules, which had quietly scattered down the tortuous lanes of the vicinity, where we had to organise a battue for their recovery. So that it was late ere we were all at last safely gathered within the walls of the Father's compound.

Father Leguilcher.

CHAPTER IV

TALI-FOU

Father Leguilcher—History of Tali—Francis Garnier—Murder of Margary—Mussulman War—Persecution of Christians—Our Relations with the Mandarins—Trade—The Minchias—Environs of Tali—The Lake—Chinese Superstition.

FATHER LEGUILCHER, in whose house we were now lodged, had been forty-three years in China, in succession to Fathers Huot, Dumont, and Fage, and was still in full vigour for his work.

The dwelling which he occupied was built in 1868, by the eldest brother of a leading Mussulman, and was one of the best in Tali. Entrance to it was gained through several paved interior courts, round which were ranged stone benches, with

marble vases supporting pleached trees, pomegranates, and nasturtium. In rear of the living-part was a garden full of palms, orange and apricot trees, and many lesser plants dear to the French palate. In this retreat we rested for the next three weeks; going out but seldom, and occupying our time in the settlement of our past and arrangement for our future journeys, and in the agreeable society of our fellow-countryman.

The town of Tali is of considerable though uncertain antiquity. It formed once the capital of a native dynasty, of which the last king was called Pe. Some Minchias, said to have come from the neighbourhood of Nanking, established themselves in the district, and were subjugated by the Chinese, who suppressed their kingdom, but left the native chiefs under the name of toussous. Within more recent time the history of Tali developed incidents of directer interest for Europeans.

In 1875 Margary was assassinated, on the road from Tali to Bhamo, by the subalterns, Lisen-tajen, of the tchentaï of Teng-Yüeh, acting under the orders of the notorious viceroy of Yünnan, Tsen. This latter expiated his cruelties eleven years later, and it is related of him that he was haunted to the day of his death by the spectres of his numerous victims, often causing him to stop while on the march to offer supplications for his riddance from their persecution. Before that, in 1863, a Frenchman, Garnier, had visited Tali; and Father Leguilcher told us at what extreme risk he had himself accompanied the traveller on this stage of his journey.

Coming to a later date, it was the capture of Tali that put an end to the Mussulman war, when the town was delivered into the hands of the Imperial troops by treachery. Tsen arrived just after the surrender, under the terms of which the

general of the Chinese forces had guaranteed the lives of the inhabitants. "The promise was yours, not mine," remarked Tsen; and, having invited the leading Mussulmans to his quarters, he had them all butchered, while, at the same time, a cannon shot gave the signal for an indiscriminate massacre in the town. This bad faith is quite a familiar feature among Chinese of all ranks and of all time; Li-Hung-Chang only just escaped being pistoled by Gordon for a like falsehood. At the period of our sojourn the town was tranquil. The people seemed scarcely even aware that China was at war with Japan.

Our presence, however, started some sinister rumours in the direction of renewed massacres of the Christians. Happily, these received no further expression at the time; but there is little lasting confidence in the safety of either life or property. The murder of Father Batifaut in this province was still sufficiently in mind. He was killed in 1874 at the gate of Pien-kio, while visiting a Christian convert. His assailants were rebels, with whom he had refused to associate himself, so that he actually lost his life through a respect for the Imperial authority. The matter was not carried to Pekin, and was allowed to drop. The next victim was a convert, Kieou-Japine by name, sacrificed out of spite against Father Charrère, who had gained the hatred of the mandarins by the determination and success of his work. This death also is to be laid to the charge of the Viceroy Tsen. The Father himself only eluded a similar fate by the timely warning of Father Leguilcher, and effected his escape, with a small band of disciples, just before the gates were shut. On this occasion forty Christians fell, the church was destroyed, and the funds confiscated. About the

same period over two thousand Christians were killed on the banks of the Blue River, for which no redress has ever been obtained.

The 28th of March 1884 saw the murder of Father Terrace at Chia-fung-tse. An accusation had been trumped up against him, which the taotaï of Tali, Fong by name, refused to entertain. But a Fou-kien mandarin of the third order encouraged it, and gave the people carte-blanche to wreak their will. The Father was accordingly besieged in his house, and, after an heroic defence through an entire night, aided only by two aged women, he was stoned to death. His body was subjected to horrible mutilations, the heart and liver being boiled in a cauldron; and it was with feelings of extreme repulsion and self-repression that, some months after the occurrence, Father Leguilcher found himself constrained by his position to entertain the perpetrator of this diabolical human cookery. The Chinese Government subsequently paid fifty thousand taëls to the mission, as compensation for the outrage.

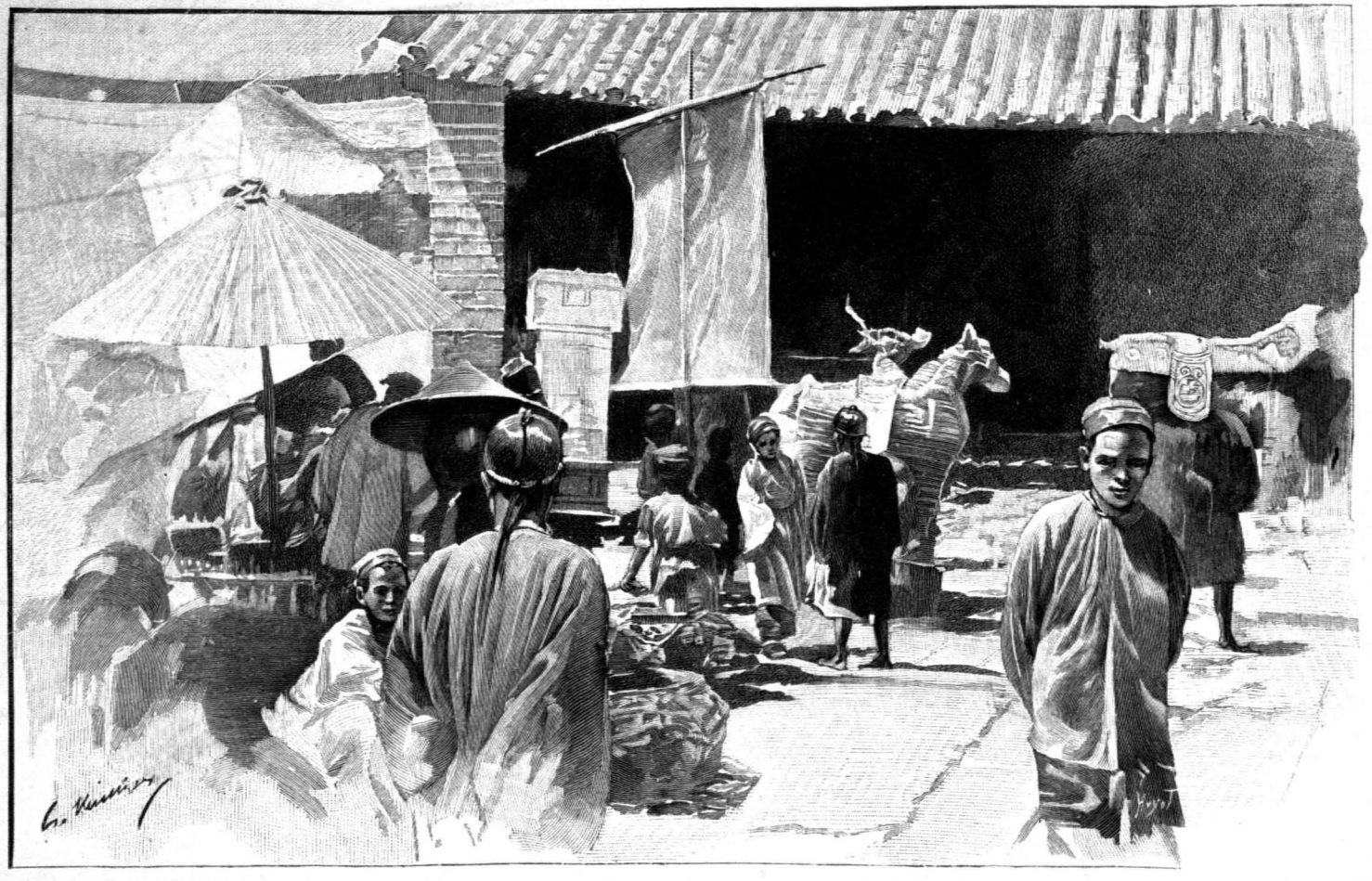
The Father told us that it was no specific witchcraft that was attributed to the Christians, but such idle superstitions as the supposed evil augury of cutting a fowl's tail-feathers, that sufficed to inflame the fanaticism of the Chinese against them. In the days of their worst terror the Christians adopted a private argot among themselves, which their oppressors called "devil talk"; but it only survives now among a few of the former generation.

As a rule, the persecution is the work of members of secret societies fostered by the mandarins, "The United Brotherhood" as they are termed. They burn incense, a cock is killed, and his blood, mixed with spirit, is drunk by every confederate.

The latter were formerly known by the title of Chaothiang païpa (*by the burning of incense the brethren are known*); later as Kiang-fou-houi (*river-lake of the Hou-Pe, sect centre*), Kolao (*elder brothers, younger brothers*). Their most ordinary designation, however, is Chiao-chiang-tichiang (*incense burners, elders, youngers*). It is even hinted that the leaders of these leagues aim at the actual overthrow of the present dynasty.

The Pet.

As a matter of fact, Father Leguilcher was, at the period of which we write, left in peace. The Christian inmates of his house seemed good servants: one was the teacher in the school, and spoke Latin fairly, another was a horse-dealer, a third a joiner. It was not an uncommon thing for poorer parents to sell their children: one such, an urchin of seven years, about the size of a child of three at home, became quite a pet of ours. He had a holiday in honour of our visit, and spent the whole day in the court silently intent upon our movements, save when we took any notice of him, when his face expanded into a wide smile, which, while it closed his eyes, permitted only the tip of



Street in Tali-Fou.

his tongue to protrude from the creases of his fat little countenance.

If we were well treated within the Father's domicile, we were not neglectful of the external forms of ceremony advisable towards the authorities. The day following our arrival we duly sallied forth to the houses of the two mandarins, the military chief, and the taotaï, whom we had previously advertised of our visit, and who had signified their gracious intention to accord us an interview. But on our presenting ourselves at their respective yamen, we were, in each case, refused audience on the plea of a headache. We regretted having so far put ourselves out for such ill-bred curmudgeons; and when, a few days afterwards, some soldiers were sent with a demand for our passports, we took the opportunity of replying that men of our rank were accustomed to travel in formal order, and that as the mandarins had declined to see us personally there could be no necessity for them to inspect our papers.

Tali has a population of about twenty thousand souls. Two principal streets traverse it, one long one running north and south, and the other descending towards the east to the lake side. The town offers but few points of interest to the traveller. The eye is attracted by a great grey block of masonry at the entrance to the main gate. This is the bell and drum tower, furnishing quarters to a few soldiers, whence a bell gives the signal for gun-fire at night-fall, and every two hours for the watch. Small shops line the sides of the two chief streets, as in most Chinese towns. Goods of European manufacture, chiefly English, come from Burmah, or from Pésé on the Canton River; those brought from the east have, before reaching Tali, to pass the head of the shortest route of penetration into China by the Red River. A few silk stuffs descend from Setchuen.

In the way of local trade I only noticed some round or square slabs of marble from the Tsang-chang mountains. They are veined, and are valued according as they bear a more or less fanciful resemblance to men, animals, or mountains. A fair sale is also carried on in skins—tiger, panther, little lynx, a greyish wolf, and pandas (*Ailurus*), the thick ringed tails of which were to be seen hanging in bunches before the door-posts. At Tali also there is a house which has a depôt of tea from Pou-eul-Fou. A wine of Lykiang, made from barley, and not unlike certain Spanish vintages to the palate, is sold here. Cette is the only other place, to my knowledge, where wine is made without the fruit of the grape. Besides such articles as those above mentioned, many Thibetan woollen stuffs, thick and warm, find their way hither. On one day (5th June) we met a caravan coming from the tea-gardens, consisting of no fewer than three hundred Thibetan horses and mules, bound for Atentsé. With them we saw several of those enormous black and tan dogs of Thibet which can only live in cold climates.

Tali-Fou Woman.

Food resources seemed plentiful: beef, mutton, vegetables, and

potatoes. Butter is made by Christian converts at about two days' distance; and often, while enjoying the luxury of our repasts here, we thought with some sorrow of the renewal of hard fare which awaited us in a few days.

The Minchia population, which is in the majority and very prolific in its increase, has been established here for some thousands of years. The type is hard to distinguish from Chinese, but the language is different. Mussulmans are also numerous, and many of them have been embodied in the army. In the opinion of the Father, the accession of the Mussulmans does not promise much opening of the country to foreigners; they talk of their advent, but at heart they do not desire it.

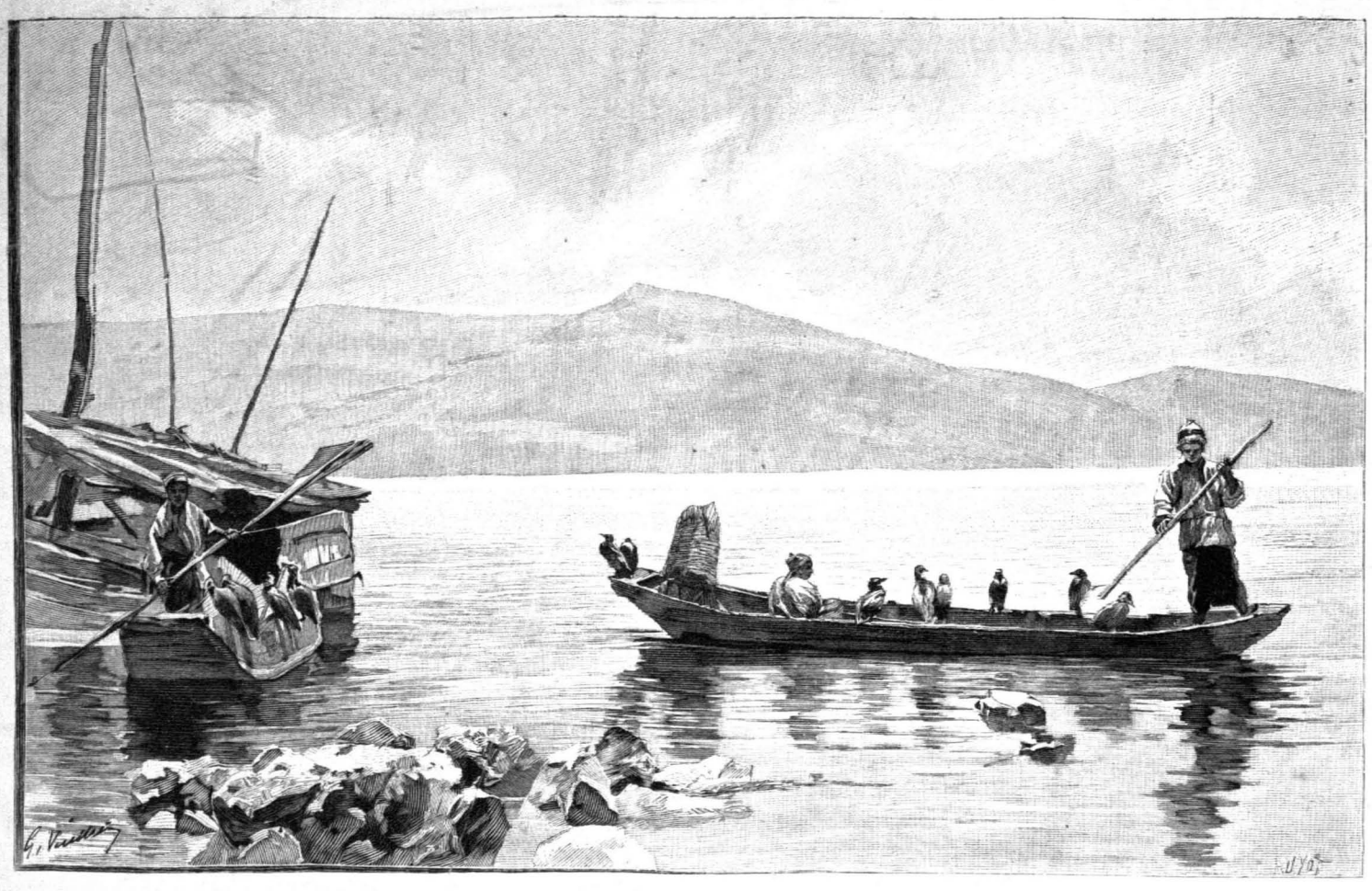
Immediately behind Tali itself the mountain rises steeply in scarps, green indeed, but totally devoid of timber, up to the sharp rocks of its summit, which stands at an altitude of 13,000 feet in isolation—a befitting natural screen and abutment to the lake lying at its feet. During our stay we only saw snow on its head for a few hours; it is rare in summer, but during eight months of the year the cap is always white. The chain of Tsang-chang placed like a wall between Chinese Yünnan, the civilised province, and the little-known and wild regions of the Kachins of Upper Burmah, and, to the right, of Thibet, reminded me of the rampart of the Altyn-Dagh, the Golden Mountains, which seem to forbid any approach from the north to Thibet the mysterious. Here, as on the south of the Lob-Nor, legends hover above their peaks, to daunt the traveller. Few are they that have crossed the barrier; and of those bold spirits that have dared its perils rarely have any re-emerged. Its inaccessible crags resist the proffered violation of their secrecy; cold grips the foolhardy mountaineer, and he drops amid their unforgiving

solitudes. It was at 9,750 feet that a dozen bodies were discovered, crouched, locked together for a long-lost warmth, and frozen stiff. Yet at this height the effects of mountain atmosphere are not so generally fatal.

At a short distance east of the town the margin of the lake Er-haï extends from north-north-west to south-east; and the plain which fringes it and environs Tali strikes the base of the Tsang-Chang mountains, and spreads over an area of a dozen leagues. Nothing can adequately convey a sense of its fertility. Between the three hundred and seventy-five villages it contains there is not a rood of fallow ground, and every field yields two harvests a year. The only rest the soil gets is in a change of crops. The chief products are corn, maize, opium, rice, and buckwheat. No tax burdens the farmer, and quite a small plot belonging to the mission brings in fifty taëls per annum.

At the two extremities of the lake the little towns of Chan-kouan and Chia-kouan (upper and lower gate) mark the limits of the plain. With a few slight military works on the north and south,—its natural defences suffice for the east and west,—the place might be held for a long time against an enemy from without, especially as the besieged would have ample and practically inexhaustible food supplies at their very gates. From which it may be seen, as before indicated, that the triumph of the Imperial troops in 1871 was due to the treachery instilled among the lieutenants of the Sultan rather than to force or famine.

One afternoon of our stay I escaped from the mission and turned my mule down towards the lake. It was about three-quarters of an hour's ride through cultivated fields to the shore, bordered with trees and villages. Over the tranquil surface of



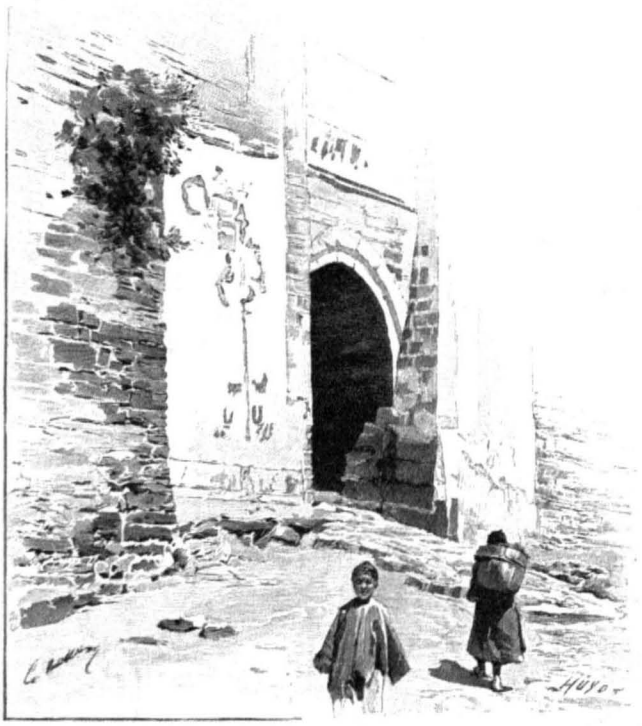
Lake Er-haï.

the blue-green water glided several boats about 40 feet long, each with a single mast and a large rectangular sail of matting. On the opposite side the hills were rounded and barren, with veins of red that meandered down their slopes into the water. It would have been a scene of calm contemplation as I sat on a stone to enjoy it, but for the hateful Chinese crowd that hustled and shut me in. At such moments a murderous desire came upon one to fling oneself, knife and revolver in hand, upon the repulsive mob that would not let one breathe the fresh air in peace for a moment. For it was a delightful spot that I had selected, beneath the shade of some willows where a green margin of turf sloped to a bank of shells upon the edge of the lake. Small barques slipped silently inshore, propelled almost without a ripple by a light and tapering pole plied lazily from the stern. In the gathering dusk they showed but as dark shadows; on prow and gunwale perched a motionless row of sombre cormorants, so that each vessel seemed the ship of Charon. Whether from the plumage of the birds, or from their attitude, the whole convoy presented a weird, funereal appearance. But the odour of their freight presently declared them only fishers returned from water-hawking. To each boat there are eight cormorants; a straw collar round the throat prevents their bolting the fish that they have struck, and the men have a seine of plaited osier for the prey. Here from the lake side Tali was but half visible, nor from the few roofs emerging from the green would anyone suspect the proximity of so large a town.

But it was time to be up and away. Our money and cases had come up from Mongtse, the taëls in little packages of five bags each, carried by six men in osier baskets balanced on their shoulders. As we advanced we reduced our retinue, and here

dismissed most of our former mafous and disposed of several mules.

Before we left we received a visit from two of the Fathers, Pitou and Reichenbach, whose station was two days distant from Tali; and with six Frenchmen momentarily united in a far country it may be judged if the party broke up early. The missionaries gave us interesting details of the country, especially regarding the superstitions of the Chinese in Tali, among which the errors of the Middle Ages lived again. For instance, in the heart of the larger cactus is found a pith, which to a lively imagination presents the semblance of a doll. In this the natives see the embryo European, and to be beforehand with a possible invasion slay every cactus in the place. Again, when rain is wanted a long paper dragon is carried through the streets; or, more effectual still, a dressed-up dog is carried in a palanquin, before which the very mandarins must bow for the propitiation of the skies.



Main Gate Tali-Fou.

CHAPTER V

FROM TALI TO TSEKOU

Caravan Reconstituted—Joseph—Departure from Tali—Fong-Yu—Cross the Yang-pi—Salt Works at Tien-eul-tsin—Dread of the "Barbarians"—Bridge over the Mekong—Fey-long-kiao—Strange Gods—Lao; Extreme Chinese Village—Valley Tangle—The Salwen—A Friendly Toussou—His Office—Between the two Rivers—The "Gate of the Tiger"—Subterranean Cavern—Lissou Tallies—The Mekong again—Cord Bridge at Piao-tsen—New Year's Trees—Tono Monstrosities—A Thief Forestalled—Lamasjens—Successful Robbery; an Unfortunate Loss—Native Dance—Lamasjen and Lissou Customs—A Village Esmeralda—Administration—False Alarms—In-Chouan; Ruined Village—Side Expedition to Téki—Explanation of Wild Loutses—Toti—Expected Attack—On Guard—Cross-Bows and Poisoned Arrows—Deities at Fong-Chouan; Joseph as Cicerone—Curious Emblems—Different Names of the Salwen—First mention of the Kiou-Kiang—Loutses and their Prisoners—With Dance and Song—To the Spirit of the Earth—Thibetan Tents Sighted—Town of Hsiao-Ouïsi—Father Tintet—Trials of the Missionaries—News from Tali—Full Stop on the Right Bank—We recross the Mekong at Halo—Hopatié Fête—Caravan Divided—Lamaserai of Kampou—Description—Points of Similarity between Roman Catholicism and Thibetan Buddhism—Yetché: its Ruler and People—The Mossos—Their History, Customs, and Method of Writing—Visit to the King—Mosso equivalent for Bell, Book, and Candle—Arrival at Tsekou—Retrospect.

By the 14th of June our preparations were complete. We had no time to lose, and wished to be off. Henceforward, as we should no longer be able, as at Mongtse, to fall back on a relay or a reserve, it was necessary to carry with us everything that we should require to the end—money, lights, stores, etc. We left with the missionaries the collections made up to this point, and some superfluous baggage for remission to Mongtse, but, in view of the country we were about to enter, we were obliged to

augment our packages, and, in consequence, our caravan. We took one load of horse-shoes; another of tea (for personal consumption as well as for barter); one of grease, made up dry in small leather bags; two dozen lbs. of sugar; three sheepskin beds (making one load), tunics of the same with the wool on; felt boots;

Some of our Escort.

and two large plain tents for the men. One of the most difficult questions was that of lights; we had with us candles calculated for six months. Our beasts had been partly changed and our retinue renewed, so that we felt as though starting on a fresh expedition.

We had experienced no difficulty at Tali in procuring strong

mules. Our caravan was composed of thirty such, of which six were for the saddle. We mustered sixteen men, all told. Our two Annamite boys, after a little hesitation, decided to go forward with us; but of the Chinese who entered Tali in our train but two remained—Roux's mule man Chantzeu, and his assistant Fa, a strong, well-conducted lad whom we had taken on at Ssumao. The new makotou was a big, seasoned fellow, about forty years old, who talked little and worked hard, and neither drank nor smoked. Under him were seven mafous, some of them Christians.

The interpreter was also a Christian, furnished by the Fathers. It was a matter for astonishment to find in this out-of-the-way spot anyone who could act in that capacity. It was still more so when I add that Joseph spoke not a word of French. He was what the missionaries termed a "Latinist." Brought up and taught from early childhood by the Fathers, he had learnt Latin, and even studied philosophy. But not feeling a call for orders he had married, and became, like many of his kind, a trader, setting up a small store with his father-in-law. Never, in all probability, did he suspect that his acquaintance with the language of Cicero would be lucrative, any more than, I am free to add, I had myself thought to derive direct advantage from the many painful hours erstwhile spent over the Catilines or the Æneid. At first, intercourse was not easy. Our oratorical attempts were hardly brilliant; there were even times when we were not in touch. By degrees, however, we gained fluency, and in a month had completely mastered each other's idiosyncrasies of expression. But what Latin! *Horresco referens!* Solecisms, barbarisms, neologisms, all the "isms" invented might be applied to our jargon. Luckily, we had only ourselves for audience.

Eulogy on our interpreter would be premature here; his merits will appear in the course of our travel. Suffice it to say that Joseph proved himself a man of sterling principle, integrity, and courage, and that as each day advanced he became not only our devoted servant but our friend.

All being then ready, on the afternoon of the 14th (June) we set forth. Our course was still west by a road leading to the Mekong. Once on the banks of the river we should have to seek a way up the valley. The actual start was a lengthy proceeding; each of our men had a last word to say to a parent or friend. But at length we got away.

Five hours later we parted from the Fathers, who convoyed us so far on our way. It was not without real regret that we said good-bye to these brave fellow-countrymen, whom we should in all human probability never set eyes on again. The pang was a mutual one. We might hope to see our country within a few months; they, never. It must have needed some fortitude to face that word—above all, in China.

We proceeded along a paved causeway between the mountains of Tsang-Chang and the lake, and we did not emerge from the hollow during the first day, which closed on us in a clean little Minchia village. On the next we continued to skirt the lake, which narrowed towards the north, until it ended in a mere reed-bordered channel, up which some boats were being poled. The swamps stretched farther, diversified with hummocks; it seemed as if the lake proper, the basin of which was clearly defined by the hills, must once have been more extensive. The alluvial land of its bed, scarcely above the level of the water, was cultivated with rice; and many a hamlet and clump of trees appeared from the verdant surface; the vista recalled some

corners of Normandy. Passing Chang-kouan, which forms the northern gate of the valley, we stopped at Teng-chouan-cheou, in a pagoda where we were pestered by crowds of inquisitive idlers.

On the 18th (June) a sparsely clad ascent brought us to a col at an altitude of 9,035 feet. We were in the midst of Alpine vegetation; asters, orchids, edelweiss, etc., abounded. The air was fresh and invigorating. At our feet was spread a wide and well-tilled vale, the rice-fields like a draught-board below us, and the villages grey specks edged with green. Throughout its length a river traced a sinuous course with a dark riband of trees. The *coup d'œil* was striking, and issuing as we did from brown and rugged hills we could hardly repress an exclamation of delight. Rarely had we seen fertility so fully turned to account. Save where small dikes defined the boundaries of the fields, no single rood of ground was lost. Upon the distant hills a few white scaurs showed like beacons over the valley. Down on the level a group of peasants might be discerned round a minute oriflamme, lightening their toil with the sound of flageolet and gong. When we descended to the river we found its waters rapid and clear beneath a fringe of willows, and the irrigation was cleverly controlled by intersecting runnels.

We crossed the valley by a paved road at right angles, and came to the Minchia townlet of Fong-Yu (two thousand or three thousand inhabitants). I noticed the peculiar head-dress of some of the women, consisting of a close-fitting little black hood with silver ornaments in front. Their hair was looped to cover the ear,—one might have supposed they had got the latest mode from Paris,—and this style seemed reserved for the young girls. To see them at work in the fields in their skull-caps, little jackets, and trousers revealed by the tucked-up skirt, they might have been

taken for boys. The older women wore the black turban, Chinese fashion, covering the hair knot. Amongst these folks one met with some pretty faces and more regular features than the Chinese. The men, on the other hand, differ but little from the latter.

Despite the fact of the doors of the inn where we lay being closed, they shut in a swarm of people, and our repose was broken by the incessant going and coming of the "members of the family," as they explained to all our grumbles. To such an argument there was no rejoinder: yet what a family! *Certes*, there is no fear of depopulation in this country yet awhile.

It took us five days to reach the Mekong from Fong-Yu along a rather uniform road. A second hill similar to the last we had climbed, and then on the 20th we found ourselves by the river Yang-pi, which we had already crossed before Tali. The stream here was spanned by a hanging bridge on eight chains fastened at either end to a white stone. At the bridge head was a platform, and on it a recumbent stone buffalo, sole guardian of the spot, as if watching the rush of water with a placid air. Near the Yang-pi we for the first time fell in with some Lissous, a tribe of mountaineers renowned in China for their fierceness. We were to have more to do with them in the future. These representatives were swarthy, and wore a broad straw hat like a panama.

On the 21st (June) we traversed a wood, threaded by green glades. The country had few inhabitants and little culture, merely an occasional patch of corn or buckwheat, but the vegetation was luxuriant and the shade grateful. White dog-roses scaled the trees and drooped in fragrant clusters over dazzling diadems of lilies of the height of a man, and under

foot pink primulas made a gay carpet. The enjoyment of these cool forests in contrast to the turmoil of the inns was great. On the 22nd as the wood thinned the villages increased, and we came to some salt pits at Tien-eul-tsin. These we inspected before our departure. The rock-salt is obtained by means of shafts about 65 feet deep, and is drawn up by a double bucket.

Hanging Bridge over the Yang-pi.

The slush is then tilted into a trench, which conducts it to large stone vats, whence it is again transferred by hand into wooden receptacles. A Chinese overseer at a counter checks the workmen as they issue with their dripping loads. The next process is to heat the mass in small coppers placed on kilns (called tsao-fang, of which there might be about sixty in the village), and the residuum is blocked in spherical wooden moulds. The