subordinate at Ouïsi. The latter mandarin read the letter, dined, and forthwith killed himself in his garden. His successor, furnished with precise orders to see justice done to the Fathers, presented himself at Atentsé, and inquired who had burned their domicile. The Lamas replied that they had done so. "For what reason?"—"The Fathers prevented the rain." "Do they not eat?"—"Yes." "Then if they eat they will want harvests like yourselves; and if harvests, rain?"—"But they have money." "Can they eat money?"—And so on. The conclusion was foregone; no compensation was obtained; the magistrate's secretary was a relative of the Lamas. We have given the above at length as an instance of the obstacles the missionaries have to encounter, and of the utter supineness of Chinese officialdom in face of the articles in the Treaty of Pekin on the subject. Perhaps some day China, vanquished on her coasts, penetrated by more civilisation, and, not improbably, disintegrated by her own internal parties,—notably those from the side of Thibet,—may relinquish her habitual perversity.

Tidings affecting us personally also reached us here. A letter from Father Leguilcher at Tali conveyed the intelligence of the death of our interpreter Joseph's only child. This might have the effect of detaching a valuable servant. But on my breaking the news to him, after the first outburst of grief he bore it with Christian fortitude. "God," said he, "has taken my child; but we shall meet in heaven. You have present need of me, and I will follow your fortunes." I was glad to honour his courage, and to recognise in this singular Chinese a testimony to the fruit of our missionaries in the Far East.

From Father Tintet we derived some information of this region. Though his proselytes were few in number, he was held in respect by all. The valley being impoverished both by its sterility and

the improvidence of its inhabitants, one of his endeavours was to induce the people to store the grain. The rains here are neither very heavy nor regular, and during a certain season nothing is seen but a little buckwheat cultivated on the heights. In the months of January and February it rains a good deal; but the cold is never extreme, the minimum temperature being about 20° Fahr., and there is little snow.

Whilst we had enjoyed the society of our countryman, our men had not been idle, and with several days' grain supplies ready, and the season now advanced, we were constrained to be off. Again we were warned that after a few days it would be impossible to continue on the right bank. Besides the consideration that the transport of our numerous caravan to the other side by an insecure bridge would be a hazardous undertaking, I preferred to adhere to my original enterprise until it should become absolutely impracticable. On the right shore of the Mekong we were in unexplored country. At Hsiao-Ouïsi the traveller Cooper, coming from Atentsé, had crossed, as well as several missionaries. All had quitted the river valley to the south of the town and gone in a south-west direction; so that we should have an entirely untrodden territory before us.

Accordingly, on the 12th (August) we performed a short stage. Our troop had lost the services of "Eagle Beak" and the two Minchias, and their places were filled by two Thibetans supplied by the Father, who himself proposed to accompany us a short distance. These recruits were Christians, and promised to be good workers. I was glad to see once more the copper-coloured, large-eyed Mongolian type and the regulation Thibetan *tchaupa*[1] and woollen boots.

[1] A rough woollen tunic reaching to the knees, crossed in front and tied in to the figure so as to form a pouch wherein pipe, tobacco, and food are carried.

The march of the 13th (August) was a short one to the village of Ngai-hoa, where Father Tintet took leave of us. Hospitality was offered us by the chief, and we preferred the shelter of his oratory to that of a bed-chamber where lay his octogenarian mother. In the chapel was an altar with three niches, from one of which the goddess Khou-an-yn with her child in her arms watched over our slumbers. It was said she would protect us for two nights, but none the less we lost three mules, which retarded us for a whole day. Nothing was more exasperating than to discover on the eve of starting that a mule was missing. It was no use dropping on the men; they would simply have left us. Patience and search were the only remedies; and in these Joseph, with his good-sense and experience, was unrivalled. Roux, who was in haste to reach the frontier of Thibet, exclaimed at one of these checks: "What are we to do if we stop here?" —"Probably eat and sleep," replied Joseph, sucking at his pipe.

On the 15th (August) we came to the village of Halo, where there was a ferry. A little higher up the right bank is stopped by precipitous cliffs to the water's edge, and pedestrians creep round on pegs of timber driven into the face of the rock. This acrobatic performance being impossible for quadrupeds, the only alternative by which the position might be turned was a flank march of a fortnight into the Salwen valley, and so round to Tsekou. This decided us. We had reached the point where the right bank must be abandoned for the left; on which a road led in two days to Tsekou, and an opportunity would be given of making the acquaintance *en route* of a chief whose friendship might prove of subsequent advantage to us. A bargain was therefore struck with the headman of Halo for the passage of

ourselves and our belongings for seven and a half taëls, and a day and a half to complete the job. The men were delighted at the prospect, and were ready to joke now over a scare they had had from some falling stones that morning, when the bold Fa loosed off his gun plump into the thicket, and swore he heard the robbers scampering.

In the evening bonfires blazed in the village in honour of the Hopatié (fire, wood, fête), the S. Jean of China, when each family invoked a favourable harvest. The flames lit up the orange-trees, the palms gleamed steely blue, and the red flowers of the giant pagoda-trees returned the glow as we kept the feast of Hopatié by letting off crackers which the people gave us.

It was rather a ticklish sensation to be launched upon the swirling Mekong in a crank dug-out 16 feet long, paddled by four men. The waters were on the rise; another day and the boatmen would not attempt the crossing. As it was, great care was needed to prevent the frail craft getting broadside on to the rush; and Joseph, who loved not water frolics, uttered a fervent *Deo gratias* when the exciting moment was safely past. The mules were transferred by towing.

From here, Roux and I, with Joseph and three men and pack mules, set forward in light order. Briffaud continued with the caravan, to rejoin us at Tsekou. Upon the left bank we fell in with a young Christian of Kampou, returning from Hsiao-Ouïsi, and engaged him at once as guide and servant. The way was good, wide, and free from scrub, having been prepared for the passage of the mandarin of Ouïsi. After so long clambering over worse than goat-paths, with the river always within sound on our right, it seemed strange to be walking at ease on the level, hearkening to it roaring on our left. We passed through the

little Mosso village of Kampou, where the inhabitants utilised even the dikes between the rice-fields for beans. Soon after, the country became wilder; affluents of the Mekong intersected our road with barren gorges, the hills were covered with pines. Just before dark we made out on the brow the white buildings of a Lama monastery; and as we could not reach a village before nightfall, we determined to throw ourselves on the hospitality of the Order.

From a winding path beneath the sombre pines we all at once emerged on a wide clearing, in the midst of which was reared a striking pile. We knocked at several doors before anyone opened, but on gaining admittance were soon the centre of a crowd of monks, fat and bronzed, with shaven heads, and draped in red toga-like mantles. They belonged to the Order of Red Hats, who had never been hostile to the missionaries. Some were Mossos, others Thibetans; they spoke either language equally, but only used Thibetan writing. Our hosts conducted us to a clean little tenement, occupied by a Lama and his two disciples. At the sight of money, eggs and grain were quickly forthcoming; they brought us also some small apples, and a jar of that beverage which the Thibetans call *tchang*, and the Chinese tchaotiou, in which the owner of our lodging pledged us freely.

Hearing loud shouts in the course of the evening proceeding from the space in front of the monastery, we descended, and beheld the Lamas in the act of decking a post with resinous torches, surrounded with flowers and leaves. It was the continuation of the Hopatié. A light having been applied, they began to sport round it, the young bonzes gamboling and throwing somersaults with very unclerical vigour. Next, all, big

and little, placed themselves one behind the other, according to size, each holding on to the skirts of the one in front of him. One was left out, who made dashes at this string as it revolved rapidly, like the spoke of a wheel. The game consisted in the single Lama trying to catch the man at the tail, without being himself caught by the one at the head.

The fire sinking low, the fête concluded with a concert of ear-piercing whistles, which each produced by putting his fingers to his mouth. Spying a woman at a little distance, a spectator of these games, I asked our host if the Lamas married—"Oh, never!" "Then there are none but Lamas here?"—"Assuredly." "But I saw a woman."—Embarrassment of my interlocutor; he reflected a moment—"Probably," said he, "some female who came to take a walk here. But," added he, "don't repeat it; it would never do to say that the Lamas were married." In reply to interrogations about Lhaça, my Lama said he had been there four times, and gave us particulars as to the route.

The following morning we were able to examine the temple near which we had passed the night, and of which, in the dusk, we had only distinguished the outline. It was a white rectangular building, with some resemblance to a Chinese pagoda. Outside appeared, in conspicuous iteration, the invocation cut on stone—

OM MANÉ PEDMI HOUM.[1]

Around it were grouped several smaller structures, surmounted by diminutive towers, with medallions of gods in terra-cotta, horns, and inscribed bones; while in front stood posts from

[1] "Adoration to the Jewel in the Lotus, Amen!" The Shadakshara Mantra, or "six-syllabled charm," with a combined sense of praise and prayer; regarded by the Lamas with deep reverence as containing an unfathomable doctrine.—TRANS.

which waved in the wind long lhaders, white flags lettered with Thibetan characters. There could be no doubt we were approaching the confines of the country of prayer.

The interior of the Lamaserai presented a series of courts, the walls of which were covered with frescoes, inspired conjointly by Thibetan and Hindu Buddhism with Chinese beliefs. One circular painting represented a male and female, naked, before a tree laden with fruit, round the trunk of which a serpent was entwined, and surrounded by divers animals. Among the Lamas the serpent formerly was regarded as the enemy of mankind. Is it possible that in this picture was to be discerned a survival of traditions carried into Thibet by the Nestorians? It is not for me to say. But the points of resemblance between the creeds of Roman Catholicism and Thibetan Buddhism, as exhibited constantly in matters of ornament and ceremony, were too frequent and too striking to be attributable to chance. Whence can they have been borrowed, or who were their originators? The question is still far from being solved.

Pursuing our investigations, we came to the central edifice. The gabled roofs rose in tiers above each other, fining into a kind of pyramid, crowned by a gilt cupola. The door of the temple was willingly opened to us, but we were requested not to ascend to the upper storey, which served as a sacristy, as they were averse to our inspecting the penetralia of their worship. In the basement of the pagoda was seated a massive gilded image of the Thibetan Buddha, cross-legged, with two saints, also gilt, of natural size, at his side, holding tridents. Arranged before the Buddha on a table were the seven copper bowls of water usually seen on Thibetan altars, and, a little in advance of them, another vessel containing oil and a lighted

wick. Behind and above the idol a Krout deity was displayed with spread wings, holding a serpent in his beak and talons. To right and left of the altar the symbols showed traces of affinity to Indian tradition—notably a painting, in which was depicted a female with twelve faces, disposed in four rows of three, one above another, and with ten arms, of which two clasped a heart upon the breast. The walls on either hand were decorated with saints, men to the right, and women to the left, in blue, green, or yellow, each with an aureole. From the gallery of the first floor drooped flags and bandrols, emblazoned with Thibetan scrolls and characters. Elsewhere were bronze candlesticks, copper bells, a Thibetan gong, and a fine censer. For readers who have not studied the question, it would be of little interest to draw attention to the similarity between the ritual and ornaments in use by the Lamaserai of Kampou and those of the Roman Catholic faith, — altar, lamp, holy water, candlesticks, censers, bells, saints with aureoles, the bird holding the serpent, etc., are common to both.

Corresponding ornaments and images from Lhaça were to be found before the private altars, which each head Lama had in his private lodging. Notwithstanding their religion, these brethren had no scruples against trafficking in these objects, but the price was prohibitive. Our visit concluded, nothing remained but to take leave of the Kamapa (Star, symbol of the sect of Red Hats), and to resume our journey, well pleased to have had the opportunity and privilege of admission to their monastery. This day, the 17th (August), was destined to maintain its interesting character, and to be remembered as one of the pleasantest in the entire record. For in the afternoon we entered upon a little plain, which contained the village of Yetché.

Yetché is Mosso, and ruled by a petty king of some celebrity in the district, and it will not be amiss to give here a few particulars of his people and their organisation.

The Mossos belong to that Thibeto-Burmese family which has thrown out several offshoots in Upper Indo-China. In the view of Terrien de la Couperie (*Beginnings of Writing in Central and Eastern Asia*) they would be of the same group as the Jungs or Njungs who appeared on the frontiers of China six centuries before Christ, coming from the north-east of Thibet. Chinese historians mention the Mossos seven hundred and ninety-six years after Christ, the epoch of their subjection by the king of Nantchao. Regaining their independence for a time, and then reattached to the kingdom of Tali, they recognised the Imperial suzerainty in the fourteenth century, and were definitely subdued by China in the eighteenth century. They and the Lolos have probably the same origin. The names of the two peoples are of Chinese application; and whilst the Lolos call themselves Nossous (or Nesous), the Mossos are known as Nachris. The dialects of both have many points in common. Upon their reduction by China they were settled round Li-kiang, within a few days' radius of the town. Towards the north they extend on the left bank of the Mekong to Yerkalo, and on the right bank up to within two days' march of Tsekou. Formerly their sway reached far into Thibet, beyond Kiang-ka. There is a popular Thibetan poem, the *Késer*, which celebrates the exploits of a warrior who strove to drive back the Mossos.

The men are dressed in the Chinese manner, but the women have a distinctive head-dress. Their hair is gathered into a knot and brought up in front of the head like a horn,

with a silver button on the top; behind this button is fastened a silver-studded band from which hang down behind the ears a pair of scalloped ear-rings, also silver, larger than walnuts. This ornament is only worn by married women, and is presented to them by their husbands on the birth of a child. Young girls have only the band without the rings. As great value is set upon these trinkets, which are handed down from generation to generation, they are difficult to obtain. In the rest of their dress they, too, follow the Chinese, with the exception of the wife of the *mokoua* (Mosso, king), who has an elaborate and pretty costume. Over the shoulders is flung a black sheep-skin fringed with a pound or two of silver bangles, and little bells and bits of glass at the waist. The head-dress is identical in shape with that of the common women, but the ornaments are of gold. A silken jacket with silver and coral buttons and a green skirt complete the effect.

The Mosso worship is that of spirits. Carved posts, on which a frequent design is an eye, are set up at the entry of the villages to avert evil, and to the same intent within the houses a pillar is planted in the centre with branches, inscribed bamboos, and small flags round it. The tradition of the Deluge is known to them. Wizards they have; often made in spite of themselves by common consent if thought to possess the proper qualifications for scaring evil spirits, to which must be added the art of healing; for in the event of failure the elect of the people is occasionally slain. On the first day of the year a feast is held at which pig fattened on peaches is sacrificed, and nothing but Mosso talked; if any Thibetans are in the village they are excluded. The medicine-man only makes his appearance once on such an occasion, to stamp a white moon

on the shoulders of the people; and withdraws afterwards into the mountains for twenty-five days, whither the tribe brings him food. They burn their dead; but the ceremony never takes place during harvest. At that season the bodies must wait, sometimes preserved in salt.

Mosso writing has no real existence as such. The wizards make and keep manuscript books filled with hieroglyphics; each page is divided into little partitions, horizontally from left to right, in which are inserted rough drawings of men, houses, animals' heads, and conventional signs for the sky, lightning, etc. I was enabled to carry away with me several of these books. The traveller Gill and the Abbé Desgodins had already taken specimens to Europe, but without a clue to their meaning. The magicians explained two of them to me. They were prayers beginning with the mention of the creation of the world, and ending by an enumeration of all the ills which menace man, which he can avoid if he is pious and gives gifts to the magicians. I have been able by collation to establish the identity of certain ideas with certain signs, although the wizards told me they had no alphabet, and that the hieroglyphs were handed on by oral tradition alone. It was interesting to light among an isolated people upon one of the first stages in the evolution of writing. Many of the Chinese characters were originally simply pictorial hieroglyphs; and had the Mossos developed instead of restricted their signs, we might perchance have seen in their sacred books the birth of letters for them also.

Yetché, as I have said, is the residence of a *mokoua*. He is of noble blood, and belongs to the ancient royal family of Li-kiang. The power with which he is invested by the Chinese Government is hereditary. His territory, which extends but a

short distance to the east, runs northward almost as far as Atentsé, southward to within two or three days' march of Yetché, and westward beyond the Mekong and the Salwen till it touches the borders of the Irawadi; but the *mokoua* only accounts to China for his administration, that is to say the collection of imposts, in the districts on the left bank of the Mekong. Indeed, China, on the principle of *divide ut imperes*, and lest these kinglets should become too important, has broken up their spheres of power on her frontiers by the insertion of Lamas, toussous, and other petty chieftains. The *mokoua* is responsible yearly to China for the tax of the villages that possess rice-fields, forty or forty-five taëls per village, the Chinese families paying him the *tipi* or ground rent of their holdings. He levies on his own subjects every three years the tithe of their live stock, and to him of right belongs the yearly issue of a licence to hunt called the *chamachu rui* (price of the *chamachu* or flying squirrel), which more especially affects the Lissous of the Mekong right bank. They must furnish besides, yearly and by family, four tsiens, paid in cereals, wax, or money. Occasionally the *mokoua* himself fixes the nature of the contribution. He for his part presents, also yearly and by family, to one-third of his people a plate of salt, to another third wine, and to the remainder meat. The Christians are exempt from the corvée and from military service, but not from the cereals or the four tsiens.

On the first day of the year the *mokoua* receives a visit from his Lissou subjects, who bring with them presents, not of duty but of respect; it would not be fitting to come empty-handed. One offers some roots, another edible fungi, a third a pheasant killed *en route*. They then perform a dance before him—a round one, in which sometimes as many as a hundred men take

part, and of which the movement gets faster and faster until it has happened that those who fell have been trampled to death beneath the feet of the others. On the celebration of these fêtes each visitor receives from the king wine and meat, more than a dozen oxen being slaughtered for one repast. The Lissous are not always tractable; it is narrated that on a recent occasion, dissatisfied with their meal and excited by drink, they broke out into a riot, and would have killed the *Iseupa* (Lissou title for the *mokoua*, "great chief"); but the latter, notwithstanding his youth, boldly bared his breast and dared them to strike. This display of courage appealed to their own, and the young king acquired a great popularity from that moment.

The Mossos of Yetché are regarded as the slaves of their chief; three families can always be called out for service or for corvée. Each of his subjects must contribute to the building of his house; and his field labourers receive their keep, but no pay. The people on the left bank of the river have a right of appeal against the *mokoua* to the Chinese court at Ouïsi. But it is never put into use: whatever happens, his jurisdiction is invariably found more just and less tyrannical than the Chinese tribunals.

The father of the reigning Mosso *mokoua* was a trusted adherent to Yangynko, conqueror of the Mussulmans of Tali, and having been deputed to reduce the Lamaserai of Honpou (near Atentsé) was there assassinated. Although his death was avenged by Chinese forces, and a fine of three thousand taëls plus the head of the murderer exacted, this did not satisfy his son and successor, who sent two thousand Lissou warriors (after making them drink vengeance in bull's blood, their warlike custom), and devastated the villages belonging to the Lamas up to the outskirts

of Tsekou, but respected the lives of the Christians and missionaries. Through the instrumentality of the latter the implements and oxen were saved for the villagers, and Father Dubernard redeemed the prisoners from the Lissous with a ransom of salt, gaining thereby such goodwill from the natives of the Mekong that they would hardly consent to his return to his own place at Tsekou. The young *mokoua* also bound himself by ties of amity with the Fathers, and on the occasion of the latter being expelled from their stations at Tsekou and on the Mekong, before recounted, received them under his protection, saying, "We were friends in prosperity, let us continue so in adversity."

This recitation of preceding local events will explain the interest we had in visiting the *mokoua* of Yetché and in gaining his friendship, the value of which we were to find in our further travels.

When with a present of a revolver and a tinder-box, and heralded by Joseph, we presented ourselves at his house, we found a rambling edifice with a wide central court. The walls exhibited a variety of patterns and Mosso hieroglyphs, all, as well as the mouldings, the design of the royal owner himself, whose more ordinary accomplishments and occupations embraced those of a goldsmith, merchant, and cider maker on a large scale.

At our entrance he came forward himself to greet us. He was a young man of regular features and intelligent expression; being in mourning he wore a white turban, and a white cord tied his queue. Our interview was short, as we could not accept his hospitality for the night, and he appeared nervous and unable to give us much geographical information. He thanked me for my gifts, and regaled us with tea, cakes, and an excellent sweet-

meat made of plums, and on our leaving presented me with a book of Mosso prayer. By his courtesy also we were provisioned for our journey with pork and edible fungi.

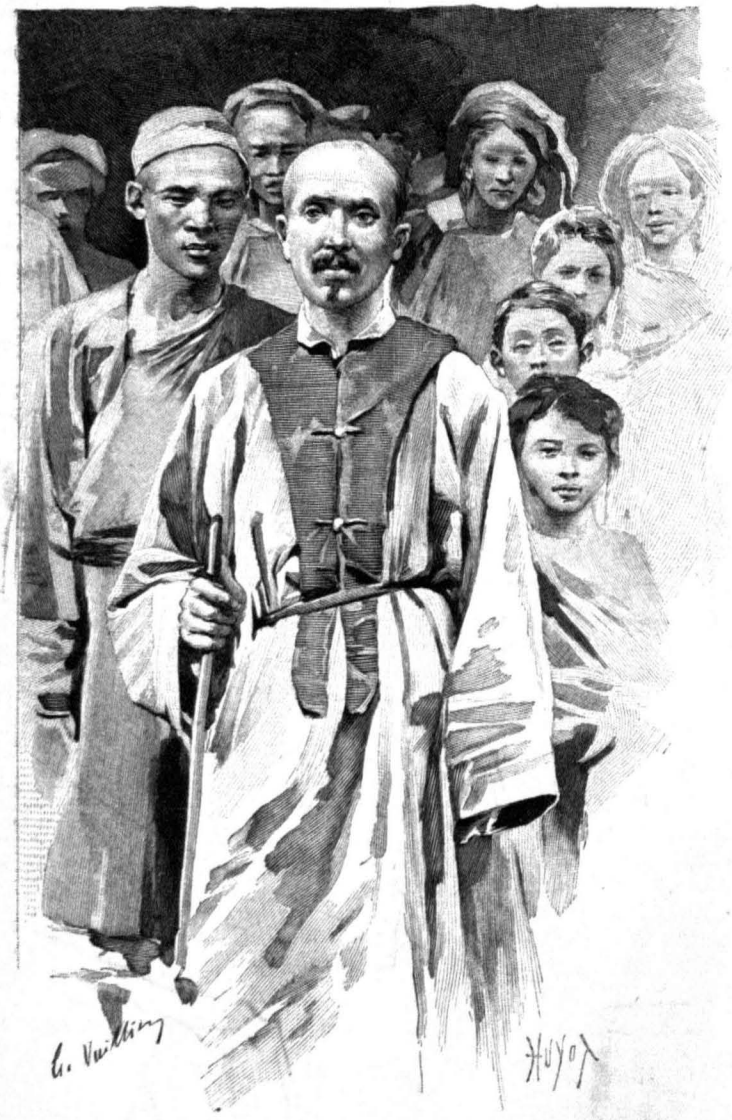
Bidding farewell then to Yetché, we proceeded to Dékou, another Mosso village, where in the evening we witnessed the ceremony with which the medicine-men ward off evil spirits and sickness from the dwellings. Each wizard wore a circular head-dress with spreading fan-like rim, from the back of which hung ribands; in one hand he held a cymbal with bells on the concave side, and in the other, one of those Thibetan double tambourines which are shaken from side to side. Behind them marched one of their number beating a tom-tom with a curved stick. The procession entered each house in turn; the family altar was decked, and cinders were placed on the tripod. When the leader had tasted a proffered cup of wine, he held it aloft while pronouncing a parenthetical litany, in each pause of which children, covered with flour and holding torches, chanted a word in chorus meaning "present." I imagine these to have represented the good and evil spirits invoked. The incantation over, the instruments were given a final shake, a circuit of the room was made, and *exeunt.* At the chief's they have to perform a dance in addition, which they execute with a bowing motion, stooping with outstretched hand as if to pick something up, in a manner precisely similar to what I have seen in Thibet. The function ended round an obo outside the village, where torches were fixed to a post, and children flung into the flames a powder which produced a white flash. The whole observance was a continuation of the Hopatié, which though in China of only one day's duration is here prolonged over several.

The road traversed on the 18th (August) was good but monotonous, and nightfall found me the guest of a Thibetan family in a lonely little hut. The "Doctor" had taken a short cut with the Christian guide, and so overshot our halt; but, as the country was no longer dangerous, we felt no uneasiness on his behalf. As I smoked my pipe in the moonlight, I realised what a tie is formed by living the same life and enduring the same hardships: I had grown quite fond of Joseph and Sao, separated though we were by a world of ideas; and even with the other men who had covered so many miles with us travel supplied a bond which racial contrasts could not wholly dissolve.

19th (August).—A long day, which seemed to me longer from the lassitude induced by a touch of fever. A line came back from Roux in the morning reporting all well, and that he would push on. In the afternoon the valley contracted: we were now opposite the spot where the precipice had barred our farther advance on the right bank. Here on the left things were not much better. The river had hollowed out the undercliff, and for some distance the way was a mere wooden gallery clinging to the overhanging bluff. The face of the rock above us was cut with large Thibetan inscriptions, the burden of which was always the same prayer found for twelve hundred miles from west to east throughout the country of the Suppliants.

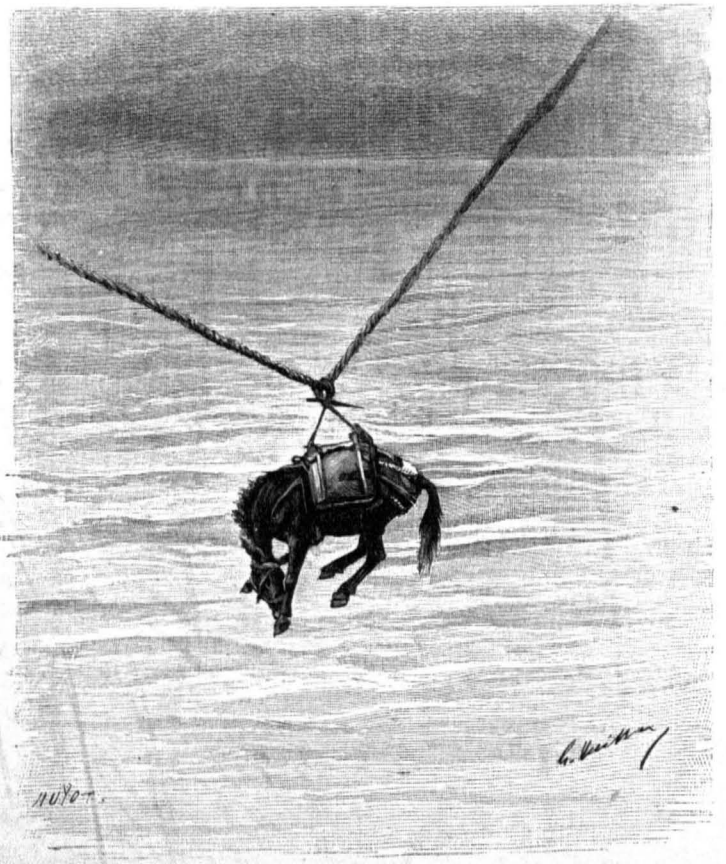
We approached Tsekou, and were already within sight of the white houses of the mission, whence a man came to escort us to the bridge of Tsedjrong, as that of the missionaries had been cut; and here Father Soulié was waiting to welcome us. The two cables composing the bridge were fairly taut, and the leather slings having been adjusted round myself and another, away we went with a swoop. As I looked down at the water all fear of giddiness

vanished. The other side was reached with the impetus of the descent, and the shock broken by a band held by two men. The mules were soon disposed of in the same manner. At every crossing the running line is greased, but even with this precaution the cords wear out quickly. When a new connection has to be established, it is done by a light line attached to an arrow, the stream being dangerously strong for boats. On the right bank we were met by Father Dubernard, one of the veterans of the Thibet Mission. In twenty-eight years this is the second occasion on which he has seen European travellers: the first was the Englishman Cooper. The reader may imagine what mutual pleasure our meeting therefore gave.

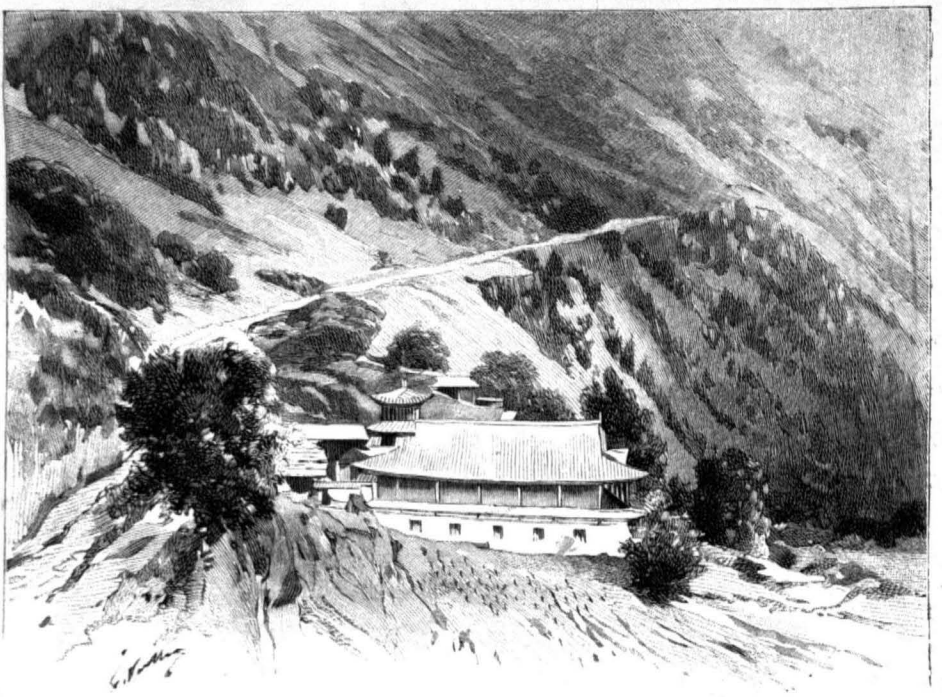


Father Soulié.

A ten minutes' mule ride and we were in Tsekou. We had accomplished the exploration of the Chinese Mekong; we had verified the routes of Cooper, Gill, and the missionaries of Thibet, as well as those of Garnier and the Pavie Mission. After the grand works of Rochill and of Dutreuil de Rhins, there only remains an expedition into the Dégué to complete the knowledge of the whole course of the great Indo-Chinese artery, the French river. With Tsekou we had attained the northern apex of our enterprise; henceforward we should be homeward bound. But first to rest, to talk with our fellow-countrymen, and to reorganise our forces while stopping a space in the gateway of Thibet.



Passing a Mule over the Mekong at Tsedjrong.



Mission Buildings, Tsekou.

CHAPTER VI

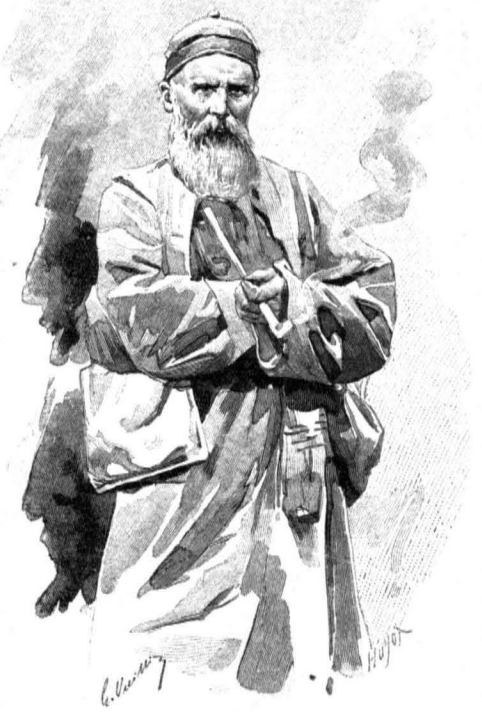
SOJOURN AT TSEKOU

Labours of the Missionaries—Honest Socialism—Persecution of Christians—Population of Tsekou—Cattle-rearing—Industries—Hunting—Fauna—Flora—Thibetans—Their Religious Beliefs—Lamaserais—Customs—Superstitions—Fables—Songs—Return of Roux from Atentsé.

A TWO-STOREYED house, with a roof of Chinese tiles, a terrace, and a chapel 65 feet high with triple gables ornamented with Chinese designs and lattice wood-work, formed the exterior of the mission. The Fathers were justly proud of their chapel; it was indeed wonderful to find such an edifice here. It had taken three years to build, with the services of Minchia journeymen from Kien-tchouan on the borders of the Blue River, and with local materials.

We had for outlook in rear of the chapel the stony ridge ill-

covered with brushwood that linked the right bank of the torrent of Tsekou to the Mekong. Above and beyond, the mountains, with their uniform covering of rigid pines, rose to the heights on the left of the river. Immediately behind Tsekou, hills were piled upon hills until the horizon was shut in on all sides, and we seemed to be enclosed within a little world apart. The eye sought its only outlet to the north, where the Mekong had forced for itself a narrow passage at the base of a high mountain which occasionally emerged from its usual canopy of clouds, and displayed a rocky summit patched with snow. It bore the name of the village beneath its shoulder, Loukou.



Father Dubernard.

The concession of the Fathers was of considerable extent, and reached the top of the chain that separated the Mekong from the Salwen basin, embracing in its area numerous villages echeloned at various heights, from which on Sunday a congregation of nearly three hundred Christians descended to mass. Father Dubernard has collected the débris of several mission stations, and has become the rallying-point for those believers whom persecution has driven to the refuge of this agricultural community which he has founded. As I

marked his administration of his subjects, his help for the unfortunate, his care of the sick, and saw him supervising the harvest, laying by food for the improvident, and giving instruction to the young, he seemed to me to resemble some beneficent over-lord of the Middle Ages; or rather, in the finest sense of the word, from which no reader need shrink, to be a true socialist. For is not he the perfect socialist who lives the life of his people, in their prosperity rich, and in their poverty poor, who shares their joys as well as their sorrows, and enters into all their fears? Here we had before us a picture of ancient Christian communism; and if, during the period of our sojourn in Tsekou, we were strongly impressed by the cordial co-operation between the pastor and his flock, if we marvelled at the mutual trust and amity that each reposed in the other, this state could only be attributable to the existence of a common bond, the sustaining power of one thought—the Christian faith. Charity has smoothed the roughnesses, and "the cradle song of human misery" has lulled its children into forgetfulness by showing to everyone the ideal of an earthly life. Father Dubernard was venerated throughout the country-side, and looked up to, at once for his wisdom and his care, as the benefactor of the land. His reputation for healing power was widespread. When smallpox ravaged the district, he vaccinated more than nine thousand persons; and he told me with what success he had combated the prevalence of goitre by treating those afflicted with iodide of potassium. And yet, notwithstanding all the good that has been wrought by the mission, there is perhaps none that has suffered fiercer persecution.

It is no part of my purpose to enter here into the heroic struggles of the Thibet missionaries, so ably set forth by Father

Desgodins in his book. Suffice it to say that the demands of our minister at Pekin for justice to be done to the Fathers have been of as little effect as the promises extorted from the Tsung-li-Yamen. The edicts of Pekin are disregarded on the banks of the Mekong. The authorities at Ouïsi refused to recognise the re-issue by China in 1894 of the article in the Treaty of Tien-tsin that sanctioned the acquisition by the missionaries of houses and land in any part of China by private negotiation without the interference of the local magnates. The mission at Atentsé was not allowed to be rebuilt. In that same town lay some chests, containing religious ornaments and effects, stolen eight years before from the Fathers. There had originally been thirty boxes, but the previous mandarin of Ouïsi had declared there were no more than seventeen. The present number admitted was nineteen, which caused the Father drily to ask if they had bred in captivity. Always and everywhere the same Chinese deceit.

In the neighbourhood of Tsekou was the pagan village of Tsedjrong. The bessé, or chief man, of this place was an implacable foe to the mission. It was he who, in 1887, had menaced the Fathers with vengeance if they did not clear out in two days. He it was who had cut their rope bridge, and, while outwardly obsequious in their presence, had never ceased to annoy them by every means in his power. To all of which ill-will they had replied by advancing him grain wherewith to pay his tribute, and so avoid being clapped into gaol at Ouïsi.

While we were at Tsekou a Christian came down one morning from the mountains, and reported that three Lamas of the Lamaserai of Honpou (Gueloupas) had come by night, under pretext of recovering a debt, and had killed his pigs, beaten his wife, and carried off his daughter. It is a dangerous thing to

profess the religion of France at the portals of Thibet. Yet, despite the obstacles they encounter, their incessant anxieties, and the persecution of which they are the object, the Fathers, posted like sentinels along the line of the Mekong, await, with

A Tsekou Christian.

unwearying patience, constancy, and alertness, the day when they shall be admitted into Thibet to carry the banner of Christian religion forward to victory. We could not repress our admiration while they spoke of Thibet as of a promised land with an

ardent zeal as unquenched at fifty, after twenty-eight years of tribulation, as at thirty. The traveller, whoever he may be, must needs honour these soldiers of the faith, whose life is made up of self-devotion and perseverance.

Our stay lasted for three weeks. I stood in need of rest, being a prey to fever and neuralgia; and the interval gave my comrade an opportunity of making an expedition to Atentsé, and of comparing his observations with those that Gill had made in the same districts. Meanwhile I had leisure to enjoy many long talks with the missionaries about the country they dwelt in, though, as I have no present intention of publishing an exhaustive study of these regions, the reader will not be surprised if I omit any discussion of more or less familiar topics, and only throw together those fragments of information which in the course of casual conversation seemed to me of rather special interest.

The population of Tsekou is composed of Mossos, Lissous, Loutses, Thibetans, Chinese, and hybrids. Tradition ascribes to the Lissous a southern origin, as their forefathers are reputed to have possessed elephants. A certain Chinese general having once upon a time subjugated them after revolt, reported to headquarters their complete extermination; after which, of course, their existence could not be officially admitted by the Government. But they continue to engage in partial rebellions, and look upon themselves as insurgents by nature. Those that are most active in such vocation are the Kimer Lissous, or Tchioui Lissous (Tchioui being Thibetan).

Suicide is of common occurrence with them: drowning, hanging, or poison is the ordinary sequel to a family quarrel. Their most usual method is an arrow poison which, when absorbed,

causes a species of tetanus, with foaming at the mouth and speedy results. They have a prophecy that a chief shall come amongst them from the west, who will have a long beard. In the early days a missionary seemed to fulfil their expectation, and the first Fathers were in consequence called Peula (gods).

The occupations of the Christians are mainly agricultural, cattle breeding, small industries, and hunting. They make butter and cheese, finding the best milk-producer for dairy purposes to be the dzomo, a cross between a yak cow and an ordinary bull. One such will give nearly sixty lbs. of butter a year. The young of the dzomo rarely lives, or, if it does, is generally puny. To wean a calf the Thibetans have a method of fastening a board across the nostrils, which, while allowing it to crop the grass, prevents it from taking the udder. The calf is removed from its mother at a month old, and is nourished for a while by the farm wife, who masticates a sort of paste, which she then introduces into its mouth in a manner more forcible than elegant.

They also manufacture paper from the bark of a tree. After a double soaking, first in plain and then in lime water, the bark is reduced with a pestle to a pulp, which is again damped before being placed in a tank with a framework bottom, in which the substance settles, and when dry is turned out as paper.

Another industry which flourishes in Tsekou is the carving of drinking bowls out of the knots of certain trees, which, according to their shape or the manner in which they are grained, are highly valued as possessing a charm against a poisoned draught. Some of these dzops, or knots, are worth fifty or sixty taëls.

One of the food resources of the mountain is wild honey, found in large quantities in crannies of the cliffs sheltered from the rain. To gather it the Lissous lower themselves by ropes,

to which they give a slight oscillating movement, and each time their swing brings them within reach they knock some of the honeycomb into a basket. They take no particular precautions against the bees; but when they discover a swarm hibernating in the holes of the rock they sweep it bodily into a cloth, which is then wrung to express the honey from the bodies. Whole swarms are thus destroyed for the sake of a single cup of nectar. The hillmen are very skilful in unearthing the hives; they even pretend that they can track the bees by their almost imperceptible droppings upon the stones. These rock-bees are nearly always escorted by a little bird, to which the natives have given the name of the "bee king."

But hunting must be classed as the chief pursuit of both Lissous and Loutses. Their weapons of the chase are poisoned arrows, the tincture for which is extracted from a root, and is said to be very rapid in its effects. Thus armed, the natives attack the most dangerous animals, such as bears and panthers, using also swift dogs trained for the work. Before setting out great care is taken not to divulge the direction of the expedition, and the trail is followed in perfect silence. Arrived at the cover, an augury is consulted by means of lots, and, if necessary, delay is made till this shall be favourable. The traces of the game having been examined, posts are assigned and signals interchanged by horn blasts. Well versed in hill work, these men will scramble up the most rugged sides wherever there is hold for a toe, or scale the face of the rock with the aid of pegs of wood driven into the fissures. In such places they have to carry their dogs into the bargain. In this manner they will pursue the quarry for five or six days at a time, and rarely lose an animal they have once struck.

There is another form of sport after vultures. The season for this is the winter, during the snows, when the birds are rendered tame by hunger. Baits are put out, and the first comers that pitch attract others. The men are in hiding, and, as soon as a sufficient number is on the ground, fling a net over the flock, often bagging as many as ten or fifteen at a single cast. The birds are quickly despatched with sticks. Their fat is highly esteemed for its healing properties for wounds, and vulture feathers command a good price from the military mandarins.

Another Tsekou Christian.

The Lissous are cunning snarers, and use their art in capturing the monkeys, which do much damage to the crops, especially the maize. A hollow tree trunk or bamboo is placed near the grain patch with a potato or fruit in it; the marauder inserts his hand, but cannot withdraw it when closed upon the dainty, which, rather than abandon, he holds on to, and is caught. So they say; but, like many mighty hunters all the world over, the natives do not let an exploit lose in the telling, and on the frontiers of Thibet a good story is not spoilt

for want of imagination. Here is a contribution from Tsekou. A certain trapper having reached a ledge of rock found himself in presence of a she-bear and her cubs. At sight of the intruder, Bruin snatched her young ones to her breast. The hunter picked up a big stone and brandished it; whereupon his antagonist put down her children and did likewise. The man then uttered his Thibetan war-cry, "hi! hi!" which so terrified the bear that she dropped her stone upon the cubs and killed them.

Wild beasts are plentiful in the surrounding country. Among them mention was made of a large boar, called a patsa, whose tusks are a foot long, and whose flesh is scented with musk. Herds of budorcas (a kind of wild ox) have their habitat near the snowline, and when they come down to drink follow their leader in such exact file that the spoor appears to be that of a single animal. Then we were told of a black fox; and of a civet called the tululu; while the *nemorrhædus*, or "rock ass," is not infrequent. The flying squirrel too, with its beautiful coat, is the object of a lively trade; and the *Ailurus fulgens*, known here as the three-coloured fox, is met with. In addition there are porcupines, and the rhyzomi or bamboo-rat, which latter, however, is only found on the left bank of the Mekong.

The flora also exhibits many varieties. The natives have a dressing for wounds made of a composition of henbane, tobacco, and elder leaves boiled and put in oil. The fumes of henbane seeds laid on red-hot embers are inhaled as a remedy for tooth-ache. But if they avail themselves of plants that cure, they are no less apt in the uses of those that kill. Poisoner is an attractive name on which to levy blackmail, and everyone so charged must forthwith purge his accusation with a bribe. They pretend, moreover, that a deadly charm resides in a certain snake,

which empowers it to change its shape and drop its venom in the cup. Father Dubernard instanced several cases where persons, chiefly women, had made full confession of the art with the persuasion of a little burning wax dropped on their shoulders. Under the circumstances one is not surprised.

Similarly, the judgment of heaven is commonly invoked in the following way:—Two pebbles, one black and the other white, are dropped into a bowl of boiling oil. If the accused can pick out the white one, he is innocent; but should he either shrink from the ordeal or draw the black, his guilt is established.

In all our conversations with the Fathers, Thibet and the Thibetans naturally occupied a foremost place. More than any other people in the world are these latter dominated by religious sentiment. From the piles of prayer-inscribed stones that meet the eye at every turn of the road; from their constant devotions in halt or on march, when the very winds and waters are made their intercessors, and no river can be forded without the sign of the cross upon the forehead; from their innate cult of the unseen and the marvellous, every event and condition is to them an occasion for superstition; while there exists not a peril which may not be averted by some practice, to their apprehension infallible, which has for its origin a belief in the supernatural.

By their own popularly received legend they are the offspring of a she-devil and an ape.

They maintain that sorcerers alight from the empyrean (as the Richis descend from the Himalayas at the birth of Buddha), and tell a tale of an individual who to prove his power of flight threw himself from a lofty rock. That this guileless person was dashed to pieces is regarded as a mere mischance. Within

Christian Women, Tsekou.

the Lamaserais astounding deeds are credited to their votaries. They open their stomachs and readjust their intestines without a scar remaining; they walk barefoot upon the sword's edge, and feel no inconvenience; the living Buddha of Tchamoutong[1] heaps up water drops with his hand as one might ice morsels. And they of Tsekou have beheld these things.

One remembers that Father Huc brought back similar stories, and was taxed with credulity. And yet from fear of seeming untrustworthy he only related a tithe of what he saw. To corroborate either his experiences or the tales affirmed to me personally would require a protracted sojourn in the midst of the Lamas themselves, leading their life and sharing their ceremonies. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they can by the aid of forces little known to us, but yet consistent with nature, produce manifestations which analogy with phenomena observed in divers other times and places might render worthy of consideration; such, for instance, as those of levitation. Of course it is easy to dismiss with a shrug of the shoulders the remarks of one or even several travellers; but it might be more reasonable to suppose that others before ourselves have been able to recognise a power similar to that outlined by recent investigations, and have turned it to the advantage of their religious prestige. Be this as it may, the Lamas, whether sincere or the reverse, have not been above using deception. The liantay[2] of Lhaça revealed to the Fathers a ceremonial trick of theirs. He told

[1] Four days from Tsekou, on the banks of the Salwen, stands the Lamaserai of the Tchamoutong, the Lamas of which take their grades from the parent house of Dégué. It is the ancient foundation of a celebrated Mosso queen, Mutsien-tsong (daughter of the chief of a thousand men), or, as she was called in her own language, Azen diamo.

[2] Liantay: a special paymaster and delegate of the Chinese Government at Lhaça.

them with true Chinese scepticism that at the installation of the Talé Lama,[1] before the public séance at which the newly elect has to pick out from a variety of objects exposed upon a board those that belonged to him in a previous state of existence, there is a private rehearsal to coach him in his part.

As is well known, the sects of the Lamas are numerous. The most ancient, as well as the most moral, is that of the Peun-Bo (Red Hats); within the sphere of whose influence every head of a family is Peun-Bo. Their books are very fine, and their principal divinity is the Nam-la-kerbo (white god of the sky). When the Lamas shave their heads they carefully preserve the hair and hide it in a hole in the wall; if they were to lose it a great evil would overtake them. Some have wigs, which they put on as a disguise when they wish to gad about in the evening.

The Thibetan invocation OM MANÉ PEDMI HOUM! is rendered in Chinese by O MY TO FOU! Father Dubernard's explanation of the origin of the latter expression was the following:—The god Fou, called also Che-kia Fou, was born in India in the year kia-yn, on the first day of the fourth moon. His father, Tsin-fou, was the ruler of a small kingdom. Fou issued from the right side of his mother Moyé,[2] and at his birth, pointing one hand on high and the other to the ground, he proclaimed: "Of all things that are in heaven and in earth, I, and I alone, am worthy of veneration!" Married to a woman named Yeche, he had a son, Loheoulo. As he was for ever occupied in the chase, he paid no regard to his family. At the death of his father he became king, dissipated his

[1] The Talé Lama is a Chinese term for what is called in Thibetan changuen diao ri boché.

[2] Maya.

fortune, and retired to a mountain called Suechan, a place of pilgrimage for the Thibetans, where he lived on roots, and instructed a few disciples in metempsychosis till the time of his death at thirty, or, as others say, sixty years of age. He remained unknown to the Chinese until the Han or Tsin dynasty, when, moved by a dream, Minty sent two envoys O and My to seek him. But he was dead; and the emissaries only brought back his image. It was from the result of this mission that arose the invocation, O MY TO FOU (O MY living Buddha)! But his worship was confined to a few. Hieutsang sent a fresh embassage to India, which returned with a bone of Fou, whose name in infancy was Mougny (Cakya Mouni). The emperor thereafter decreed that all his prisoners should worship Fou. Most of them escaped. From that time the followers of Fou were condemned to shave their heads and to ring a bell, as a means of identification. Such, according to oral and written tradition, is the origin of the Chinese bonzes.

Here are some of the Thibetan customs of this region :—

A visitor is not allowed to cross the threshold till a pipe has been smoked outside, and the new-comer is ascertained to be free from disease.

Blood brotherhood in Thibet is cemented by blending and then drinking the blood of the contracting parties; but after this mutual pledge all things are not held in common as in Madagascar.

When any beasts are lost a wand is with much ceremony held upright on the ground: its fall indicates the direction to be taken in the search.

In neighbourhoods where there are many panthers, the Thibetans burn scented sticks in a chafing-dish under their animals: this renders them safe from all attack.

In a case of an unpaid debt where the creditor has no proofs,

he should seek to place his hands upon a child of the debtor. By this process a terrible malediction is conferred on the defaulter.

Should a rich man fall sick and fail of a cure, he procures a consenting pauper, dresses him in his own finery, gives him his arms, and turns him adrift, in the hope that the evil spirit, hoodwinked by the disguise, will transfer his attentions, and torment him no more. But if no willing scapegoat can be found even for such a tempting bribe, a straw manikin may be decked in a similar fashion, and left outside. The clothes generally disappear, if not the disease.

A Thibetan of Tsekou.

Rich folk, when they have attained a certain age, hold their own funeral obsequies in advance with feasting and prayers for a good end.

When the Thibetans have to defer the burial of their dead for any length of time, they place the corpse in a doubled-up attitude, with the head between the knees and the back broken. It is

curious that most of the mummies found in Central America have been in this posture.

The Thibetans are great hands at a story, and are much addicted to fables, of which the two subjoined may be taken as specimens.

THE FOX AND THE PARTRIDGE.

A fox having played a trick on a partridge, the latter determined to have her revenge. But first she had to lull him into security. "To-day," said she, "we are going to laugh fit to split our sides." "Good," replied the fox. Together they went into a field where there were two men hoeing. The partridge lit on the shoulders of one of them, and when the other aimed a blow at her she flew off, and his companion received the stroke instead.

Next day she resumed: "We shall be frightened to death presently;" and, hiding renard in a thicket, waited till a party of bonzes, who were conducting some rites over a sick man at a little distance, concluded the ceremony with cries and gunshots, which caused the fox the utmost alarm.

The third morning she remarked: "To-day we'll play at who can stretch their legs the farthest." So saying she led him by a path into the mountains where there was a trap hidden, and began to fly to and fro over the spot. "What are you doing?" quoth he. "Just amusing myself with a little game," said she; "won't you come and join me?" The fox, who by this time had perfect confidence in her, followed, and was caught by the leg in the gin, where his frantic struggles soon ended his life.

In this we see the Thibetan character for deliberate vengeance well portrayed.

THE BEAR, THE FOX, AND THE HARE.

A bear, a fox, and a hare were one day going along together when they met a man carrying a bundle. "Let's play him a trick," said the mischievous hare. "I'll sham lame, and when he pursues me you must run off with the bundle." No sooner said than done: the hare limped right between the man's legs, who dropped the bundle and gave chase, but in vain. Shortly after, the hare rejoined his companions in safety, and they proceeded to share the spoil. "You," said he to the fox, "are a hunter; this pair of boots will suit you admirably." And to the bear: "Why, here are a tambourine and a horn; just the things for your dear little ones when they cry!" The tsampa (millet flour) and meat he kept for himself.

Next day, when the fox put on the boots, he tumbled about in the

clumsiest fashion. The bear went to her den, and, when her cubs cried for food, beat the tambourine, till they shuffled in terror to the back of the cave, and then gave them a blast on the horn, which killed them outright.

The hare meanwhile struck for home with the food in high good-humour.

The Thibetans are fond of recitative singing, accompanied by chorus and sometimes by dance. These are rough renderings of some of their performances :—

1st Voice.—Let song the dance prelude.

Chorus (full).—Let song the dance prelude.

1st Voice.—

Upon the mountain's yellow brow
The herds of musk-deer meet.

Chorus (full).—id. repeat.

Semi-chorus A.—

Thibetan, Tartar, Chinese, e'er
Can they be one, can they be one?
Nay; from the first they stand alone
They stand alone.

Semi-chorus B. (bis)—

If peace should reign, they may combine.
id. „ „ „

Semi-chorus A.—

The sun, the moon, the stars, at once
May they give light, may they give light?
Nay; till the day be turned to night,
Be turned to night.

Semi-chorus B. (bis)—

Now and again, twin stars will shine.
id. „ „ „

Semi-chorus A.—

The stag, the wild goat, and the sheep,
Will they consort, will they consort?
Nay; till the hills with valleys sport,
With valleys sport.

Semi-chorus B. (bis)—

To pastured plain, yet all incline.
id. „ „ „

Another—

1st Voice.—Let song the dance prelude.

Chorus (full).—id.

Semi-chorus A.—By Guidam, in the Orient, are three meres; of gold, of silver, and of turquoise. Beside the sea of gold burns a golden tree, from out whose branches flies a yellow bird, piping to the tree, "Rest here in peace; I go."

Semi-chorus B. repeats id.

Semi-chorus A.—By Guidam, in the Orient, are three meres; of gold, of silver, and of turquoise. Beside the sea of silver glistens a silver tree, from out whose branches flies a white bird, piping to the tree, "Rest here in peace; I go."

Semi-chorus B. repeats id.

Semi-chorus A.—By Guidam, in the Orient, are three meres; of gold, of silver, and of turquoise. Beside the sea of turquoise springs a turquoise tree, from out whose branches flies a blue bird, piping to the tree, "Rest here in peace; I go."

Another—

1st Voice.—Let song the dance prelude.

Chorus (full).—id. repeat.

(*Guests from afar greet the hosts within the house.*)

Semi-chorus A. (*guests without*).—"We are guests from a far country; say, is it well with the chief?"

Semi-chorus B. (*hosts within*).—"The chief is well."

Semi-chorus B.—"Guests from a far country; say, is the Lama in peace, in health?"

Semi-chorus A.—"The Lama is in peace and health."

Semi-chorus B.—Guests from a far country; say, are father and uncle in peace, in health?"

Semi-chorus A.—"Father and uncle are in peace and health."

Semi-chorus B.—"Guests from a far country; say, are mother and aunt in peace, in health?"

Semi-chorus A.—"Mother and aunt are in peace and health."

Another—

"Elder brother, elder brother, that gay kerchief of crimson silk around thy head, is it thine or is it borrowed? If thy very own, so may

it be ever thine. How! borrowed?—then canst thou at best but enjoy it three days."

"Elder brother, elder brother, that rich gaou[1] which adorns thy breast, is it thine or is it borrowed? If thy very own, so may it be ever thine. How! borrowed?—then canst thou at best but enjoy it three days."

"Elder brother, elder brother, those garters of many colours that gird thy knee, are they thine or are they borrowed? If thy very own, so may they be ever thine. How! borrowed?—then canst thou at best but enjoy them three days."

Another—

Semi-chorus A.—"My friends, my country is the fairest upon earth."

Semi-chorus B.—"Fair country, quotha! There is not where to build a house. To build he must leave his fine country."

Semi-chorus A.—"My friends, my country is the fairest upon earth. In a strange land there is nor peace nor joy. I hie me back to my own country."

Semi-chorus B.—"Fair country, quotha! There is not where to rear a palace. To rear palaces he must leave his fine country."

Semi-chorus A.—"My friends, my country is the fairest upon earth. In a strange land there is nor peace nor joy. I hie me back to my own country."

Semi-chorus B.—"Fair country, quotha! There is not where to found a forum. To found a forum he must leave his fine country."

Semi-chorus A. (*fin.*).—"Friends, my country is the fairest upon earth. In a strange land there is nor peace nor joy. I hie me back to my own country."

Another—

Semi-chorus A.—

The poplar of itself has taken root,
Of itself it has risen like the hills;
Its branches skyward shoot:
The earth has fertile grown,
The land a gem.

Semi-chorus B. repeats id.

[1] A reliquary.

Semi-chorus A.—

The bamboo of itself has taken root,
At Tsarong, of itself, like the hills;
Its branches skyward shoot:
The earth has fertile grown,
The land a gem.

Semi-chorus B. repeats id.

Semi-chorus A.—

The grape-vine of itself has taken root,
In the land of the Mosso, like the hills;
Its branches bend with fruit:
In the jewel of all gems,
The Mosso land.

Semi-chorus B. repeats id.

Another—

In a rich valley a golden kieutigne rose;
Of colours five the cone.
There came a rain
For years, one, two, and three:—
And the colours of its dome were gone.

In a rich valley a silver kieutigne rose;
Of colours five the cone.
There came a rain
For years, one, two, and three:—
And the colours of its dome were gone.

In a rich valley a marble kieutigne rose:
Of colours five the cone.
There came a rain
For years, one, two, and three:—
And the colours of its dome were gone.

The kieutigne is a building in the nature of a dobang or religious monument, often passed upon the roads of Thibet, but more lofty and of better construction. The moral of the song is the old one, *tempus edax rerum.*

One could go on collecting these dance chants to almost any length. They are of every kind, patriotic as well as erotic. Most

of them are improvised on the spur of the moment, the two semi-choruses engaging in an extempore encounter of wits, like a more or less literary joust, where the art lies in catching a fleeting cadence or a rhyme.

On the 30th (August) Roux returned from Atentsé: the loss of a mule, the drowning of poor little dog "Pinaud," who seeing his master crossing by a rope bridge tried to follow him by swimming the river, and a night alarm with a panther in a barn, formed the only incidents of his excursion. He had sighted the three snow peaks of Dokerla (stone ladder), with its fine glaciers on the right bank of the Mekong, and estimated their height to be about 17,875 feet. Dokerla is a sacred mountain of Thibet, to which a pilgrimage is made in the year of the sheep, *i.e.* every twelfth year, and, as it happened to fall at this time, the "Doctor" had met many folk from Tsarong. The women he described as wearing over their tchaupas a sleeveless frock-tunic of poulou stuff, with horizontal stripes in brown, blue, and white. In their hair was a silver disc for ornament.

Atentsé is a little town of three hundred families, perched at an altitude of 10,725 feet, and, being one of the gates between China and Thibet, holds a position of some commercial importance. A portion of its inhabitants settled there from Chan-si more than five hundred years ago.

Trade consists in :—

Musk: eight or ten mule loads per annum, sold at seven times its weight in silver.

Ouaulien: a root used as a tincture and a drug, brought from Dzayul, and sold at forty taëls the load.

Gold: in small quantities, sold at eighteen times its weight in silver.

Raw wool.

Madder : from Tsarong.

Ka : a red dye obtained from an insect of Assam, the residue of which is used in making sealing wax.

Copper : from Yünnan. At Atentsé there is an accredited agent from Lhaça, styled Deba, for the purchase of wrought copper for the large Lamaserais. For its transport he can command a corvée of the people.

Tea : intended for Lhaça, being a monopoly of Tatsien-lou, only a little passes through Atentsé.

Girl from Tsarong.

CHAPTER VII

TSEKOU TO KHAMTI

Choice of Homeward Route—Caravan Re-formed—Start in the Mekong Valley—Fears at Landjré—Early Obstacles—Francis Garnier Peak—Valley of the Salwen—Loutses and Kioutses—Tionra: Crossing the Salwen—Relations with the Lamaserai of Tchamoutong—Mules Abandoned—On Foot—Tamalou—In the Basin of the Irawadi—The Kiou-Kiang—The Kioutses—At Toulong—Difficulties of Recruiting and Re-victualling—Mosquitoes on the Banks of the River—Rock Climbing—Deidoum—Aspect of the Kiou-Kiang Valley—Our Men—Gold-Washing—News of a Large River and a Plain—The Du-tchu-mu—Perilous Position—Saved—Leeches—The Big River; Telo and Dublu—On all sides Mountains—Painful Torrent March—Death of "Diamaï"—Duma—Apon Explained—Equatorial Scenery—A Large Village—Beside the Nam Tsan—Fish-Dam—A New Race—Pandam—No Salt—Mélekeu—People of Moam (Khamti)—One more Col—Village Fête—The Plain.

Our stay at Tsekou was longer than we had anticipated. The need of rest (for a fortnight fever only left me to be succeeded by neuralgia and other ills), the despatch of our men, preparation for further advance, and the enjoyment of repose in the congenial society of our fellow-countrymen, all combined to detain us.

Now arose the question as to what routes were open for selection. Having rejected the idea of returning by the south to Burmah, which would involve retracing a portion of our steps, and having negatived the already known eastern roads through Yünnan, our eyes were fixed upon the west.

If, after ascending the Mekong for several days from Tsekou, a turn should be made in this direction, we should fall upon the Thibetan province of Kam, a dependency of Lhaça. The

district is governed by a *tiquié* resident at Kiangka, with under him three *debas*, and below them again three *chelugong* at Menkong, Tchraïa, and Dzayul. Around the Lamaserai of Menkong, which is situated at three days' journey from the Mekong, stretches the Tsarong country; and beyond Tsarong the rich valley of Dzayul (land of the earthen pots), whence streams descend to the Brahmaputra, as shown by the pundit Krishna. Finally, westward again beyond Dzayul, between the Tsangpo and the Lohit lies the Brahmaputra, in the Bayul—a mysterious land if ever there was one, unmapped, and as free in the past from European exploration as in the present from the prying eye of Russian or Indian scouts. The Bayul or Pourba is divided into Po-Ten (upper) independent, and Po-Me (lower) subject by payment of tribute to the second kinchas of Lhaça. Among the Thibetans of the north the Bayul is renowned for its robbers and its horses, and the country is reputed rich in gold. The inhabitants wear hats of ratan, and sell baskets made of the same material.

From Tsekou a road goes north, which, after skirting the Dokerla and crossing the Salwen, leads to Menkong, and farther to Sanguias-Kiendzang. This route offered temptations, as supposing Sanguias-Kiendzang to be attainable we should there find ourselves at the entrance to the Bayul, and, if access to it was rigorously denied, there would remain the alternative of taking up the itinerary of Krishna by Roema and Samé. Only, in the latter event we should not make many explorations.

In order to get to Sanguias-Kiendzang, Tsarong must be crossed—a dangerous province, the Lamas of which have been systematically hostile to the missionaries. Moreover, it would not be on the Chinese that we could reckon for support against

the native authorities, still less upon fellow-racial Thibetans. In addition, in the remote possibility of our success, the fact of leading men from Tsekou into Tsarong would assuredly bring down reprisals upon the Christians and our countrymen for assisting us. In my opinion the check appeared certain, and the attempt therefore useless. We were wayworn, a journey into Thibet would be very long, winter would be on us closing the passes, and we should not improbably end by having to spend several months in some remote valley. Albeit we were here actually at the threshold of Thibet, all these considerations forced us to renounce the idea of penetrating farther, and, though it cost us some regret to relinquish the route to the north-west, we felt that the success of our main enterprise would console us for having abandoned an achievement so dependent on chance.

The upshot of these reflections was that we decided to strike due west on the Salwen, which we should cross to enter Bayul. The region which, south of Dzayul, is watered by the upper basin of the Irawadi, is designated by the name of the Rotin (ratan). Bayul itself is in part a dependency of the mokoua of Yetché, some Dzayul families, and the Lamaserai of Tchamoutong, and partly free. The only particulars we could gather with regard to this country were that it was watered by the Kiou-kiang, that the ways were very bad, and that naked savages inhabited the trees.

In this manner we were about to embark on the hitherto entirely unknown, with the hope of being enabled to solve the problem of the sources both of the Salwen and the Irawadi, and with India for our Promised Land, approached by a new route, and longed for as a haven of rest.

We reduced our baggage, retaining only twelve mules besides

our own saddle animals, and sending fifteen back to Tali under the charge of the makotou, with whom also went our collections up to this point. The men who left us received a month's pay; and on the 3rd September Briffaud and I went out to see the column depart. The waters of the river having risen, some difficulty was experienced with the mules at the crossing, but with the help of extra guy-ropes all were eventually slung across in safety.

Of our old band we now had only the two Annamites; Fa, Roux's henchman; and another Fa, a young Christian of eighteen, whom we dubbed Siao (little) Fa for distinction. Lastly, there was Joseph, the indomitable, of course still anxious to share our fortunes. In remitting some money for his family by the makotou he took care to consign it to Father Leguilcher; "for," said he, "if my wife has it in her hands she will be sure to buy superfluous things." Prudent man, he knew the feminine nature.

For new mafous we engaged twenty-four hybrids of Chinese, Thibetan, and Mosso race. If the mules could not get on we should send them back and replace our four-legged carriers by bipeds. This troop was composed of eighteen Christians and six pagans, a mixture provided with a view to secure the missionaries from any future molestation on our account from the local authorities. The hiring of the heathens was not done without difficulty. They were supplied by the chief of a neighbouring village, the bessé of Tsedjrong, a hypocritical rascal, all devotion to our face and detestation behind our backs. It was he who had destroyed the Fathers' bridge, and was seeking by every means to dislodge them from Tsekou in order that he might lay hands on their property. And in return for this treatment they advanced him money wherewith to pay the taxes and escape the

prison at Ouïsi. It was an undeserved good fortune that brought him into relations with such charitable men. He tried to foist upon us some of his own kindred, demanding a guarantee in writing against any mishap that might befall them on the road, and got from us a suitable answer. The missionaries suggested that the heathens should enter into a written engagement, to be cancelled if incapacitated by sickness or other accident. The Tsedjrong folk then drew up a form of contract, but couched in impertinent terms, alluding to Father Dubernard as "the Tsekou Chinaman," and filled with misspellings by the bessé in order to hide its authorship. We rejected the document, and it was afterwards rewritten in conformity with our wishes. The men were to have six taëls a month—high pay for these parts. We provided them with food, and each received two taëls in advance to leave at his home. The Christians requested that their wages should be deferred until their return ; and, calculating the journey at three months, we left a sum for them in the hands of the Fathers, only to be redeemed on production of a certificate from us. This may be taken as an instance of the trust and respect inspired by our countrymen in that region, when Christian and heathen alike, rude but home-staying and timid by nature, were willing to enter an unknown country of ill repute in our service upon the simple bond of the Fathers for our honesty.

We have incurred a debt of gratitude to the French missionaries which we can never adequately requite, and I am fain here once more to place on record my recognition and regard. Without their timely help we could never have brought to a successful issue, nor even prosecuted further, our expedition into India.

By the 10th of September our arrangements were made, our supplies collected, and money deposited. It took some time to

calculate the last in a country where neither a coinage standard nor paper currency were in use, and value goes by weight. The business occupied a whole day. We left with the Fathers sixteen hundred taëls, carrying with us only the smallest possible amount.

Our personal belongings, fine by degrees, were speedily packed, and still more quickly loaded. It was wonderful to watch the address with which the Thibetans harnessed the animals. They adopted a different method from the Chinese. On the beast's back were laid three pads with two small boards on top, breast and crupper straps held in position a splinter-bar which in steep descents pressed on the flanks; the pack-saddle, not detachable *en bloc* as in China, was fastened by a girth; and the load, instead of being placed horizontally, was secured vertically to the boards by thongs; by this means less angles were exposed in narrow defiles than by the Yünnan method. Some packages were put on the men's shoulders. We now had eleven pack and six saddle mules, and with twenty-three porters and muleteers (three having been despatched in advance to buy provisions on the banks of the Salwen) an imposing troop of thirty-four men was formed. Well as I already knew them, I could not but be struck afresh with the cheery animation and activity of the Thibetans. They seemed to have real blood in their veins, a pleasing contrast to the inertness which is so exasperating in the Chinese.

At our departure a fine rain was falling. Notwithstanding the dulness of the skies, each one of us felt light-hearted to be once more *en route*, bound for the unknown, curious as to the secrets of the Salwen, its inhabitants, and what lay beyond.

On account of the wet, most of the men carried their wool boots slung Thibetan fashion round their necks, and on

slippery ground went barefoot. As we threaded the upward valley of the Mekong we passed through Tsedjrong, where our friend the bessé awaited us with a scraggy duck in his hand as a present, nor was he above accepting a rupee in acknowledgment. Beside the rice-fields which we traversed there grew a plentiful crop of tares, the peasants professing that in addition to their furnishing good feed for the cattle, by cultivating them on the confines of their plots they prevent them overrunning the latter.

At 11.30 Fathers Soulié and Liard bade us adieu. Father Dubernard continued with us a space longer. Clad in a velvet vest and a large red hood, *à la Chinoise*, and mounted on his little white horse with red neck-tassels, the "Chief of Tsekou" with his long white beard appeared like some patriarch of bygone days, an object of veneration. At midday our men made a halt of an hour and a half, much shorter than that of our old caravan. None the less were the packs lifted off, a fire promptly lit, and the tea thrown into the pot to boil. The beverage was then poured with some butter into a wooden tube fitted with a strainer, and stirred with a long spoon. Each man brought his porringer for his share, which, with a ration of tsampa,[1] kneaded into balls, constituted his simple repast.

As we proceeded through the village of Regny the natives that met us saluted us by clasping their hands, or more often with palms uppermost as if for an offering, and by inclining their bodies. Among them was pointed out to us one, a hunter, who had committed several murders, but whom none dared arrest. At a little distance from Fan-fou-pin superstition marked the abode of a djin to which respectful perfumes are

[1] Tsampa = millet flour.

burnt from afar. In the village of Seré, where we stayed for the night, we were the recipients of gifts, in token of gratitude to Father Dubernard, by whose intervention a portion of their belongings had been saved to the people from the expedition of the mokoua of Yetché. Those of the villagers who were too poor to have *gaous*[1] carried round their necks amulets hidden in bamboo tubes. The women had their hair parted in the middle and hanging down behind in a number of tails, united lower to form a plaited queue. We slept in a Thibetan house, with a ground-floor of lime-washed walls and a spacious terrace, on which stood a row of small white pyramids, holding bunches of bamboo and serving as altars. Over the door was a stone bearing the inscription, OM MANÉ PEDMI HOUM, surrounded with serpents.

On the 11th (September) we took leave of Father Dubernard, and pursued our way up the course of the river. The road led beneath a defile formed of mighty, jagged rocks, called by the Thibetans the second gate of Sima-Chan; the first was at Lota. Cooper named it the Gorge of Hablus, in memory of his protector.

Near the village of Gotra we made our breakfast beside a hot sulphur spring, the waters of which were at a temperature of of 113° Fahr. Nam caused some amusement here: as he was suffering from sore legs, we counselled a warm bath; whereupon the simple Annamite without hesitation jumped into the torrent a hundred yards farther off. Beyond Gotra we redescended to the actual brink of the Mekong through forests of superb coniferæ, and, after crossing a foaming torrent, camped in the brushwood on the far side. This was our last bivouac on the Mekong.

[1] Gaous = reliquaries, charms.

The force burst chafing from a narrow breach of wild and lofty grandeur, which it seemed to have riven for itself in its escape from the ravine; the sides were lined with horizontal strata, revealing the geological formation of the innermost mountain; and the glen disclosed a bottom of grey stones sown with needle-pointed firs. But so constricted was the entrance, and so forbidding the aspect of the beetling cliffs, that it looked barely possible that we could penetrate their recesses.

It was, however, through this pass that our route of the 13th (September) took us, when we left behind for good the actual Mekong valley to turn our faces to the west. The path clung in zigzags to the wall of rock, shored up in many places by props of wood driven into its face. It was as fine a piece of engineering as one might see in Switzerland, but hardly looked to meet with here. Once through the rift, our descent was fairly rapid, having sombre fir-clad boulders on our left and a towering red cliff over against us. This part of the scenery was very fine, and recalled that of the cañons in the Rocky Mountains.

A bridge being reported cut in front, our men asked us to go forward; and we learned that the Lamas of Tchamoutong had received orders from Sanguias-Kiendzang to impede our progress by all means in their power, threatening with death anyone who should show us the road to the Salwen. We paid little heed to these rumours, as we knew that Tchamoutong had not had time to communicate with the other and receive a reply; but they had their effect on our men. Sure enough, about two hours farther on we came to the site of a bridge of which one spar alone was left, and that a rickety one with barely breadth to put one foot before the other. The rest of