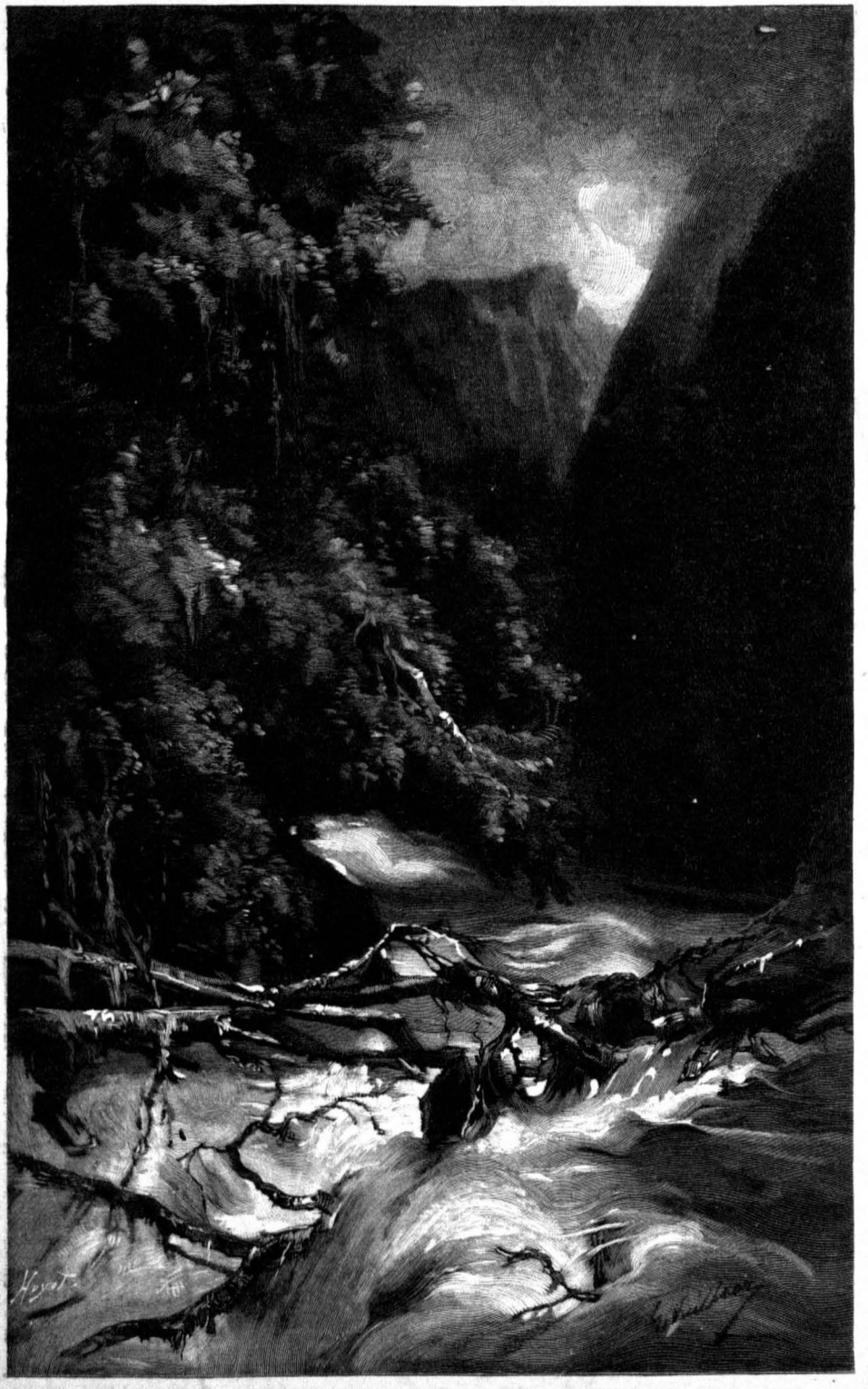
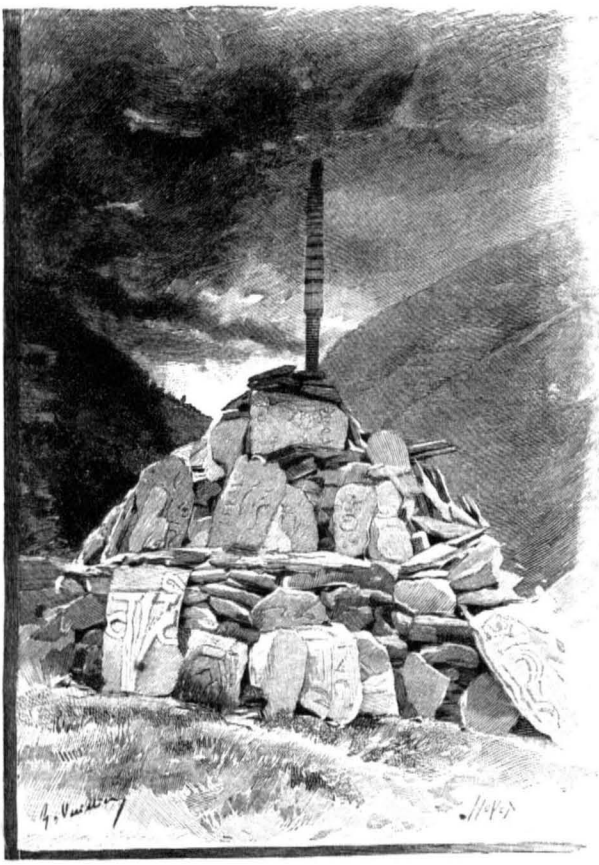


Torrent Scene, 13th September.

the beams had been withdrawn to the far side. At great personal danger one of our porters got across, and, fastening a noose to the planks, in half an hour we re-established the connection.

We then advanced with our guns at the head of the column down a widening valley till we came to the village of Landjré. It was built at the confluence of two rapid streams, with large Thibetan houses situated on terraces in the midst of fine culture, chiefly maize and walnuts. Here two roads branched—one to the left, which we should follow; the other to the right, leading to Tsarong, and used by the pilgrims of Dokerla returning from the Mekong. Any other route would have vitiated their pilgrimage. In the entry to the village were some *obos* and a *kortchen* (a little erection in shape like a lotus bud), and from the roof of the latter projected a staff, supporting several iron rings and a red crescent.



An Obo.

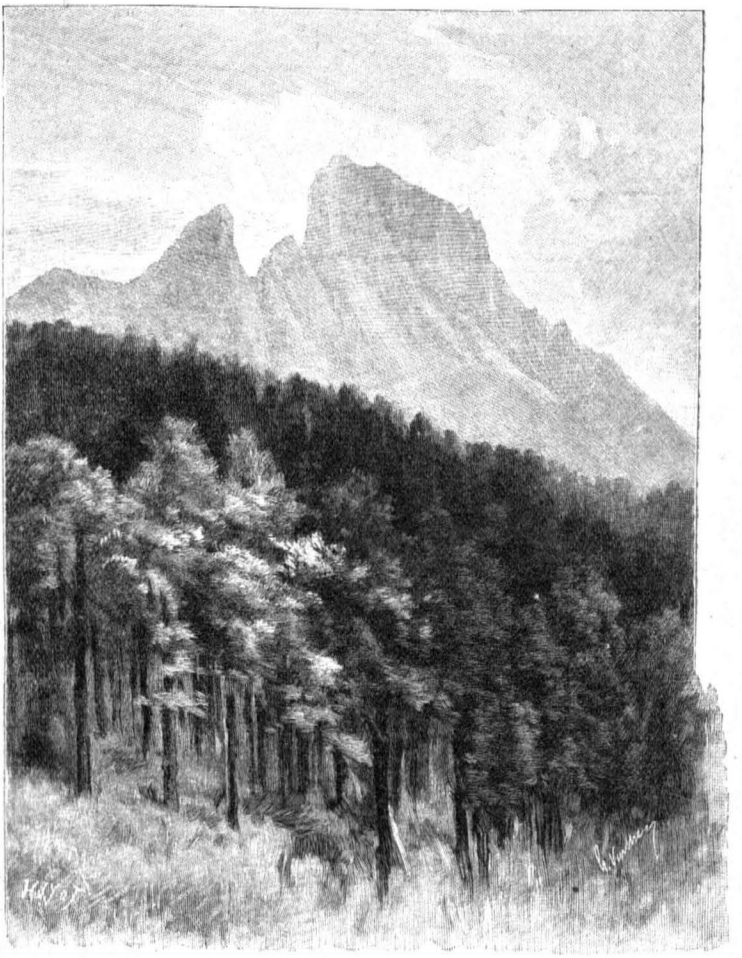
At our approach the inhabitants came out in astonishment, but

with friendly salutations and no demonstrations of hostility. I asked why they had removed the bridge, but only elicited the invariable answer, "Jem pou té" ("I don't know"). Nearly as bad as Maître Pathelin's "bê."

Through our men we heard that these villagers had cause to fear the Lamas. Placed on the frontier of Thibet, Landjré has to stop all strangers, and would suffer for any neglect of orders. Great was their relief, therefore, when we did not take the road to Tsarong. We pitched our four tents in the fields above the place, and, despite a rainy evening, the men danced round the fire with little apparent concern for the future.

The next day, and the next, it rained, with only slight intermission. We marched through virgin forests, where the large-leaved bamboos soaked us through. A rare gleam of sunshine lit up a savage scene of torrent, rock, and tree, of which it would be hard to convey an idea. Pines, and oaks, and giant chankas, with boles of 18 feet diameter and long grey beards of pendent creepers, choked the slippery path with tangled roots and fallen trunks. It took the mules six hours to accomplish what we did in three. Our camp of the 13th (September), among lilies and rhododendrons on the edge of the euphoniously named torrent Lili, we called Tululu, after a sort of civet which we had seen in the woods. Our men had the inspiration to lead with them from Landjré two of the long horizontal-horned sheep of the country. The 14th (September) was a heavy day. We crossed the Lili, and mounted the left bank by sliding zigzags, where the mules fell constantly and the men had to carry most of the loads. Above the zone of rhododendrons, and "water, water everywhere"—in the grass, on the rocks, in the atmosphere, with the thermometer only 3° above freezing. I think if one wanted stage scenery for the

"Realm of Rain," here would be the spot to study it. At length we ran the stream to its source in a swamp. This was the col, 12,350 feet, and the limit of the basin of the Mekong, which we were about to quit. The col marks a depression in the chain; above it and around, the summits are of great height. To our left rose, grim and grey, a formidable array of fanged ridges, presenting a confusion of pinnacles like the spires of some Gothic monument. To the highest of these we gave the name of Francis Garnier Peak, in memory of the famed explorer of the Mekong.



Francis Garnier Peak.

On the other side of this neck, and about 600 feet lower, we landed in a wide morass, impossible of circumvention, and had no choice but to plunge boldly through. The deep baying of a dog now betrayed the vicinity of a little hut, whence we were greeted with the Thibetan alarm-cry, "Hihihi!" However, the

occupants proved to be not more terrible than four herdsmen of Landjré, who spend six months of the year on the pastures with their cattle, a few oxen, half-bred dzas, and black yaks, with their comic tufted tails. Round the cabin, which was open to the four winds and very cold, were ranged wooden kegs, used as churns. Their method is to stir the milk in them with a circular perforated paddle until the butter comes. This removed, the residue is poured into a large pot on the fire, and the whey as it rises is strained off through a basket, while the curds are dried at the fire. Their spare time they employ in carving wooden bowls and spoons, always singing at their work, and subsist on the ordinary Thibet fare of tsampa, and tea flavoured with butter. Even here, on the tops of their mountains, in their miserable shanty, they do not omit the observance of their religion. There was a shrine on a stone; and before drinking the tea our hosts poured a little into a saucer, which they placed before it. On seeing that I observed the action, they raised a hand simply towards the sky. There was something grand in the childlike faith of these half-clad shepherds.

Some of our men had to pass the night in the open, beside the packs which had not reached the summit. They were to be pitied. In the general misery Nam excited my compassion as much as any. He arrived benumbed and speechless, and had to be rubbed down by the fire before his features relaxed into that most hideous grin with which nature ever disgraced human countenance, whilst he fumbled for his pipe. It was a far cry from the chill mist and crags of Thibet to the warmth and palm-trees of Saïgon.

15th (September).—In the clearer morning air the outline of Francis Garnier Peak was sharply defined. I profited by the intermittent arrival of belated baggage to do a little botanising,

and, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, was still able to obtain twenty-six specimens of mountain flora. The yaks had gone early on to the pasture. There they showed, black dots between the rocks, conspicuous among the other cattle from their bison-like humps. One large male stood sentinel apart, and gazed on us with wonder.

Before leaving we bought the watch-dog of the herdsmen, an animal of the fine Thibetan breed, black and tan, with short muzzle and massive head, adorned with a regular mane. He was named "Diamaï" ("red"), and would be a chum for the small terrier "Boursica," given us by the Fathers. The same evening, after a downward climb to bivouac among dripping rhododendrons, Diamaï, an elderly carrier, and one of the sheep, failed to answer the roll-call. The two following days we kept on through damp forests, mostly in drenching rain. All were now on foot; in my case luckily, since my mule had a nasty fall in one spot. On the third morning we came upon our stragglers, the old porter seated by some half-burnt logs, smoking his pipe, between the dog and the sheep. They had lost the way, and so got ahead of us in the dark. We could not sufficiently praise our men, who, without a dry stitch upon them, performed their arduous toil, which now combined that of mafou and carrier, without a murmur, and generally ended up the day with songs and laughter round the fire. As for ourselves, we had now got our walking legs, and were fit for anything. But for the eternal rain, it would have been delightful.

On the 18th (September) we emerged from the woods and came into the region of dwellings again, passing presently the hamlets of Feu-la and Meuradon on an affluent of the Salwen. Wretched collections of huts upon piles they were. The inhabitants were Loutse. By Loutses were no longer meant, as

before, Tsekou Lissous frequenting the valley of the Salwen, but several distinct tribes with their own language and customs.

The Loutses belong to an interesting race hardly met with in the latitude of Tsekou. They are bounded on the north, at two or three days' distance from that place, by the folk of the

Kioutse Types.

Tsarong, scattered among whom a few rare Loutse families are to be found. A few days to the south their limits are with the Lissous, of whose incursions we had heard so much in the course of our ascent of the Mekong. The Loutses therefore occupy the mountains between the Mekong and Assam. At the height at

which we crossed the Salwen they styled themselves Anous; a little farther north, Melams; and, advancing westward, at Tamalou, Diasous.

In the basin of the Kiou-kiang the mountaineers are termed by the Chinese, Kioutses. They are closely akin to the Loutses, possessing almost the same dialect. Their precise denominations are successively Toulongs on the banks of the Kiou-kiang, Tandsards by the river Télo, Reouans at Duma, and Louans at Pangdam. The people of Khamti, that is to say the Thaïs, know them under the generic title of Khanungs; and this is the name marked on the English maps. The same Khamti Thaïs call the Mishmis, Khamans. It is probable that the first syllable, Kha, is identical with the name by which the Laotians describe the hill tribes of Indo-China. Kha would mean a sort of domestic slave. Finally, the Thibetans speak of the Loutses as Ngias (imbeciles). The Loutse language differs entirely from the Lissou, and contains but few Thibetan words. Its construction, too, is dissimilar.

The Loutses relate their own origin thus:—There lived formerly on Pémachou (a mountain which we afterwards saw on reaching the Kiou-kiang) a man and his wife who had nine sons, each of whom in their turn married. One became king of Thibet, and another king of Pekin. Then these two asked their seven brothers for money. The latter refused, and proposed to make war on them. But the mother interceded, saying, "I am the mother of you all. Do not quarrel; you seven ought to give each a little to the two who are kings." Her counsel prevailed; and that is how the seven, who peopled the district of the Loutse-kiang and became the Loutses, came to render tribute to China.

Like the Lissous, the Loutses are not the owners of the soil.

When they wish to clear a mountain they pay a sum to the mokoua or to their chief, who will later adjudge the impost of the village. But he can also, if he likes, evict the new tenants. On the frontier of Thibet these hillmen come freely into the Lamaserais, but are spectators only of the religious exercises. The Loutses are usually, but not by law, monogamists. A proposal for the hand of a daughter is made by offerings to the parents—some wine, a knife, or a pot, on the acceptance of which depends that of the suitor. Their consent acquired, a betrothal feast ensues, with more gifts from the bridegroom—larger jars of spirit, a pig, a pot, a tripod, ear-rings, and a tchaupa (Thibetan garment), with the necessary viands. The newly wedded husband visits his bride at his discretion; after a year of probation the wife takes up her abode with him. Should any discord arise, the parents must return the son-in-law's presents. Among the polygamous Kioutses the marriage rules are simpler. If the wife does not present her spouse with an heir he does not pay for her. There are few good looks and little modesty among the families

Loutse Types.

or tribes. The inheritance of the sire is shared amongst the sons, and a father can disinherit a refractory son. In dress the men follow the Thibetan fashion. The women are attired in two garments—one fitted to the figure, the other looped from under the left arm to the right shoulder. Sometimes they have a white fillet like the Lissous, their hair either loosely gathered into a net, or shaved, leaving a toupet in front. Two ladies we observed with rectangular green tattooing on the nose and cheeks; they were heiresses. Nearly all the females carried a small distaff, with which they spun hemp unceasingly. Assassination is not regarded as a heinous crime, but blood money is sometimes exacted. The dead are buried with the usual symbols of the defunct's occupation on the grave. They believe the deceased go to a beautiful land if they have done good, and if not that they rejoin the bad spirits. The Kioutses have their witch-doctors, and sacrifices for the sick; but diseases are rare, and centenarians not uncommon. Venereal complaints are unknown. When a malady declares itself, a fowl or a pig is vowed to the evil spirit. In the house where we slept a sorcerer was engaged in exorcising such a one from a sick woman. The rites resembled in the main those we had witnessed on a former occasion, save that in this instance some little wax images were employed, which were anointed with tsampa and water, and placed in the fork of a big tree outside that was supposed to have had an ill influence on the patient. The physician went through a variety of incantations and facial contortions, and finally touched the sick woman's head with a peacock's feather. But he smiled at me the while.

At Meuradon we found one of our men whom we had sent before us from Tsekou. He had been as far as the Lamaserai

of Tchamoutong on the right bank of the Salwen, and pronounced the Lamas well disposed towards us; but added that the mules could not pass beyond that point, and that we should be obliged to go two days farther down the river to find a practicable route to the west.

At Tionra, where we were only five hours' march from the Salwen, we were glad of a day's halt in the regained warmth of the sun. The Loutses here were mild-mannered and hospitable, but wretched and dirty in the extreme. Their physical attributes were, well developed but receding foreheads, the countenance larger than the Thibetans, with eyes not oblique like the Chinese, and the facial angle rather sharp. The women were little round-about beings.

The 21st and 22nd (September) were employed in the passage of the Salwen. All our party were in high spirits, and the cattle rested. At the request of the men, the mules were given a hash of raw fowls and salt, avowed by the Thibetans to be a rare pick-me-up for beasts of burden. We ferried over in skiffs about 16 feet long, hollowed out of trunks of trees. From two to four men manœuvred them with small oars. The crossing was an easy matter compared with that of the Mekong at Halo; there were no real rapids here, and counter-currents could be taken advantage of. The temperature of the water was much the same as that of the Mekong at the same height, being 60° Fahr.; but a neighbouring tributary from the mountains registered nearly 6° higher.

On the right bank we received a messenger from the Lamaserai of Tchamoutong, distant now only a few miles, who announced that the superior had under him seventy-six Lamas ("Red Hats"), that he was afraid to come himself to meet us in consequence of

an injunction from Tsarong against allowing us to enter Thibet, but he sent us by two of his Lamas gifts of tchang, flour, and butter, as well as other provisions for sale. These holy emissaries took frequent pinches of snuff from a little horn. In return I charged them with chromolithographs for their chief, and astonished them by exhibiting photographs of their Grand Lama at Lhaça. It was politic that they should take with them the tale that the French were evidently on good terms with them of Thibet.

On the 23rd and 24th (September) we continued down the Salwen by a good road. As is the case lower, the valley is greener than that of the Mekong, with flora almost approaching that of warm countries. The trees were literally decked with tufts of orchids, whose yellow and brown spotted blooms hung in odoriferous clusters: this might appropriately have been named the Orchid Valley, a paradise for amateurs. Creepers abounded, one in especial with thick leaves and scented white waxen flowers, which I have seen in conservatories at home. Another shrub, too, I noted for its fruit, like the arbutus, but containing a delicious cream. Djewan was our stage, and here we gleaned a few meagre particulars about the Kiou-kiang. Mention was also made of a larger and further stream called the Nimer. The people told us that the son of the chief of Ngaïhoa, whom we had seen as we passed through that district, had been seized by Lissous while trafficking on the Kiou-kiang. He had saved his life, but lost his merchandise. Most of the inhabitants of Djewan were Lissous, but pacific—at least towards us. Our host was a Chinese trader of Setchuen. He collected chiefly drugs, amongst others a large tuber found in the root of rotten pines called fouline, which is held in much estimation in Chinese pharmacy.

After Djewan we worked westward again, and for two days

reascended by the bed of a small tributary of the Salwen. But the higher we went the worse grew the path, till it was no better than a track through sodden brake and over abrupt declivities. Great thorny thistles with yellow heads choked the hollows, through which the mules, even stripped, could hardly struggle. The unloading and loading went on incessantly. Our progress was, in consequence, almost nominal, and on the 27th (September) came to a dead stop. We therefore called a halt to allow the stragglers to close up. Here, in response to our oft-repeated inquiries, two Lissous spoke of a district on the Upper Kiou-kiang called Dutchu, where one half of the denizens were robbers and lived in holes, and the other half were timid and slept in trees. Beyond the Kiou-kiang were three mountains, then a big river named Tersa, where we should find rice, and black Lamas, and, further, Chinese (?). Valuable information, forsooth! However, the more mysterious this region the more we desired to find it.

In the evening our scouts came in on the main column, and reported no possibility of getting the mules any farther. We held a council of war, and decided to push on afoot for the next village with a few carriers, whom we could send back with food to the succour of the rest. In accordance with this resolution, on the 28th (September) we set forward, and almost immediately afterwards the wood closed upon us. Our men had not lied. There was not so much as a track. We followed the general direction indicated by broken twigs. We did not mount, we did not descend —we simply gave ourselves over to gymnastics. Clambering over roots, grappling with trees, now bestriding a huge trunk, anon crawling on all-fours, foot by foot we won our way. We slid, we tumbled, we saved ourselves by a vine, and, when we found a square yard to stand upon, stopped for breath. On one such platform,

of rather less precarious dimensions, we made our midday meal. Water was running among the boulders in a bed of felspar granite, moss and red orchids tapestried the sheltering wall of rock. On their arrival at the big tea-kettle, the first care of the Thibetans after dropping their packs was to draw forth their bamboo-root pipes, and in blue clouds of tobacco smoke to obliterate their trials. None can tell the full enjoyment of a pipe after the hardships of a march like this. Nam shared our view as he squatted like a Buddha ruminant. I believe a cataclysm would not shake him out of a casuality greater even than an American's.

Naturally, there was no further question about the mules. We sent back word to the headman to forward all the packs he could, and to leave the animals where they were under a small guard. For the present it must be *pedibus cum jambis* for us, like the great Tartarin. But this was something like exploration. The enjoyment of the work grew on me. And added to it all was the distant pleasure of dropping in upon the English by a road they did not know.

We had thought our efforts of the morning laborious : they were nothing to those of the rest of the day. Close following on the escalade of a crag by the help of two notched tree trunks, there succeeded a struggle up an almost perpendicular rampart of damp soil, where, while digging one's elbows into the surface and clutching the tussocks, a slip would seem to have set one rolling to eternity. I own I did not dare look back for fear of giddiness. Shortly before nightfall we bivouacked on a ledge hard by a patch of snow. The altitude was 10,808 feet, and the temperature 48° Fahr. As it was fine, and we were dry, we all felt better than at the base of the Garnier Peak. This was Nam's first introduction to snow, which his curiosity led him to taste, under the assurance

from the others that it was sugar. The children of Annam, at least the Tonkinese, know only ice, which they call in their picture-language "stone-water."

At daybreak I had from my tent door a glorious sight. The whole valley of the Salwen lay stretched before me, a sea of cloud, with here and there a detached wreath of vapour floating feather-like above in the rays of the sun. The great dividing range betwixt the Mekong and the Salwen upheaved its grey mass with sharp-cut edges against the sky, conspicuous in which a single summit stood forth dominant. Garnier Peak was invisible from here, but we could distinguish a lesser rock in the chain, to which we had given the name of the Dent de Djewan. Little by little the mists rose like a curtain from below and blotted out the scene, which remained only as a vision of the dawn.

A stiff climb still separated us from the col, and occupied the morning. Once on the other side, the descent was as rapid and slippery as the seat of one's trousers could desire. We brought up at the village of Tamalou, Tamalo, Tamalopoula, or even Poulalo; each variation having been used to designate to us the group of seven hamlets that here dotted the banks of the river Poula, affluent to the Salwen. Henceforward more protracted halts were imperative, owing to the necessity, now that we were on foot, of providing supplies for some days in advance, and extra followers to carry them.

We had first to re-establish communication with our mules; for which purpose twelve men were despatched to bring up the remaining loads, with directions to send back the animals under escort to Tsekou with a few cases not absolutely indispensable, consigned to Father Dubernard. Great difficulty was experienced in enlisting additional porters. We had personally to beat up the huts and

offer inducements. Even so, they would not engage to go beyond the Kiou-kiang.

While waiting here we mixed freely with the people, whose hospitable reception of us was in large measure owing to the excellent relations we had had with the king of Yetché. They were Loutses, mostly dressed in white togas with blue stripes, and epaulettes like the Lamasjens ; many wore a cap of brown felt, and all had large white bead necklaces. Each hamlet was merely a collection of two or three houses under a headman. A tax-gatherer, sent yearly by the Yetché mokoua, or by the mandarin of Ouïsi, takes a tsien per house in money or kind ; otherwise they are unburdened. A few trophies of the chase, skulls, and horns of the raguen and diasuna (*nemorrhædus* and *budorcas*) decorated the interiors, but we saw few tools. The women do what little tillage is necessary for bare sustenance. One of the chiefs on whom we called had a primitive still in which he manufactured a sort of spirit. A funnel hollowed out of a tree was placed over a cauldron of hot water upon the fire. A wattle in the former contained the maize, roasted and mixed with leaven. On top was fitted a vat of cold water constantly replenished, which hermetically sealed the funnel. A bowl received the condensed vapour, which fell into the centre by a bamboo tube. We tasted the liquor, and upon my word it was not bad.

By the 4th (October) we were ready again. We resumed our route with but vague instructions for our future guidance, but under better physical conditions, and passed the first night beneath the gigantic branches of a monster tree in shape like a dragon. The ponderous arms were fraught with menace, but we consoled ourselves by reflecting that as they had threatened thus for many years, they would probably last out our temporary stay.

The two following days were employed in surmounting a crest of 10,725 feet. From here our new Loutse carriers sent back four stalwart wenches, who had helped their relatives with their loads up the ascent. I secured a garter,—"honi soit,"—and found its measurement to be 19 inches below the knee.

Then more up hill and down dale, damp underfoot but bright overhead. The thick bamboo brake which clothed the south-west sides of the hills did its utmost to retard our advance. Not content with striking us in the face, the canes lay low and tripped us when we stooped, and the mildest of our adversaries poured a few drops of water down our necks or relieved us of our head-gear. When we exchanged this vegetation, it was for barer heights, among which often gleamed little grey-blue lochs; a scenery not unlike some parts of the Pyrenees.

After a strenuous climb up a dry watercourse, we emerged upon the col. This pass over the mountains has a terrible reputation in snow. Natives hurry over it; song and gunshot are unheard under the great dread inspired by its solitude and many victims. And in truth, human skulls and shin-bones, a porringer, a fragment of a pipe, bore dreary testimony to the fate of unfortunate wayfarers overtaken by the cold. Our little band pressed on in silence among the sombre scattered rocks. It took several hours along the ridges before we ensconced ourselves for the night in the dry brushwood beneath a sheltering mound.

Whilst the men were preparing the bivouac, I could not resist the desire to climb a neighbouring eminence, on the brow of which I found myself the centre of a vast panorama of extraordinary grandeur.

The mist which had wrapped us during the last stage of our

march was torn apart, and the horizon in the west was glowing clear. In the foreground below me the land fell in green terraces, dotted with dark stunted firs, towards the Kiou-kiang. The river itself could be divined, though not discerned. North-west, a lofty range, erect, stern, and snow-clad, formed Nature's fit, if forbidding, barrier to Thibet. Away to the west-south-west opened a gap, an ample valley fringed with lesser mountains, above which the zenith lay blue, flecked with white cloud. That was no sky of China ;—imagination caught afar a visionary glimpse of India. Backward, whence we had come, the eye revisited the chain of separation now searched by the setting sun, which glistened on a recent whitening of the crests. It leaped the whole interjacent river basin, and scanned their well-known features, to where, appearing in a cleft, Garnier Peak stood up, sprinkled with fresh snow, and set like a miniature in perspective. It wheeled to the left, and rested in the north upon a lonely rounded summit, Pémachou, the legendary cradle of the Loutse race. That night we slept in considerable contentment with the ideas conjured up by our wide prospect, and recked little that the thermometer stood only two degrees above freezing.

8th (October).—Following the spurs we continued to descend, at first among bamboos, and later in rhododendrons. Beneath their spreading roots we passed more skeletons, the blood congealed upon the skulls, with derelict bowls and strainers. In the bottom of the valley we sighted the Kiou-kiang, running over a shingle bed, blue as the Aar. Casting about for a camping ground about 900 feet above the river, we came across two little thatched bamboo huts on piles. The thresholds stood agape, the hearths deserted. In the abandoned garden were remains of tobacco culture, pumpkins, beans, and plantains,—and beneath a

rough shelter lay two dead bodies. Truly a day of mortality: we had left skeletons only to find corpses.

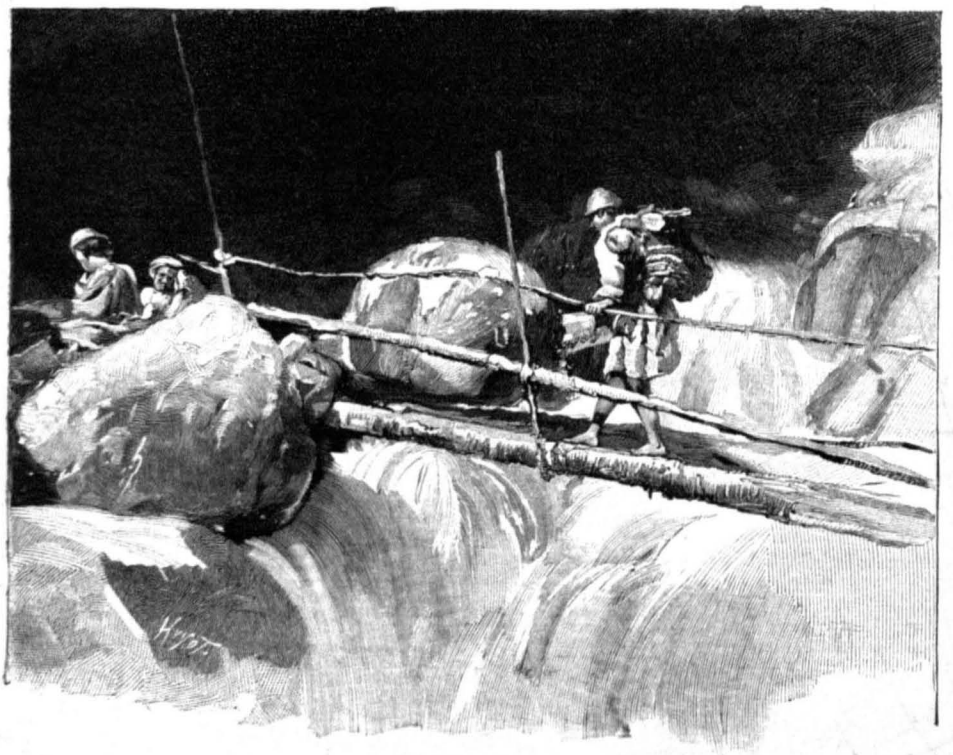
We quitted these undesirable companions for a spot half an hour lower down, where lodging was obtained in the wattled bamboo dwelling of the son of the chief of the district, which was called Toulong. Here, as at Tamalou, we encountered further delays in procuring supplies and carriers. At our first approach the alarmed inhabitants began to hide their food in the mountains. Luckily, they were of a gentle, timid race, Kioutses, so named from the Kiou-kiang, though they styled themselves Tourong or Toulong, and the river Toulong-remaï. In speech and appearance they differed but little from the Loutses, save that in frame they were rather more robust. The men mostly had a twig or thorn in the ear as ornament; the women sometimes a large silver ear-ring. The latter also were tattooed in green round the mouth. Formerly they used to be unmolested, but the Loutses made war on them, and it was then that they lived for precaution in holes under the trees. By degrees, when they found we gave them presents of blue atoutzi yarn (here held in high estimation) and cotton, and paid well, they became tamer; and again we traced our indebtedness to an emissary of the Yetché mokoua. The collector of revenue (called in Lissou, *nerba*) had received instructions from his superior in our favour, and in him we found a valuable auxiliary. As if as a further aid there also arrived at this period from Tamalou a Chinese itinerant trader, who had been instrumental in helping us when there. These two together used all their influence on our behalf. Still, our patience was never more tried: the natives could not be brought to understand the need of diligence. The longer our large troop remained stationary the more it exhausted the available supplies on the spot. The

nerba at last issued a *mouké* (in Loutse, a *chiteun*), or requisition message, which was forwarded to a chief lower down. A second *mouké* was required for a new cord bridge by which to cross the Kiou-kiang. This was made with ease and dexterity. There was no lack of bamboos, and of them a twisted cable was fashioned by one man in one day. I could not but admire the address with which a broad river is thus spanned. With all our vaunted science we could not have beaten this in old Europe.

On the 13th (October) baggage was triced up, beds folded, tents struck, and our men began to emit sounds of rejoicing and departure from bamboo tubes. But where were the local carriers? Two reluctantly approached. And now appeared on the scene a new bore, in the person of a Chinese delegate from the mandarin at Ouïsi. This dignitary was a man of immense self-importance. Fresh palavers ensued. The Celestial, after a long-winded speech, would strut out of the apartment in seeming dudgeon. Negotiations were apparently broken off. The next minute he was back again in the doorway, and the whole farce was acted anew. Then the nerba, who had promised to set us a short distance on our way, suddenly developed intense official preoccupation; and the carriers refused to go beyond two stages instead of six. And, after all, we found the reason of this unexpected change of manner was that one of our men had got into a scrape with a village belle. An indemnity was graciously accepted by the latter, and we actually made a move as far as the river-side. Here we passed a night of vigil from the myriad mosquitoes. The mere lighting of a match caused a cloud to settle on our faces. At 2 a.m. I could stand it no longer, and patrolled the camp till dawn.

We were early astir, thankful to be off. The nerba was there, shouldering a mighty cross-bow, the Chinese sutler, and

the fresh bearers, each with his wallet stocked with houang-niaï, a rock plant remedial in dysentery, of which we forthwith purchased a supply. Altogether the column numbered nearly threescore men. The river at this point was about 50 yards broad, with traces of a rise of 40 feet in flood. The transference of ourselves and chattels was accomplished without hitch; we even stopped to take a photograph in mid-air.



Bamboo Bridge over Torrent, Valley of the Kiou-kiang.

On the 15th (October) we kept down the right bank of the Kiou-kiang, and the vegetation had changed. We were now among large creepers bearing tempting red berries unfit to eat, shrubs with a rosy blossom not unlike the hortensia, only scented, fig-trees, plantains, elegant palms, and, in damp spots, clumps of fern 6 feet high. The river was low, and ran in a bed of

granite, quartz, and micaschist. The natives who came in with food were well formed, though diminutive, almost naked, and wholly dirty, but withal of a not altogether unprepossessing type, having large eyes, small heads, hair less coarse than the Chinese and tending to brown, and their lower faces rendered more shapely from slightly prominent cheek-bones. Most of them carried a sword in a big sheath across the chest. Both men and women smoked a powdered green tobacco. We paid them partly in money, but chiefly in yarn.

The path by which we reached Deidoum on the 16th (October) was frightful. It was blocked by enormous rock masses, which had to be scaled, in some instances, by the help of notched tree trunks and trailers, but more frequently without, and having a 20-feet drop on the other side. Even the dogs had to be carried in places. Twice across a torrent by a liana bridge, holding to the hand of the man in front. But no sooner over than the clambering began again. The agility of the men was wonderful; no projection was too slight for a step, no indentation too shallow for a toe. Their bare feet gave them an advantage. And yet this route is not held to be a bad one by the natives. They admitted that there was one, going westward from Toulong into the mountains, that was dangerous. I wonder what it may be like. What we were traversing is the high road from China to India—the subject of so many English dreams, and the ideal line of Captain Blackstone. For the present, I rather imagine it has small chance of becoming an artery of commerce.

The denizens of Deidoum were very shy. At first they inspected us from afar, climbing the trees and peeping at us through the branches. The least suspicious movement on our

part, and they vanished like a flight of sparrows. Little by little they gained confidence, but great persuasion was required to induce a few to act as carriers.

From a hill, on the 17th (October), we opened out the mountains formerly descried from the pass above the Kiou-kiang. Dense woods grew right up to the base of their crowning bastions, which were precipitous, though often flat-topped. They were named the Moutentekie rocks.

This valley of the Kiou-kiang, which we had now been threading for several days, with many more to follow, gave an impression of greater size than that of the Mekong, since, although narrow at the bottom, it was bounded by mountains of receding gradients, each with its own forest species, from palms below to ilex and rhododendrons above. It is one of the peculiarities of the scenery of the Upper Irawadi to find these clear rapid waters, like Swiss torrents, fretting their course through tropical vegetation. The region is little inhabited, and dwellings, whether single or in small groups, are invariably about the middle zone of altitude. Culture is evident only in occasional narrow strips of buckwheat, millet, or maize, and then merely in sufficient quantities to supply the most meagre necessity.

On the 18th (October) we reached the foot of a waterfall, sighted on the previous day, which fell from a height of 200 feet on to a smooth rock. With its flashing drops and iridescent spray amid the green foliage, it was like a diamond pendant in its casket. A side torrent had to be crossed, with no more bridge than a couple of slippery bamboos. Most of us crawled gingerly over unencumbered. But two of our men rashly ventured on it at once. I heard the rotten saplings crack, and was

"Down with a crash into the foaming Water."

in time to see the sticks go down with a crash into the foaming water. However, we saved our half-drowned comrades farther down. What with swarms of virulent mosquitoes to harass our rest at night, and the severe toil undergone by day, we were having a fairly hard time of it. Luckily the weather at this stage was beautiful, just like spring in France. Our chief disquietude was on the score of food; and now we had to share some of our scanty stock with departing relays of Kioutse bearers, who by the terms of agreement should have victualled themselves.

I do not know but that we reached the acme of cumulative obstruction at this period. Up to the present we had overcome many a spell of choice obstacles. They had not exhausted the vagaries of nature. Indeed they might be looked upon rather as the occasional rockets of the entertainment, and this as the *feu d'artifices*. Jagged points, slippery surface, crumbling brinks, creepers that tripped, worm-eaten trunks up which to swarm, almost vertical ladders to climb, formed of wooden pickets driven into the face of overhanging bluffs, often hauled by sheer strength of a couple of men and liana drag-ropes over boulders. We struggled on because we had to, and sat down abruptly on the other side, to marvel how the deuce we got there. Let any who want good training for calf and biceps come here. A mile or two in a day was sometimes all we could do, and at this rate we began to despair of seeing India in 1896.

Camped on the 19th (October) beside a curious rock. It was of granite, and 20 feet high. Outside it looked very ordinary, but, on descending to its base, an aperture was discovered leading into a circular chamber, pierced with two windows like eyes. One could imagine oneself inside a colossal head

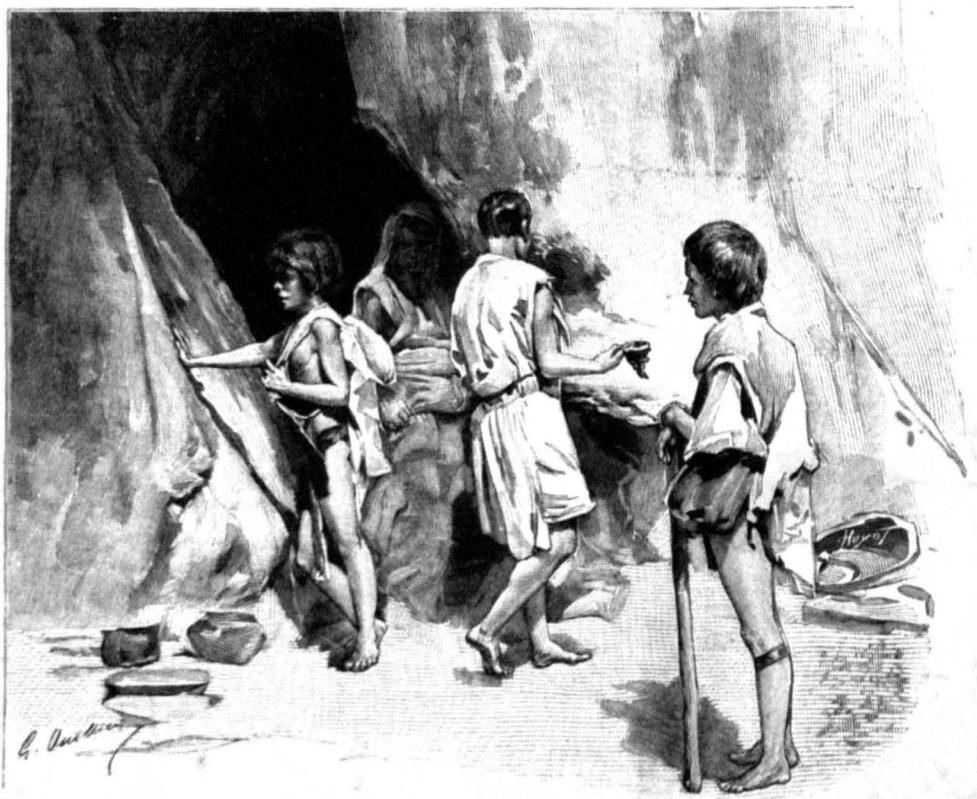
like that of "Freedom lighting the World" in New York. Evidently this cavity had been caused by the river at high water, an inverse phenomenon to that of the "Marmites des Géants" in Switzerland.

Wild as our life was, we had grown accustomed to it, and were a united band in our daily adventures. At daybreak our men rose in their tchaupas like loose dressing-gowns, stretched themselves, had a wash, and lit the fire; during all which operations the Christians repeated their prayers, which sometimes lasted well on into the day's march. Tea was brewed, and some maize or millet partaken of. The troop was divided into several messes. In No. 1 was Anio, chief of the porters and commissary-general, a man of rare thews, indefatigable energy, and self-sacrifice. Then there were Pétalon, the wag of the party, who kept everyone alive with his jests and grimaces; and Loureti, his younger brother, too slight for this sort of journey. With them were also José the faithful, a cross between Mosso and Thibetan, a grand fellow and my especial bodyguard, who carried my camera and gun, and looked after me like a mother; and Goumbo ("divine grace"), the Adonis of the band, quite a painter's model with his large soft black eyes, but very reserved. Mess No. 2 contained three mighty brothers, plucky but generally keeping aloof from the rest, though one was much attached to Roux; and another interesting type of a Thibetan, a Herculean monster, whose matted hair, flat nose, and open mouth gave him quite the ferocious aspect of the conventional ogre ready to crunch raw fowls. All the above were Christians. Among the pagans, too, we had good stuff, men displaying equal attachment to us. There was Oumbo, son-in-law of the Tsedjrong bessé, who undertook voluntarily the hardest tasks with unimpaired

vivacity, notwithstanding his ill looks, corrugated brow, and projecting jaw. And we owed as much to Seran-Seli ("eternal life") as to anyone in the company—the man to unravel a knot if ever there was one, who spoke Lissou and even a little Kioutse, and having been in the Kiou-kiang valley before in search of gold, had experience of the inhabitants. His description of the gold-washing (on a left-bank tributary of the Kiou-kiang) showed it to be but rough. The large stones were turned over and the silt sifted for grains of the precious metal. Occasionally a nugget as large as a haricot bean was found. The gravel and slush were then strained on wooden shutters and the gold remained. A man may collect sometimes a taël weight (1⅓ oz. adp.) in a week. Both here and on the Loutse-kiang the search is unrestricted; on the Mekong it is taxed.

After chota pipes were lighted. The manufacture of these bamboo pipes was a great distraction during our enforced delays, and we had become adepts in the art. Then tents were struck, the modest kitchen range stowed with excessive caution by old Nam, and loads assumed. Anio apportioned the labour, and we never heard a complaint; on the contrary, the sick or tired were often relieved by their comrades. Once under way, each man went his own gait. The van on reaching a plateau got a welcome rest while awaiting the rearguard. At the close of the day, after the Thibetans had lent a voluntary hand to our Annamites in strewing our leaf mattresses, came the best hour in the twenty-four: we sat round the fires, wrote up our log, drank tea, smoked and chatted with the men. Most of them spoke or understood a little Chinese, and by aid of signs or a pat on the back and a pinch of tobacco we established an excellent good-fellowship.

In the course of these chats we were puzzled by accounts given by the Kioutses. According to them, we were to find within a few days a large river, the Neydu (Lissou, "big water"), to follow it up seven marches, cross a high mountain, and then arrive at a wide plain which was called Apon, where the villages were frequent, the houses circular, and the people



Midday Halt.

dressed in trousers and vests like ourselves, only with black teeth and wearing turbans. To us poor weary rock-climbers the word plain spelt paradise, and Apon became the constant theme of speculation and debate.

As far as our investigations upon the fauna of the Kioukiang went, the results were largely negative. We heard that

tigers, though sometimes seen, are rare; neither wolves nor deer are met with; and the wild ox (by which was probably meant the *budorcas*) is tawny or black. The wild ass (*nemorrhædus*), black and white roebuck, dark-haired goats with horns like the markhor of Kashmir, were not mentioned. There are black bears, and foxes of three colours of the Thibetan species; and monkeys and large bats are numerous in the forests.

The following is the translation given me by Joseph of the names of the several more important rivers we had seen:—

Lang-	*-tsong*	*-kiang*
That makes waves	swift	river

Lou-	*-kiang*
Wrath	river

Kiou-	*-kiang*
That zigzags	river

Tou-rong or *Tou-long*
That has stones.

I tried to make a careful study of the Kioutse type of physiognomy. The line from the lacrymal duct to the nostril, almost straight in many people, is with them very sloping; they have thick lips, short chins, and triangular face. The space between the eyes is wide, and general cast of countenance not displeasing. The visage seems small, from the pent-house thatch of hair overhanging it. Chests big, and thighs largely developed from hill-climbing.

A long march on the 23rd (October) brought us to the scattered hill village of Tukiu-mu. On the way, near the river, I had noticed a species of date and excellent figs; I also picked up some large brown seeds in a pod similar to what I

had seen in Madagascar. Just outside the village we passed a tomb stuck with stones and bamboo tubes, which had probably originally held food for the deceased. A post on which was the skull of an ox, and five perches surmounted by wooden birds roughly carved to represent hovering, were sufficient to scare most evil spirits. It was some time since we had met with these attentions to the dead.

While at Tukiu-mu, where we all shared one roof, the rains once more descended, and we might have supposed ourselves shut up in a house-boat. The people of the district were so destitute, of food as well as raiment, that we again found ourselves checked for three days, and in straits for provisions. The annoyance was that we had no hold on the natives: they had only to disperse into the recesses of the hills or to hide their grain to have us at their mercy. Even supposing we could have laid violent hands on their property, we should have alienated the very levies on whom we relied to carry it. Having an aversion to rain, they would only come in singly or by couples under cover of large shells made of tree bark, bringing a few tongs (Thibetan measure) of rice, the husking of which in one little wooden mortar occupied another day in this heaven-forsaken place. We paid for everything (which was little)—in trinkets, prints, and yarn. But our most seductive wares failed to extort any but the scantiest pittance of tobacco. It was amusing to witness poor Nam's dejection, and the care with which he dried at the fire a single leaf he had somewhere acquired, fondling it like an old savant over the rarest object in his collection.

It was the same story. The inhabitants raised just sufficient for bare existence, and having no money had no desires. I

conceded their grounds, but resented the consequence. Necessity has no law: here, as at home, hunger is hunger. Our plight proclaimed the socialist theory to us more clearly than the loudest speech, even to the excuse of robbery with want for cause. The Haves defend themselves from the Have Nots; and justly. But when the former condemn the latter without remission in the name of high-sounding principles, they have not put themselves in the others' place. We were now in the position of the indigent; and, reflecting, became indulgent.

As the result of a council held in the preceding evening with Anio and Joseph, we set forward again on the 27th (October). From Tukiu-mu to the big river was reported four days' march. We had food for two. Our design was to go on short rations, and to send Seran-Seli with two men on ahead to try and procure supplies to meet us. In the midst of our perplexities we had the satisfaction to detect no sign of discontent among our followers proper. They simply asked if we were going much farther, with a view to avoiding this route on their way back to Tsekou; to which I gladly replied by a promise to send them home by Ava in Burmah and Tali, and they were satisfied.

Our departure was slow. At the last moment most of the local carriers vanished. It was no time for compliments, so we promptly collared some Kioutses who were innocently looking on, and started with nine pressed hands. After a few hours' marching in a steady downpour through dripping woods, we came to the confluence of the Kiou-kiang with a stream on the right bank, the Du-tchu-mu. This river rolled a strong head of water tumultuously over shingle bars, and its black tide was furrowed with ribands of foam for a considerable distance before mingling with the other. Here we found Seran-Seli, unable to pro-

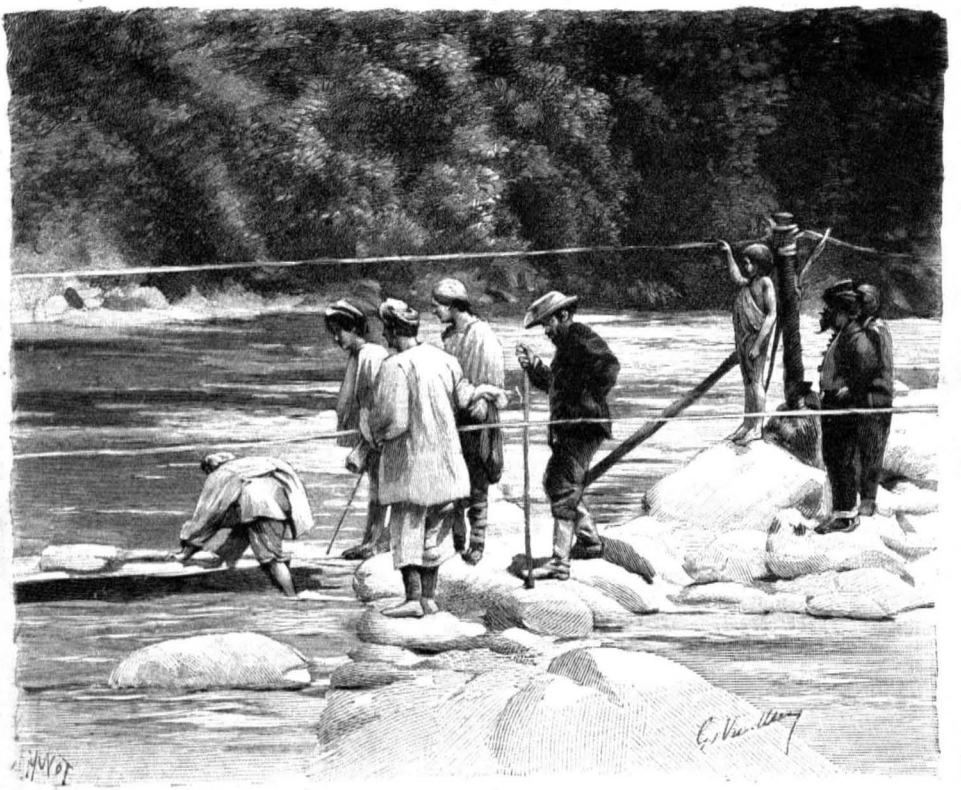
ceed. Hardly above the swirl three ratans swung loose from a post on either bank, but not tautened for a rope bridge. The river was in flood. The pebbles on the margin were covered with big black wood-bugs, seeking safety from the swollen current; we crushed them as we sprang from stone to stone, and they emitted a fetid odour. But the Kioutses stooped to gather and devour them. While crunching these tasty bon-bons, they further encouraged us by explaining that the Du-tchu-mu was usually crossed by a tiny raft, which, under existing conditions, was out of the question.

"What is to be done, then?" we asked. "When the waters are out," replied they, "we stay at home."

A Thibetan, one of the three brothers, volunteered to make the attempt by the slack-rope, for which service of danger we offered a reward. The night now falling, the venture was deferred till daylight, and we camped where we were.

Not long after, I noticed the men retiring higher into the woods to sleep. Looking out of the tent, I perceived the water rising rapidly round us: it was high time to beat a retreat, if we did not wish to wake up in the river. In the darkness and confusion of rushing streams, it was no easy matter to clutch our belongings and make a hasty escape on all-fours up the channeled bank. The camp was in dismay. We found Nam among his pots, swearing and wailing by turns. "Master Doctor! Master Sire! Annamite no way make dinner,—no China way!" (by "China" he included all that was neither Annamite nor French). "Don't cry, Nam, we'll do without;" we consoled him like a child. Finally, we gained the shelter of a big rock, and there, with the help of the men's tent and a fire, while the rain kept up a deluge without, we passed the remainder of the night huddled together

as best we could. I counted twenty-nine beings within the limits of that tent—Frenchmen, Chinese, Annamites, Thibetans, Lissous, and Kioutses. The men maintained an excellent demeanour, but beneath our jokes we all had the serious reflection that if the waters still increased, or we failed to cross, the alternative would



Beside the Du-tchu-mu.

be that of abiding in a district that could barely provide us with two days' sustenance.

But with dawn on the 28th (October) came unexpected relief. As if by enchantment the inundation had receded, the shingle bank on which we had been marooned was free, the Du-tchu-mu was only a sullen torrent growling between its almost normal banks; the very bugs were gone.

I imagine this phenomenon of flood overnight followed by abatement in the morning, which we more than once experienced, is to be attributed to diurnal melting of the snows at the source.

Our first care was to repair the connection with the far side; and a Kioutse having contrived to cross, our men were not long in following. The ratan was old and frayed, but by putting a clod of turf upon the traveller the friction was lessened, and all passed in safety, if not in comfort, over the minished stream. The heavier of the party, myself included, had to present our backs to the current, and did not escape a ducking. After the troubles of the preceding night, fortune seemed determined to make amends, and, when we called halt at the close of the day at "Safety Camp," further disclosed to us a little cache of four good-sized baskets of maize and rice. It was curious to note the respect of the Kioutses for personal property: this harvest of provision for winter was left in perfect trust out in the country, far from dwellings, and merely covered with leaves. From it we were enabled to purchase a small replenishment of our stock.

The 29th (October) was therefore a day of restored hilarity. Not that much improvement of the route was observable; the customary acrobatic performance had to be got through, with for one of the Thibetans an incidental fall from a 20-feet rock; but we managed to dry everything by the margin of the Kiou-kiang, which here was a broad sheet of water, swift but noiseless, and wonderfully clear.

The men enjoyed themselves "after hours" by stone-throwing, in which the Thibetans excel, and by a swimming exhibition by Pétalon the buffoon and Fa the younger. The Kioutses, as

undressed as usual, squatted on a rock apart, beneath a great tree, whose branches swept the stream and up-bore a hanging garden of ferns, orchids, and woodbine clinging by long lianas to the forest behind. This forest assumed more and more the character of warm regions; the bamboos were enormous, tree-ferns 30 feet high, and above the pale green stars with which the plantains studded the hills palms with their metallic sheen rose rigid and erect. But from the dense mass of humid vegetation issued an army of leeches; they dropped from the bushes, they crawled upon the ground, and fastened on the calves of the men. Even we in our boots were not spared. Although their puncture was not painful, it often caused a wound to spread round the place.

On the 30th (October) we reached at nightfall another confluence of two torrents. One was the Dublu, the other was the Neydu or Telo—the great river of which we had heard so much, its silent tide and tranquil depth! "*Voces non clamant,*" as the poetic Joseph rendered it.

It was a wretched disappointment. Instead of level fields, hills and impenetrable forest as before; instead of houses, crags as savage as any in the valley of the Kiou-kiang. We did not feel in the least moved to join in the songs of our men. Nevertheless, the lengthy stage of the day had gained us ground, and here the proverb "Time is money" was fast becoming "Time is life."

We had attained one of the principal feeders of the Irawadi. Like the Kiou-kiang, it did not come from far, but it brought a considerable body of water, and it is the great number of these large tributaries that accounts for a river of the size of the Irawadi in Burmah.

We were shaken out of sleep on the 31st (October) by an appalling crash. One of our men thinking to make a speedy and unusually safe bridge, had felled an immense tree on the opposite side, which came near to crushing the whole encampment in its fall. Much more effectual was the work of the Kioutses: planting bamboos two by two X-wise in the river-bed, and hanging on to the farthest by their toes, in a very short time they had a line of trestles across and a light causeway laid. The skill of these savages was marvellous; I question if civilised engineers with the same lack of implements would in two hours have thrown a bridge over a torrent at least 32 yards wide. The Dublu crossed, we proceeded up the left bank of the big river.

Thanks to the exertions of our forerunner Seran-Seli, the inhabitants of the vicinity here met us with some food, for which barter was the only form of purchase. Anio proved himself irresistible in the rôle of pedlar, would tap the vendors on the shoulder, make them laugh, and descant on the beauty of the coveted trinkets. It was the women who showed the greatest avariciousness. They seemed more independent than in most parts of Thibet, and on an equal footing with their husbands. Most of them were small and ugly, though the tattooing elsewhere prevalent was represented only by a blue mark on the lower lip. We took advantage of the general satisfaction to beg a fill for our pipes. I could not help laughing at being reduced to mendicancy from savages, with a fair prospect of sinking to yet lower straits.

On the 1st (November) the offer of my spoon secured us the services of a competent guide, under whose direction we at once transferred ourselves to the other (right) side of the river

on rudely improvised bamboo rafts; the water was quiet, deep, and of a grey-blue colour. Our passage disturbed a number of otters on the brink, who dived before we could get a shot at them. For the two succeeding days we climbed a steep and rugged track, catching sight through openings in the woods of an amphitheatre of snow-covered mountains. In the west a high white range running north-east and south-west was identified by us as the alps of Dzayul, on the other side of which lies the basin of the Upper Brahmaputra in Thibet. From our camp at the close of 3rd November nothing could be seen on all sides but mountains and valleys.

The 4th (November) furnished us with novelty in the manner of routes in this part of the world. Most of our old feats were duly called into play, but with the addition of being exercised in the actual torrent. We had camped overnight on its edge, and at starting crossed and recrossed it half a dozen times: ultimately we settled down to ascend it without divergence. It was the simplest plan. All the same, it was as painful as anything we had done. Our own men with their loads struggled bravely against the current, which was sufficiently heavy to require a strong stake to steady each step. The naked natives found the waterway admirably suited to their agility. Being barefooted, both had some advantage over us in our boots among the rolling stones. Stumbling, slipping, plunging, our ears ceaselessly deafened by the relentless roar of the descending water, we staggered blindly forward all day with barked shins and broken knees in the urgency to make headway. For we had only one day's supplies left. It was emphatically a case of gaining our bread by the sweat of our brow. In the evening the Kioutses caught some welcome

fish by an ingenious artifice. A small backwater in which quantities of spindrift had collected was barred, the pith of a plant was picked like oakum and cast into the pool, and the fish entangled in the mixture of foam and fibre were taken by hand and net. To their own menu the Kioutses added a mess of boiled fern leaves. Our faithful fellows bore their privations most unselfishly; they had already been on half rations—two porringers of rice swollen with water per man; but they were only concerned to lessen my anxiety, and sustained the greatest appearance of cheerfulness. To fill up the measure of this distressing day, we had to deplore the death of "Diamaï." For some time the poor beast had followed with difficulty, famished for lack of the meat which we could no longer procure. After vain efforts to contend against the stream, which kept sweeping his lean carcass back, he gave up, and lay down to die under a bush. I reproached myself for having taken him away from his pastures and snow. He was the second dog of the breed which I had lost; they seem unable to exist far from the icy cold and rocks of the uplands of Thibet.

5th (November).—We had to get somewhere. We had nothing left to put between our teeth. So into the torrent we stiffly lowered ourselves again and bent to the collar. Rain from above was soon added to the water below, and we enjoyed a double bath. The stream was wider and less swift than before, more like a water alley through the midst of the deep forest, where unbroken gloom lent solemnity to the scene. After many grievous hours of toil, it was with feelings of reviving cheer that we issued from this oppressive confinement to raft over a broad reach, and committed ourselves to firmer ground. And when at last we extricated ourselves from the tangled woods,

we hailed with joy once more the sight of hill cultivation and the straggling houses of the hamlet of Duma, in one of which we were not slow to seek shelter, and to disembarrass ourselves of the wet garments and the leeches that adhered to our limbs.

The Kioutses at Duma seemed a finer set of men than those hitherto met. In proportion as we advanced west we found them more civilised. On the borders of the Telo, instead of loin cloths they wore drawers; and here one saw cotton stuffs and large straw hats with a small cone of the Burmese shape. The women also were no longer tattooed. The same indifference to cleanliness and tillage marked their dwellings and their fields. Nor did they evince any apprehension of discord arising from intercourse with men of other villages. Their extreme isolation probably makes for peace. They allowed themselves to be freely interrogated, and gave us copious if indefinite information as to our route. They said that about Apon,[1]—of which

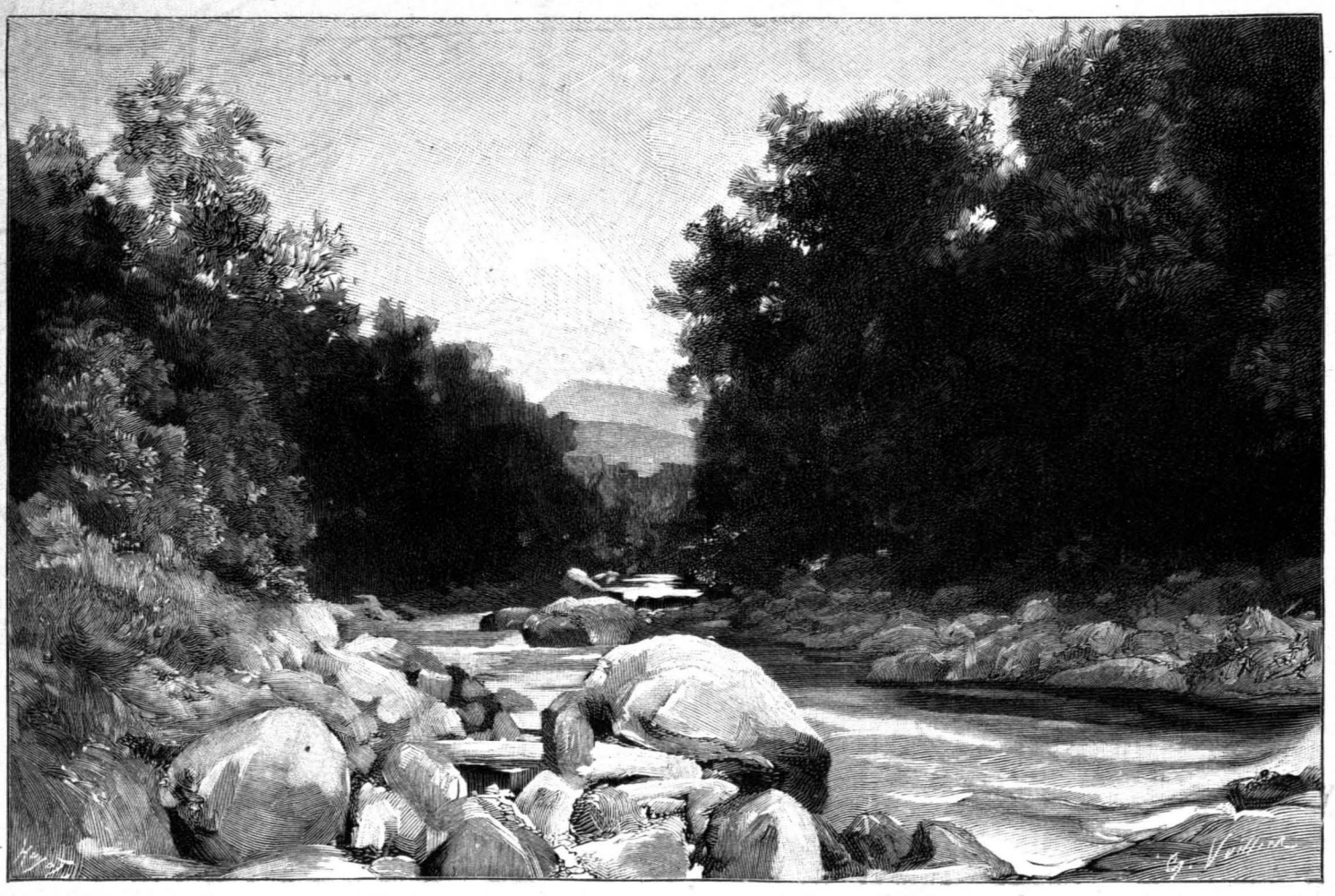
A Kioutse of Duma.

[1] We discovered that Apon simply signified in Lissou, Païs (Thaïs). When, therefore, they spoke of Apon they meant "the region inhabited by the Thaïs."

we had heard so many incoherent stories,—we should come to a plain called Moam, which we must traverse, and that we should find rice-fields and elephants. Our Thibetans on learning this testified much interest, imitating a trumpet with their arms: they had heard of such beasts in their legends, but had never seen one.

An old man I conversed with declared the Kioutses, Loutses, Lissous, and Chinese to be sprung from the same stock. This branch of the Kioutses at Duma styled themselves Reouans. They had been driven westward successively from the Salwen and the Telo by the Lissous of Kioui. Even now it was a Lissou delegate from the chief of Kioui who collected the impost, one tsien per family; thence it went to the chief of Ditchi, who in his turn passed it on to the prefect of Likiang. Filtering through so many hands, I wonder how much of it ever reaches the latter. To my inquiry why they paid, they replied that though some families evaded the tax they feared the power of the Lissous. It was indicative of the reputation for ferocity enjoyed by the riparian Lissous, that, already established in the east and south-east, it should also be recognised so far west of the Salwen as this.

Negotiations for food and bearers were carried on more easily here. Money by weight and the rupee were known; and with a wholesome addition to our diet of smoked fish, we were able to proceed on the 7th (November) after a halt of a single day. We forded a broad and shallow river, the Reunnam; and it was hard to believe ourselves at the base of the lofty mountain chains of Thibet; the long file of porters amid the tropical plants heightened the impression that we must be in equatorial Africa. The appearance of our column as it wound snake-like to the river's margin was original. The Kioutses led the way,



The Reunnam.

cross-bow or wooden lance in hand, with here and there a big straw hat. Fine men they were, tall and with expressive faces, ingenious, but industrious only to the bare limit of their need. Leading a life of perfect freedom, they preferred not to engage in traffic with other folk, which might in the end lead to a loss of individuality and liberty. They reminded me of the fable of the wolf and the dog. The Kioutses have chosen the part of the wolf, and are very likely right.

A diversified woodland march ended for the day in a real village. Five houses, each 90 feet long, placed parallel to one another, testified with the barking of dogs and grunting of pigs to an approach to comparative civilisation. We celebrated the event in a cup of rice wine with an old greybeard in silver bangles, and repressed the grimace which the insipid stuff evoked. The two ensuing days afforded little of incident. The marching, although somewhat easier, tired the men from its monotony, and we had to invigorate them with the incentive of Moam and all its prospective joys.

On the 10th (November), after being disturbed early by the cries of invisible troops of monkeys that infested the woods, we performed a long and toilsome stage, a great part of which was in a watercourse. But at its close we debouched upon a fine sandy beach, ideal camping ground, by the shores of a considerable river, the Nam Tsam. The stream was 40 yards in width, and expanded into a small lake at the foot of a sounding cataract. Here, deluded by a curious appearance on the surface of the water, we one and all delivered ourselves to fishing. But as the fish, if fish they were, remained indifferent to baited lines, stone-throwing, or Sao's ineffectual gun, we had to fall back on our usual supper of rice and water.

The next day, the 11th (November), we pursued a rough track up the left bank of the Nam Tsam, again at risk of neck and limb, and towards evening arrived at a large fish-dam. Tree trunks and bamboos were lashed together two and two between the rocks in mid-stream, and from this barrier depended a valance of trellis embedded in pebble heaps in the water. From the centre of the weir a channel staked by bamboos extended down stream, and at its extremity the apparatus for catching the fish was set at night. We profited by the bridge thus offered to cross the river, but it took us half an hour to effect a passage sitting astride the narrow causeway and working ourselves along by our hands. The owners of the dam, whom we found under a leafy hut on the other side, exhibited new traits; their features small, almost effeminate, eyes prominent, forehead convex, mouth projecting, and complexion olive-coloured. They wore a white turban which half hid their hair-knot. Although they called themselves Kioutses, they showed more affinity to the new races we were nearing in the Moam district. The material of their vesture, no less than their red and blue leather wallets and copper pipes, undoubtedly came from there. Their huts, too, were of a novel shape, like cradles set on end.

These fishermen gave us a good reception and some directions. They reckoned the number of days upon their hands; four by an open hand with thumb shut to palm, five by joining the finger tips. We all excited their astonishment; but Sao puzzled them most, because his mode of coiffure resembled their own.

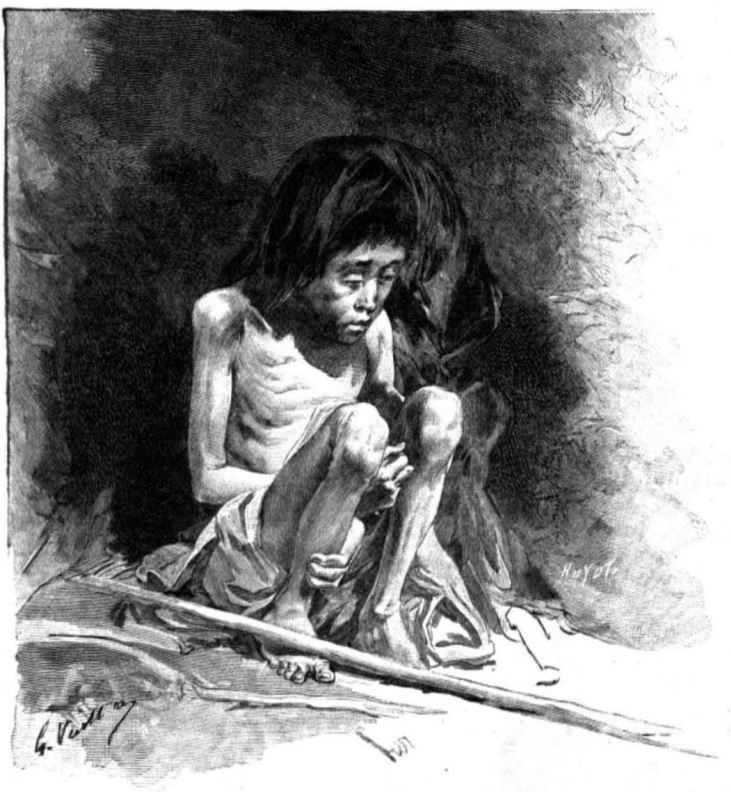
Signs were not lacking now of an approach to a hotter climate. A tiger paid us a nocturnal visit; at another time our march was harassed by most malevolent wasps; and one morning we were

Slippery Footing. Brink of the Nam Tsam.

interested by a long flight of white butterflies in line, which dipped and hovered with marshalled regularity on their course. I thought of the Burmese belief that they are the souls of human beings dead or asleep. If the latter, they would be able to take back with them a strange dream,—of a forsaken country ; of three Europeans toiling painfully with many falls along a torrent bed enclosed in dim forests ; at the head of a small band of men clad in grey blouses to their knees, with loads on their backs, yet still from time to time breaking into song ; followed by a set of half-naked savages adorned with large black wigs, some with foreheads pressed hard against the strap that sustained the burden on their necks, and others moving free. Or would the vision be to them but that of purgatory,—of hapless ones condemned to unrespited struggles through misery to paradise afar ?

Mountain rice culture began to be visible in clearings of the woods, and felled trees laid horizontally here and there assisted the path ; elsewhere, trunks left standing served as miradors above small granaries like bee-hives upon posts. As we drew near to habitations averting emblems reappeared, and we noted a fenced elliptical tomb on which were deposited an earthen vessel, a tube, and some calcined bones. The last suggested the possibility of cremation among the Kioutses of this district. A sword in its sheath hung upon a post, but the weapon was of wood. Examining the representation of articles of which the deceased might have need, I called to mind the graves of South America and ancient Egypt, where are found figures of slaves intended for the service of the departed. These taphic observances could not but attest the resemblance, sundered by many thousands of miles and years, between those of the people of the Pharaohs, the Redskins in America, and these savages of the Irawadi.

Two days which we passed at Pandam sufficed to partially revictual the column, but our stock of salt was exhausted, and we could by no means replenish it nor find an efficient substitute in the pepper or grated ginger of the natives. The circumstance led to a discussion among us as to which was the greater privation, want of salt or tobacco; and on a division I was in the minority



Idiot Woman.

in favour of the latter. Throughout our stay in this village we were on the best of terms with the inhabitants, self-styled Lanouans, but hardly differing from other Kioutse branches. As ill luck would have it, a man was absent who might have served us as an interpreter in the Moam plain, where they declared no one comprehended Kioutse.

From Pandam, which we left on the 15th (November), to Mélekeu the route was good, on easy gradients, and well cleared of brushwood. Except for a slight personal touch of fever, we all felt light-heeled by contrast with our late crawl. Mélekeu was composed of pile houses sometimes 130 feet long, not unlike the Moï dwellings in Annam. The families were separated by bamboo partitions, with a passage of communication. Each compartment was arranged alike—a square hearthstone in the centre, round which the inmates slept; above it a platform supporting a loft, and a sloping roof about 16 feet high, which projected several feet in front over a little terrace, where stood the pestle for husking rice. Round the piles ran a trellis to keep in the pigs. Mélekeu was set in an attractive semicircle of gently retiring hills partly covered with yellow rice clearings: a few large trees, survivors of the primeval forest, dotted the slopes; in the distance the level sunshine smote the line of woods like the head of a repulsed column in every variety of light and shade.

We already had a foretaste of the Moamites (to coin a word) in two copper-coloured men who had joined our party. There was no doubt about their personality; their cotton garments and turban over the hair-knot bespoke them Thaïs. They had come from seeking lead in the mountains, and had with them some Kioutses to carry it.

So the plain of Moam is really peopled by the Thaïs, members of that numerous race which stretches from the Canton River to Assam, while it extends south to the Malay Peninsula. An intelligent, easy-going folk, possessing artistic tastes and a mature caligraphy which in its diffusion has infected the greater part of Indo-China. The two above-mentioned representatives observing us making notes, took a piece of charcoal to show that they also knew how to write.

Among our informants was one who said that from Moam it was a sixteen days' journey to *Atsara (the Thibetan name for* Assam), where there was a big river, and on it boats with houses that went like the wind. Clearly there was a road from Moam into Assam, and we already saw ourselves navigating the Brahmaputra.

The allurement of all the delights awaiting us in Moam led us to set out from Mélekeu on the 16th (November), notwithstanding that Briffaud was lame from a bamboo splinter. Our gaping boots, scarce held together by many a strip of hide, no longer saved our feet. In our impatience for a horizon we made the best of our hobbling speed towards the summit of a col, in view since the preceding night. It was but 5,200 feet; but every step was a slip, each leaf a shower-bath, while overhead the monkeys greeted our efforts with ceaseless mockery. There before us it lay at length; still far away, but revealed. A wide expanse of apparent inundation enveloping lagoons of land; but what to our eyes seemed swamps were no doubt paddy-fields. Upon its farther verge rose folded hills to the ridge of the frontier chain of Assam. What mattered it to us then that fresh snow powdered the distant crests? The plain for which we longed lay between us and them.

We pushed on, leaving the main body of our carriers to follow. At four o'clock in the afternoon we discerned the blue smoke of a habitation, and presently became aware of a noisy gathering under a shed. Chattering, laughing, and gesticulating all at once, a band of almost naked men, women, and children were pressing round a large cauldron. We had lighted upon a Kioutse harvest fête in propitiation of the mountain deity, to whose satisfaction, and their own, copious libation of rice wine was being made. Everyone was merry, most were tipsy. Old men babbled, women playfully pushed each other, a child harangued an aged individual, most

probably its great-grandmother; and on all sides rose a babel of songs and jovial mirth. Yet withal there was nothing brutal in this extraordinary bacchanalian orgy; perfect cordiality reigned throughout.

Imagine the effect on this crew of the sudden apparition of eight figures, strange of feature and in divers garbs, armed and unannounced, dropping from the mountain into their very midst.

Their moment of stupefaction was a short one. Hospitality was evidently in the ascendant. Drink was offered to us, and we were given to understand by signs that they would accompany us to the village. So, under this novel escort, none too steady on their legs, surrounded by a medley of lances, swords, and bamboos, and a hubbub of strange cries, we made a triumphal entry into Délou.

Here we were able to buy rice, fowls, and potatoes; and after passing a somewhat broken night owing to Sao's setting fire to the bamboo screen, and to minor disturbing visitants, we resumed our descent on the 17th (November) at a more deliberate pace. Our next camping ground happened to be on the borders of a tobacco field. The morning light shone upon bare stalks: our men were the locusts. Finding this godsend, they had thanked Providence and fallen to.

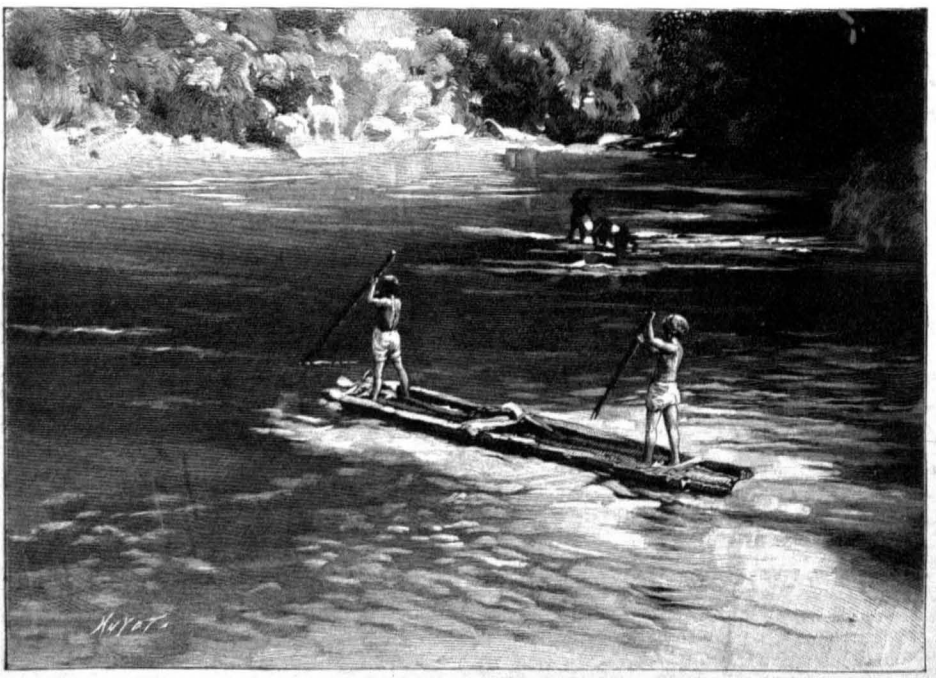
We discoursed with the two men of Moam, previously mentioned, in tags of all the dialects at our command, and learned from them that the country known to the Kioutses by the name of Moam was called Khamti, with a capital named Khamtidon, and they proposed to precede us and announce our coming to the king.

We conjectured that these two Thaïs were deputies of the chief of Khamti, and that the supremacy of the latter embraced the Kioutses of this district, since they were at free quarters in the villages which they entered, and requisitioned carriers with the tone of authority. The lead which they were convoying was in small pigs like those sold at Luang-Prabang, and similar, both

in shape and size, to what are still found in the mines of Laurium, the product of bygone Greek industry;—another strange instance of conformity between an ancient people of advanced civilisation and a savage one of to-day.

On the 18th (November) we stepped out freely along a shady, sloping path, in which the hoof marks of buffalo became increasingly frequent, and just as day was declining emerged all at once upon a rolling sward of close-cropped grass. With cries of astonishment, "Allais! Allais!" our men broke away, and raced each other with their loads towards the camping ground.

The cause of their boyish glee,—what they imprisoned in the deep and narrow gorges of the Kiou-kiang had never in their lives beheld,—what we ourselves had well-nigh forgotten for five months in those pent-up valleys,—was—the level plain!



Passing the Torrent of the Kiou-kiang.