

FROM TONKIN TO INDIA

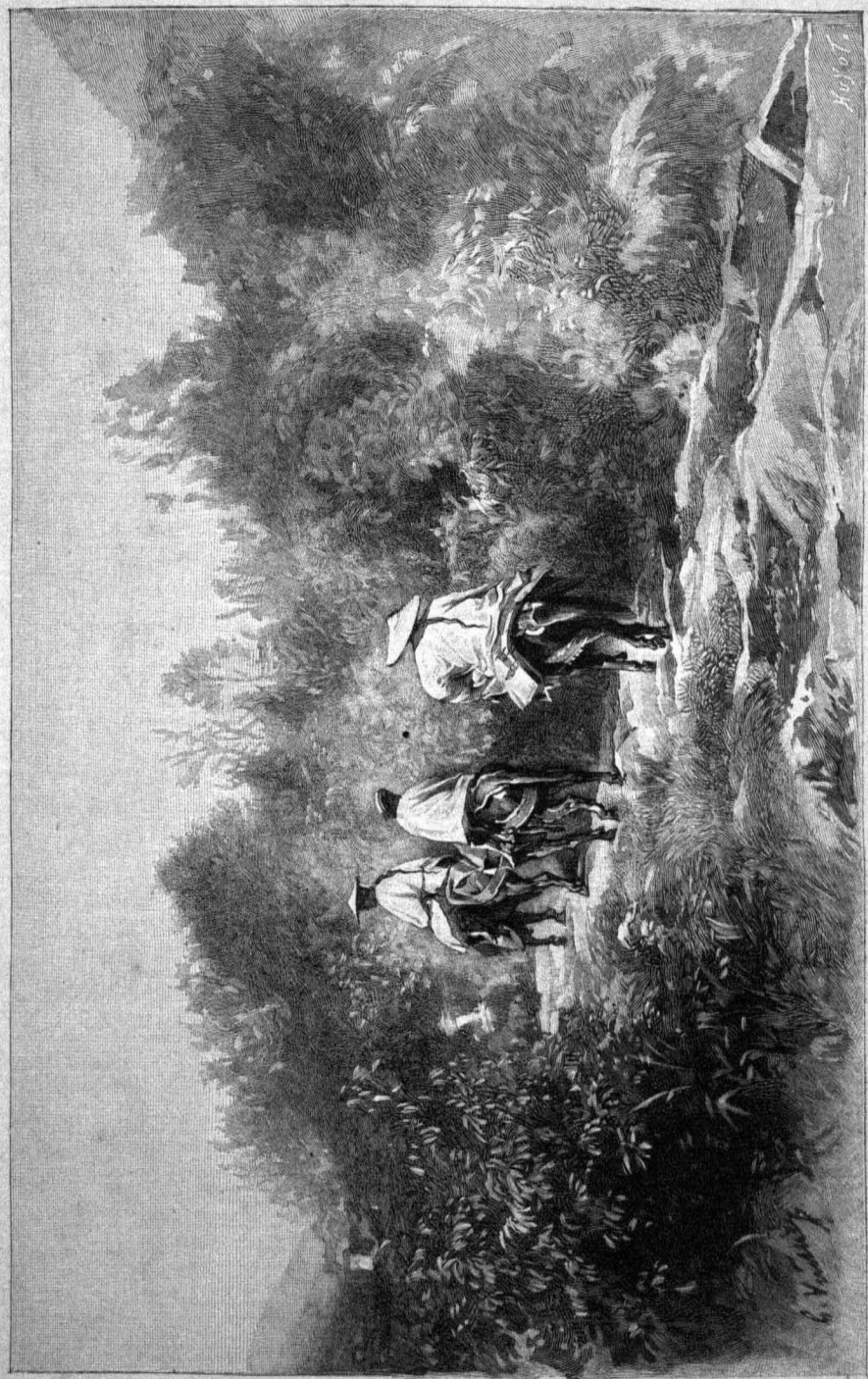
some remembered scene in Japan. Then to sleep: with only the chirp of the cricket and the "takkō-kō-kō" of the lizards round us.

Two more stages and we should arrive at Isa; the road became more frequented, as was shown by stone water-troughs for the caravans under little wayside shelters. We met strings of mules laden with salt, and other merchandise is taken down the river in small 16-foot boats, which descend in convoys. At the rapids the flotilla stops, the crews take to the water, and pass each cargo through in turn.

Our rate of progress was slow, for the animals were tired. One of the mules being hardly able to stagger on, the makotou bled it from the tongue, and burnt a rag under its nose, which caused a discharge from its nostrils; he then made the animal inhale some powdered pimento placed on glowing charcoal, and finally forced it to swallow a black drug called kouizen. After which attentions the mule revived sufficiently to proceed.

In the afternoon of the 13th (March) we came in sight of Isa. I have seen few things more cheerful than the aspect of this little town. Crowning the hills and set in the verdure of the valleys, it enclosed its tiers of white-roofed houses within walls which the bamboo and larger trees chequered with their shadows in the sunlight. Beneath it, in the plain, ran the river; on the right bank, rice-fields dotted with villages; on the left, the range that we now forsook, which reared its bare crags as a background to the richness of this little oasis.

It was opposite Isa that Garnier descended. The town contains some thousands of inhabitants, and has a brisk trade. Salt comes from Mohei (near Pou-eul-Fou), sugar from Tong-hai, tobacco from Canton through Manhao, and other goods from



Woodland Path.



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Yuenkiang. They told us, also, of an ancient copper mine in the river valley, now disused.

We had the luck to fail in our quest of an inn, so camped in the midst of the tombs on a mound topped by a polygonal stone kiosk, which now contained nothing but a few joss-sticks: it made us a good kitchen. The populace was almost exclusively Chinese, and the gapers were as numerous as usual in that race. A few of them, however, betook themselves from contemplation of us to flying kites, which rose to a great height, and produced a strange humming through a tube tied to the tail. In the same way, the Chinese have a habit of fastening a musical pipe under the tail-feathers of their pigeons. All these loafing fellows were a nuisance, though not hostile as at Setchuen. They did not resent our scattering them, but settled again immediately like flies.

From Isa to Ta-lan was said to be eight stages, at the fifth of which we should rejoin the highway from Yuenkiang, unless a short cut should allow of our avoiding the known routes.

Having, therefore, replenished our commissariat and disappointed the wily François, who sought to inveigle us into staying by the tale of a wondrous dragon with a jewel in its head, that we might undoubtedly capture in the vicinity, we set forward on the following day, and, leaving the main road on our right, bade farewell to the river valley, and directed our course to the west. I preceded the main body with Sao, but, owing to the native ignorance of Chinese, our inquiries as to the route met with the invariable response of "Ma chai" ("I can't say"). Eventually, a Chinese innkeeper put us right, and we reached our intended halting-place, a village called Souto. The people were Lolos again, and while waiting for the rest of the party I conversed

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with them by signs, showed them my field-glasses, and asked for manuscripts. They indicated that they had none. François was of no help to me in these researches, as he ignored the existence of Lolo writings, and regarded my efforts as a harmless eccentricity. According to him, the Houé-dzeu alone, the abstainers from pig, had other characters than the Chinese.

While thus engaged with the villagers the day declined, and still no caravan. We decided to retrace our steps, but night overtook us at the entrance to a wood. It seemed more prudent to stop, as we had before us a solitary dwelling where earlier in the day we had asked the way. Accordingly we knocked, but, getting no answer save the barking of a dog, I pushed open the gate and entered the courtyard. A shrivelled beldame accosted us, and in trembling accents conjured us to go away, repeating incessantly the familiar phrase, "Ma chai." As it was black as pitch outside, I bade Sao pacify the old woman, which he proceeded to do by patting her on the shoulder and pouring out a string of Chinese and Laotian patois. The dialogue had been begun by the light of a match which I struck; I now lit a wisp of straw, which the hag no sooner saw than, thinking we were going to burn down her hovel, she trampled on it with her bare feet in great alarm. At this juncture a ragged old man appeared on the scene. He had more wits than the grandam, and presently the matter seemed in a fair way of settlement. An oil lamp was produced, some straw shaken down for our beds, and we unsaddled the horses and laid aside our arms. Meanwhile disquieting shouts were heard without, accompanied by dropping shots from the direction of the village. "Pou pa" ("don't fear"), said the man; but I was far from feeling reassured; and as the tumult increased I stepped out into the yard, making signs at the same time that

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he should sally forth and interview the rioters. A long silence showed that a parley was being held. I took my stand in the court with Sao, who did not lose his *sang froid*. Of a sudden, about a dozen men burst in armed with guns, 12-foot lances, swords, and tridents. The Hou-Nis (for as such I at once recognised them) were led by a man brandishing a torch, and from their threatening gestures seemed about to fall on; their pieces were at the shoulder and their fingers uncomfortably close to the triggers. I had slipped

my revolver into my pocket and loaded my gun, determined not to sell my skin for nothing; though, caught in a trap as we were, we were pretty sure of our quietus if they attacked. In this crisis Sao surprised me by his cool courage for an Annamite. Knowing that,

bad as his Chinese was, it would come better from an Asiatic than my gibberish, I left the speaking to him. Our old emissary had by this time prudently made himself scarce. In rough tones the leader of the band invited me to begone. This was not our intention, so we replied by making signs that we were hungry, and to show a firm front began to sweep a space in the court for a fire. Then Sao had an inspiration. Although he could not speak Chinese, he could write it. The yard served as a spacious slate, and he forthwith



A Hou-Ni.

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proceeded to describe our situation with his finger in the sand. As soon as one phrase was comprehended, he rubbed it out and traced another. The Hou-Ni chief then made answer by the same medium, with the help of a word or two of Laotian. The position which a moment before had looked ugly was altered,—each had taken the other for robbers. Our wild gang now was tamed, and for a small sum of money brought us eggs and rice and straw mattresses. Still they seemed reluctant to leave us, and four or five hung about our sleeping quarters with their arms in their hands, casting covetous eyes on my gun. The one who had appeared their head observing me taking notes, asked me, through Sao, to write some words for him to hang up at the foot of an image in his house. At length they withdrew, and, worn out with fatigue, I slept. At daylight we felt very glad to be once more in the saddle; the overnight scene of the courtyard filled with savage faces lit up by the torchlight had left a sufficiently vivid impression. But for my Annamite's presence of mind anything might have happened; the least hesitation would have lost us our lives.

We found our troop installed in a pagoda in the village of Souto-tia. The monthly feast of Buddha was in progress. Women were on their knees with clasped hands before the figure of a fat god; its features wore an expression of perfect bestiality, and in one hand was placed a garland, in the other a scroll. The worshippers accompanied their chant with bells or sticks, and from time to time prostrated themselves in front of the altars, on which were burning perfumes, bowls of rice, tamarind seeds, and other offerings. In Souto I at last succeeded in laying hands on two Lolo manuscripts, in exchange for some money, a looking-glass, and a pair of scissors.

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We resumed our march in company with five Chinese on horseback, and twenty men on foot armed with matchlocks, spears, and tridents, who formed the escort of a minor mandarin on his way to chastise some Hou-Ni rebels. The natives hereabouts had a reputation for lawlessness; most of them carried weapons and employed their spare time in brigandage, of which spirit we had evidence at a village from which the inhabitants issued and with angry menaces forbade us entry.

The landscape began to change. We had left the region of rice-fields for confused mountains covered with brake and brush-wood, and were approaching the divergence of the Red and Black Rivers. At Ta-yang-ka the headman told us of a path followed by caravans coming from Ibang, which passed through Muong-le without rejoining the main Ta-lan road. We decided to take it, and this time our men obeyed without much demur. They began to recognise our determination, of which they had received a fresh proof. Up to this point the makotou had paid the mafous, deducting half a taël for food from the seven taëls per man which he drew from us. We now learned that the rogue had been in the habit of handing his subordinates only five taëls. Upon their complaint, I promised for the future to pay them direct.

To the men originally engaged at Mongtse we had now and then, as occasion served, added another as guide. A young Lolo, who at this time was acting in that capacity, proved intelligent, and furnished me with some facts regarding the Païs. By his account they are divided into four sorts—

(1) The *Chui-Païs*; distinguishing mark, black trousers and blue vest in the women.

(2) The *Kin-Païs*; hair twisted into a knot like a horn, sleeve-cuffs gathered in at wrists.

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(3) The *Pé-Païs*, or White Païs; women—black trousers, white vest.

(4) The *Hé-Païs*, or Black Païs; women wear skirt instead of trousers, and a waistcoat; men in dark blue.

He averred that the Hou-Nis had no writing like the Lolos. They reckon numbers by means of parallel lines; thus, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., and are only conversant with two characters, signifying 100 and 200 respectively. But the Hou-Nis and the Lolos understand each other in speech, indeed their vocables revealed many similarities of sound. This particular guide styled himself a Heï-Lolo; farther west are found the Pé-Lolos. The Miaotses, too, have a writing. It is well known that M. Devéria found, in a published Chinese work, a page the characters of which were ascribed to the Miaotses. We met women here clad only in a sort of bathing costume, with a loose open vest. Their hair was parted behind, and drawn forward in two bands to form a top-knot, protected with a copper sheath. They were said to belong to the Heï-Hou-Nis. I remembered a like head-dress among the independent Lolos of Setchuen, whom the missionaries called "Licornes."

Beyond Ta-yang-ka we were enveloped in a Scotch mist, with the thermometer down to 46° Fahr. The Chinese who paid us a visit carried a small basket containing an earthen vessel filled with hot charcoal. Some of them concealed this Sybaritic warming-pan under their garments, and looked as if they were deformed. At Lou-tchou we bore away pleasant recollections of the hospitality of the chief, who insisted on killing a pig in our honour, and gave me a jade cup as a souvenir. I also acquired copious information, costumes, and some manuscripts.

The chief was a toussou in command of a hundred men, nomi-

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nated by the Chinese mandarin at Yuenkiang, and dependent for his pay on farming the taxes of the district. In the dialect of this part the Lolos are called Nesous—a name met with by the traveller Bourne in other parts of Yünnan and Setchuen, and by ourselves much farther on. Hence Nesou should be taken as a subdivision of the general designation Lolo among the peoples of China. These Nesous were established about five hundred years ago, under Ming-Ia (at the end of the Ming dynasty), from Tiang-Neu (Nang-king). This coming of the Lolos from the East was confirmed to us later. On the other hand, we met with universal testimony that when they first came to Yünnan they found the Hou-Nis already settled there. Nowhere did I hear any other place of origin assigned to the latter than Yünnan. Wishing to affirm that they were the aborigines of Yünnan, the toussou told me that the Hou-Nis had been in this province for over three thousand years. He divided them into—

Heï-Hou-Nis,

Dé-Hou-Nis,

Lami-Hou-Nis,

Bana-Hou-Nis,

the last two not being found in this region. Polygamy is prevalent among the Lolos, but divorce is not admitted. The custom noted by Rocher, according to which the married woman quits her husband for several months after first cohabitation, was not in force here. Marriage is solemnised by drums and trumpets and killing of fowls, but there is no religious ceremony. Particulars as to creeds were always hard to obtain, especially with a bad interpreter like ours. But I gathered that the Lolos believed in spirits, in one more powerful than all, in heaven and hell, and in the existence and transmigration of

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souls. They have books of prayer; and though they do not build temples, they erect little bamboo altars in the woods. They sing and dance, and the dates of their feasts are generally marked in the Chinese calendar. The climate of this part is cold in winter, ice even being seen in December. Deer and

small game abound in the mountains, which, as far as the inhabitants knew, have no mines. The female costumes which we bought deserve mention, being peculiar for a long sort of cassock with red sleeves, the corsage worked with handsome arabesques in black, white, and red, disclosing, when open, a small embroidered vest.



Lolo Woman.

It is from these varied hues that the Lolos probably derive the name Koua-Lolos (Lolos of colour). The throat was encircled by a band with a silver clasp, and the head by a turban, the ends of which were brought round in front and ornamented with silver studs, while large ear-rings of the same metal completed the

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whole. Manuscripts were plentiful at Lou-tchou, and they brought me some very fine illuminated ones. The characters are still in use, employed in property contracts in duplicate with Chinese. A more learned native than most agreed to make a translation for me, and said the Lolo caligraphy contained three hundred letters and signs, and was read from the top of the page to the bottom, and from left to right.

We quitted Lou-tchou in thick fog by a route following for the most part the crests of the hills through low woods, where red and white rhododendrons alternated. Primitive bee-hives furnished us with welcome honey in hollow trunks stopped with clay and bored through the middle. The route being fairly frequented, we met quantities of tea and cotton, the former sometimes wrapped in bamboo leaves; most of the muleteers were armed with tridents, and as the caravans travelled in large convoys their appearance was sufficient to overawe robbers. Despite the bad weather, our men kept up well. François, draped in a long blue cloak, under a round grey hat, looked from behind like a town-clock; on the march he sat his pony like a statue, mute and erect; only after dinner was his tongue loosed, and he would condescend to interrogate the natives.

Among our mafous was one, a lad of twelve, accompanying his father, whose frank expression and cheery "cheulo" ("all right") quite gained our hearts; even when he rapped out the customary "malépi," the imprecation seemed to lose half its ugliness. It was deplorable to think that this boy was doomed to so short a childhood, and that ere long he would inevitably become a confirmed opium-smoker, and acquire with their passions all the corruption of his elders. Among the Hou-Ni villages around the greatest squalor prevailed, and the wretched inhabitants lived in constant

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terror of tigers, which even invaded their hovels, and had recently carried off two men : we ourselves met many traces of these animals for several days. Our surroundings, however, improved by the 19th (March), when we were on the descent into the valley of the La-niou-ho, an affluent of the Lysiang-kiang, or Black River ; within five miles of which gold was said to be found. The fog



Woman at Ngapa.

cleared off ; instead of forest, we had rice or poppy fields, terraced villages amid Indian fig-trees festooned with gigantic creepers or covered with hairy orchids, and open tracts of moss-grown rocks and fern. The air was scented with orange blossom and alive with æthyopiga of brilliant hue : through such scenery, typical of Upper Tonkin, we made the stage to Ngapa. One could not but be struck with the degradation of the women of this district : with scarcely a rag to cover them, they were here, as in Thibet, little better

than beasts of burden, the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

A cotton caravan met us here, coming from a region beyond the tea plantations, eighteen days distant. The cotton is bought at eight taëls the pecul,¹ and sold for fourteen. This commodity might with advantage be sent by us from Tonkin.

¹ Pecul=about 133 lbs.

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The dampness of the climate caused Briffaud a slight attack of fever, and we had no desire to stay in the neighbourhood; but one morning, as we were about to make an early start, we discovered that a case containing provisions and a cape of mine was missing. We had passed the night in a solitary hut, whose



Feeding the Prisoner.

only tenants were four natives. As neither threats nor careful search revealed the box, we resolved on drastic measures, and proceeded to make two of them captives, to be carried off as hostages. Accordingly their hands were tied behind their backs, without a sign of opposition on their parts. The one female in

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the hovel fed them before their departure, and nothing more comic can be conceived than to see this brace of goitred imbeciles on their knees receiving beakfuls of food from their nurse. This done, the column set forward.

Wild camellias abounded by the way, and with the change of flora I observed also new fauna, scarlet paroquets and birds of turquoise blue. Plants and insects were of no less brilliance, and it was interesting to note the law of adaptation and protective colour that everywhere exists. Our quadrupeds were jaded: my own horse, skittish enough at the start, was now dead beat; every few yards he stopped, and could hardly be induced to move although I dismounted and endeavoured to drag him forward. There was still one more hill before us; this time he could not breast it. Down he went. Outstretched limbs and glazing eye showed all was over. Often as I had had to lose other animals, it cost me a pang to leave behind this good servant, whose final struggles had not quite availed to land him at the stage's end.

Dinner over, I examined our prisoners. Miserable tattered objects they were: one maimed and embellished with a huge goitre like the pouch of a pelican; the other halt and with his eyes bulging out of his head. They might have been fugitives from the Court of Miracles, fit to figure in one of Victor Hugo's dramas. Just now, having had a meal and a smoke, they were helping our mafous, who promptly seized so rare a chance of getting their work done for them. As it rained heavily and a rest was imperative for the mules, we decided on a stoppage for a day. The captives were released,—of course, without the recovery of the box,—and they went their way home quite contented. They had been well treated, and for very little would

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have stayed with us of their own choice. The goitred one even gave us guttural thanks, prefacing every word with a sort of bellow.

Again we were in the vicinity of Lolos; and by showing those that we had already, made purchase of more manuscripts. I was promised one upon linen, which would have been valuable as older than the others, but, unhappily, this I never got. Sao saw in a house a belt made of the skin of a tiger, cut off the chest from paw to paw, leaving one claw on each. Such a waistband, the Annamites say, is a good preventive to stomach ills, and the Lolos attach the same efficacy to it. These tribesmen were still of the Koua Lolos. They came in a century ago from Chiping on the Yünnan-Sen side, and maintained a worship of the Péti (Deity). Their garments were of home-made cotton, stained with a blue dye from Lotsen. From them we heard of "black dogs" in the neighbouring mountains that climbed trees: query, bears?

On the 22nd (March) we came to the right brink of a rushing torrent called the La-niou-ho, which was pronounced impassable by the guide, who found the water up to his neck at the ford. The sight of a collection of armed villagers on the far side did not serve to encourage our men, and the makotou was for staying where we were till the waters should decrease. As I saw no reason for expecting this, but rather the reverse, Roux and I put our animals at it, and got over with some difficulty. The mules were then dragged through by strings of five at a time, the men keeping on their lee side to push their heads up stream. Only one broke adrift and was swept down a rapid which was below: we hardly thought to recover him, but being without his load he came through somehow, and at the end of three-quarters of an hour we all mustered safe on the left

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bank. I kept the photographic materials dry by taking them on my head; and Nam, who loved not horseback, did the same for the collecting gun by holding it at arm's-length above his head. Thus Camoëns swam with the "Lusiad" in his hand; only our cook was not a poet, and thought most of his pipe and his pot, after his own skin.

We slept that and several succeeding nights among some Hounis, tormented by legions of fleas that recalled Madagascar. The inhabitants were uniformly hospitable, and this tribe pronounced themselves in their own dialect Han. The women had their lower teeth stained with a scarlet dye made from a tree called sena. There were no musical instruments nor writing amongst them, they did not dance, and they prayed to a superior being whom they called Ponkhu, and to whom they erected small bamboo altars. In proportion as we neared the Black River the country became more cheerful, with a formation of sandstone or slaty schist. The hills were clothed with tufts of feathery bamboos or deeper groves of fig-trees, with roots exposed like feelers of a giant polypus, and with a species of palm the head of which expanded in a sheaf of wind-tossed dark green leaves less formal than ordinary. Other trees, again, were laden with violet-tinted, sweet-smelling blossoms, which almost hid their stems.

We should have enjoyed this part more had it not been for renewed trouble with our mafous. They were slack, and we had to hurry them up, with the result that three, including the little urchin and his father, deserted. Their defection had a bad effect on the others, and we were constrained to lessen their baggage duties, and to talk freely of the gratuity with which those that remained loyal would be able to make merry when we got to Ssumao. That haven of delight was not now very far distant, and they would be

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singularly short-sighted to forego such a chance for want of a final effort. The majority of them saw it in this light, and held on.



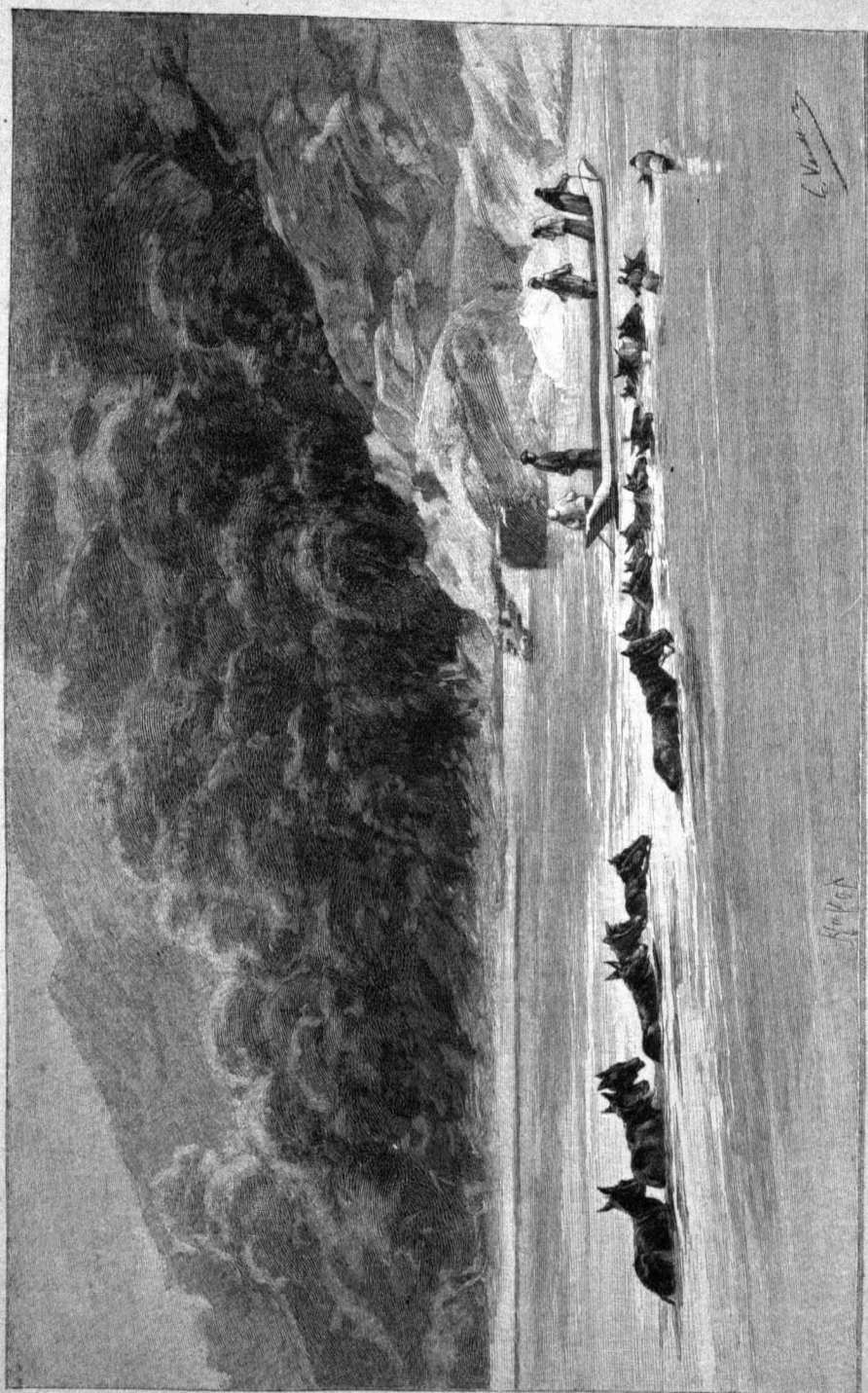
Hatous.

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The Hatous were the next new folk amongst whom we found ourselves. They resembled the Hou-Nis in their sombre dress, but, in addition to the usual silver ornaments, the women wore cowries or pearls pendent from large ear-rings, which were linked by a light chain under the chin. They were all very partial to tobacco, which they smoked in small wooden pipes with silver chains; one stalwart old woman offered me three eggs for a pinch of it: her upright carriage, with the energetic expression of her bronzed and wrinkled face and restless eyes beneath her turban, gave her a mien of barbaric wildness that suggested something almost uncanny behind the mask. These Hatous, whose speech was akin to that of the Hou-Nis, came here twenty-nine years ago from Ouang-Tchang (near Xieng-houng), a small town not far from Tali, and regretted their migration, which they would gladly retrace had they the means. They had no priests, but worshipped the deities of sky, earth, house, and mountain, as well as ancestors up to the third generation, and they disbelieved in evil spirits.

The mountains harboured here wild boar, deer, roebuck, porcupines, and tigers. The black panther is also to be found. I bought a skin from two men, who called it *hélaofu* (black tiger), and held that it was the latter and no panther. However this may be, I believe this is the first occasion when this colour has been cited in these regions.

We reached the left bank of the Black River on the 26th (March), and found a volume of turgid water rolling down, in breadth about eighty-seven yards, between wooded hills of less height than those which confine the Song-Coï. Its colour contrasted with the clear torrent we had lately been following, but by the time it reaches Tonkin it has lost its reddish tint. The Black River, known here as the Lysiang-Kiang, higher as the Papien, and lower as the Song-



Passage of the Lysiang-Kiang, or Black River.



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Bo, passes, in less than a week's journey below where we stood, Muong-le (Lai-chau). The natives talked of Tonkin, to the dispiriting of Sao, who imagined that by embarking here on a raft we might be back there in a week. Nam, too, whose geographical knowledge was of the vaguest, and placed Saigon close by, thought he must be near home. They both wondered where in the world we were taking them, and what possible object we could have in wandering about such uninviting and monotonous countries.

The passage of the river was easily accomplished by relays in a long pirogue, only two of the beasts requiring to be towed over, and the rest beginning quite to take to swimming.

In leaving the Black River I too threw a regretful glance behind me, like my Annamites, though my motive was not theirs. The knowledge of the life of a part of India, of Central Asia, embracing several hundred million beings, was becoming intelligible to my perception. For the moment I yielded to the witchery of Nirvana. . . .

But at night we were rudely recalled to the realities of life by an unforeseen peril. Under the pretext that tigers were in the vicinity, our men set a light to the brushwood round our hut. It was too late to check them, and presently we were walled in with a ring-fence of roaring flame, which, if it saved us candles to write by, also only missed the destruction of our persons and property by the providential absence of the least wind.

We reached Muong-le on the 28th (March); the later stages having been performed over a paved and widened road through a pretty country positively homelike in its foliage and grassy slopes. One might almost have imagined oneself in some corner of France, until by a turn of the path one came upon a mud-walled village with yellow roofs in a clearing of cane-brake and

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palm grove. Down on the level the sun struck bright on the streams that watered the rice-fields and bananas, and the butterflies and birds of gaudy hues reminded us that we were not in northern latitudes. Muong-le proved to be a small town of less importance than Isa, wholly Chinese, and built on a slight hill in the centre of a plain, with the usual characteristics of wood or plastered houses. We found good quarters in a sufficiently clean granary belonging to an inn. The inhabitants lost no time in telling us that two Frenchmen had been here only a few months before, coming from Lai-chau. It was not difficult from their description to identify one of these as Pavie, even had they not held his name in remembrance; the other was mentioned as wearing epaulettes, and was known to the Chinese as Ma. Here, as everywhere in my travels where I crossed his track, I was struck by the admirable impression Pavie had left on the people with whom he came in contact. The French cause in Indo-China has reason to be grateful to this pioneer for the esteem in which the name of France is held. It was always a matter of regret to me that I did not meet his expedition, to shake hands with fellow-workers in our common aim. We congratulated ourselves on the intersection of our respective routes, however, so that each in his research would fill in many blanks on the map of the region extending from the Chinese Song-Coï to the Mekong.

During our thirty-six hours' stay at Muong-le our relations with the inhabitants and the mandarin were excellent. We exchanged visits of courtesy and presents with the military commandant, "litajen." Nor did the crowd incommode us as at Isa. As the 29th was market-day we were able to gain much insight into the trade of the district. Skins of panthers, at one taël apiece, were common, also of the wild cat and ant-eater. I

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noticed at a druggist's the head of a two-horned rhinoceros, which had been killed four miles from here. The chief native industry is a black cotton stuff, of which quantities hung before the houses to dry. Other cotton is brought from Xieng-houng, and retailed at thirteen taëls the pecul; salt from Makai; sugar in round sticks from the neighbourhood, where the cane is cultivated, and sold at twenty-four sapecks the Chinese kilo.

The European articles of import are English needles, coloured silks from Yünnan-Sen, and French metal buttons from Canton. The natives also sell minute cherries, a species of freshwater shell-fish, tea of the district in small cylinders, rice, joss-sticks, tobacco from the adjacent country in twist and in leaf, the tender sprouts of the bamboo maize and ginger as delicacies, and vegetables. I also saw chintz from Chu-ping, wooden combs, pipe-stems, and flints. Little opium is to be seen in the outskirts of the place; it is introduced in large quantities from Xieng-houng or Mien-ling. It is not easy to gauge the caravan traffic, but from what I heard I should estimate it to average about five hundred mules a month, except in the three rainy ones.

We were off again on the morning of the 30th (March). The rest was useful and necessary, but emphasised the undesirability of staying in towns by an episode among our mafous that might have turned to drama, and clearly instanced the Chinese character. The evening before we started the makotou discovered the loss of a packet of money from the chest in which he had placed it. Suspicion fell on a mafou called Manhao, who had hitherto given no cause for dissatisfaction. Forthwith the makotou, without reference to us, warning, or proof, mustered the other mafous, and with their help bound the suspect tightly to a post. In this position they left the poor devil for the night,

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despite his protestations and howls. And among all his fellows who for a whole month had travelled with him, eaten with him, and toiled with him, there was not one who would lift a finger against this injustice. They are a cowardly and cruel set, this yellow race, always ready in their cold selfishness to combine against the weak, and each satisfied if by finding a scapegoat he can secure himself. La Rochefoucauld ought to have written his maxims for the Chinese; he would never have been in error. In the early morning Manhao came with lamentations to us, showing his swollen arms. I have little doubt he was as bad as the rest, and would have acted himself in a precisely similar fashion had the occasion offered; but for the moment he was the plaintiff, and our investigations only established the fact that there was absolutely no evidence against him. After having angrily reprimanded the makotou, to his intense astonishment, we required him to take care of the accused. The epilogue to this little drama was to disclose itself a few days later.

The two first stages after leaving Muong-le were particularly uninteresting, at the foot of the hills rice, and on the flanks villages, thatched and unclean. We slept among Païs who had nothing original. The only incident of the march was a kick which one of the mules obligingly lent me in the face. I escaped with a grazed eyebrow, but it might have been different. It was not without envy that we saw buffaloes driven into the villages at nightfall; but we could neither make acquaintance with their flesh nor with the milk of the cows: ever the eternal rice and eggs, fowls, and occasional pork. On the 1st April, in the afternoon, we had made our customary halt for a bite and a rest, when just as we were about to resume, a tremendous storm, which had lowered for some time in the hills, burst over us. Lightning, thunder, wind, rain, hail,—

FROM MONGTSE TO SSUMAO

big guns and mitrailleuses,—nothing was lacking; the hailstones were as large as pigeons' eggs. Most curious was the aspect of the caravan, as, cloaked in my ample waterproof with my shoulders stooped to the deluge and my sight half obscured beneath my hat brim, I endeavoured to take in my surroundings. With ears laid back and tails between their legs the animals scattered, driven by the blast and lashed by the hail, the men running hither and thither in vain effort to collect them. Others of the mafous cowered beneath their blankets, without which, in sober earnest, the hail would have been dangerous. I felt the stones rattle round my ears, and saw naked limbs receiving a far more lively impress of their sting. Soon the faces of the men began to show long lines of red like bleeding scars, the dye was running from inside their caps in streaks upon their visages. As for our two Annamites, bewilderment possessed them, the phenomenon was altogether unfamiliar; they tried one or two of the hailstones with their tongues, and then, as the projectiles grew bigger and the wind increased, surrendered themselves to rigid immobility, like capuchins beneath their cowls.

The tempest ceased as suddenly as it began. The scared sun looked forth, and turned the hailstones into iridescent gems, or walnuts sparkling with crystals. "What a pity," soliloquised Nam, "that one cannot preserve them!"

Within a quarter of an hour the little stream that before had trickled was a roaring torrent, and we recognised that this route must be impracticable in the rains. The surface became soft and treacherous, and we had to wade through pools widening over oozy ground in which the animals sank to their girths. Each instant saw a load upset into the mud; the men scarce knew when to give the mules their heads, and, to crown all, the path became so narrow that they had to prick them from behind to make them move forward with

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their burdens. Amid these difficulties François suffered most. He urged his pony at the mire, and promptly tumbled into the river. Knowing full well he would get no sympathy from us, he bore him-

self with offended dignity, much enhanced by the lamentable state of his once showy velvet boots, and gravely climbing on to his little grey was presently trotting ahead in search of a camping ground. We succeeded at length, without much knowing how, in reaching an insignificant Chinese village, where two scanty rooms were grudgingly assigned us after prepayment. However, a proper bath soon made amends for the April fool's washing we had already undergone.



François.

As the rain was over I sallied out to investigate, and hard by came to a large tree in a hollow, with a small altar at its foot. The platform was supported by uprights and cross pieces, and at its sides were arranged some peeled wands, with a bamboo trellis

FROM MONGTSE TO SSUMAO

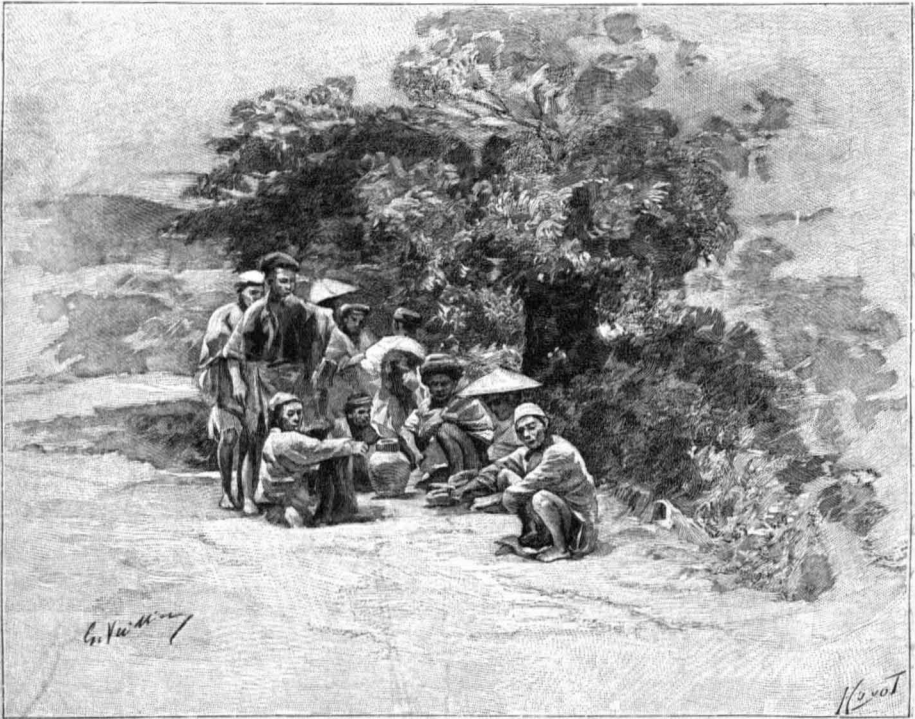
against the trunk; the whole structure being thoroughly Laotian. As I surveyed this mark of reverence to some woodland deity, my thoughts reverted to a like worship paid by our ancestors, the Gauls, to the genii of the forests. It is not one of the least interesting studies of the traveller to trace thus among the savage races of to-day the past history of people now advanced in civilisation. By self-same paths our forefathers set out. Here, separated by thousands of years and hundreds of leagues, one could detect a common starting-point for races of mankind dissimilar in manners as in feature. Might we not look to find as we journeyed westward away from China proper and penetrated the abodes of men still more remote from the fringe of civilisation,—just as in the islands north of Japan or in the higher latitudes of Siberia,—habits and scenes from the iron epoch, nay, even from the age of stone . . . ?

A tedious gradual ascent and the crossing of a spur led us on the 2nd (April) to the edge of the basin of the Mekong River. A deep valley lay at our feet, but in the swathing mist it seemed to our eyes one vast void. Our men showed an inclination to stop short at a village on the pretext that there was not another for twenty miles, but we made them proceed: a roof of stars was preferable to a grimy shelf. It was not until 6.30 p.m. that we came in touch of water, and by it pitched our tent. Later, Briffaud and the "Doctor," as Roux had been dubbed at Tonkin, employed themselves by the light of an opium lamp, which we used to economise candles, in working out our longitude by an observation of the moon and Jupiter. We had to-day accomplished three hundred and twelve miles of exploration. We could not have guessed at Manhao that we should reach Ssumao by an entirely new route. Our journey had thus had unforeseen development,

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and by continuing in the same way we might hope to accomplish good results.

All the next day we were descending into the valley, the base of which could be seen to be cultivated with rice and tobacco by Païs. In the evening (3rd April) we celebrated the five-hundredth kilomètre by a great feast, washed down by Sparkling Rivulet



Halt of our Men.

and Old Crusted Pump, and crowned by coffee and cigars. A grand concert concluded the proceedings, and we felt almost like home. Before turning in we had a long moonlight chat ; plans were discussed, maps brought out, and books consulted ; our imagination spanned valleys and overleaped mountains in the Far West of our hopes ; and lest we should lose the least portion of our airy dreams, sleep stole upon us as we talked.

FROM MONGTSE TO SSUMAO

Upon the 4th (April) we crossed the river, successfully accomplished, and enlivened by a difference between Chantzeu (Roux's man) and his steed, which ended in the quadruped having the last word. Chantzeu led off by selecting the deepest spot in the stream; the horse, after nearly losing its footing, refused the opposite bank, and bore its rider back to the starting-point. Again they crossed, and again fell out; this time Chantzeu came off in mid-stream, and got a most desirable ducking. But his blood was now up, and he started to drag his recalcitrant mount behind him. It was no good: neither blows nor kicks nor a litany of "malépis" availed; and it was only by the intervention of the others that the unvanquished combatants, a queer conglomerate of two creatures,—I had almost said beasts,—with but half a brain between them, were towed across together on the same bridle.

We breakfasted in the midst of a charming landscape. Pine-clad hills stood round in a semicircle, with villages clinging to their curves. On the mound where we were a grove protected a hut, within which was an altar built of three upright stones upon a bank of earth. Feathers of fowls, and bamboo tubes containing half-burnt joss-sticks, were stuck before it, relics of a former sacrifice. This little temple was probably the common property of the several hamlets in sight. The situation was a fine one, and as much by its position as by its surroundings reminded me of the locality in the outskirts of Huë, where may be seen the wonderful tombs of the Emperors of Annam. This pleasant scenery continued on the morrow; the mountains, bare on their eastern, were wooded on their western slopes, with a stunted growth of gnarled trees, like oak and chestnut, on the heights, and a ranker, semi-tropical vegetation of curtained creepers in the torrent beds below. We rested for the night in Po-tso, an attractive place, where the

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buildings were new and cleanly. The chief industry of its Chinese occupants was the making of the spirit called "tchaotiou" of rice or barley, so that a mild exhilaration soon displayed itself among our men. In rear of the village was a clearing, planted with cabbage, lettuce, turnips, fennel, and pumpkins, the soil in many cases being propped by horizontal tree trunks or hollow bamboo stems, which also served as aqueducts. The side walks were shaded by palms, pomegranates, bananas, and orange-trees, carefully tended. The Chinese certainly are first-rate market-gardeners.

On the 6th (April) Ssumao was reported as only twenty-four miles distant. I therefore sent on François and the makotou, nothing loth, to secure quarters. Our mafous were ready to be off by 8.15 a.m.,—a treat to behold,—mules saddled, packs corded, and no useless palaver; our rôles were reversed,—it was they who hurried us now. One day more, and then pay, brandy, opium, and leisure to enjoy their dissipation. From the number of basket-laden peasants we met in the course of our approach to the town, it must have been market-day; buffaloes there were, too, swinging wooden bells with outside clappers like those in Laos. The region here seemed to be warmer, and, besides the commoner rice and scented white rhododendron, aloes reappeared, which we had not seen since our entry into the province of Yünnan.

At a turn of the road Ssumao came in sight. Instinctively we drew a deep breath as we saw stretched before us a wide plain, such as we last looked on at Mongtse, in the centre of which the town rose on a gentle acclivity. A haze hung over it, through which an indistinct impression was received of white walls, grey roofs, and darker verdure, with detached pagodas amid groves of large trees upon the summit. Between us and the town lay spread

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the accustomed graveyard, with little mounds like molehills, and here and there a single column; not, as in the capital, a forest of upright stones. We followed a path through level rice-fields and narrow dikes, and presently arrived at our rest-house in the suburbs.

CHAPTER III

SSUMAO TO TALI

Stay at Ssumao—Civility of the Mandarin—Troubles with our Men—We start for the West—Mules Stolen—Among the Païs—The Mekong—The Lochais—Dayakeu—Theft of Roux's Baggage—Disappearance of Nam—Lolo Dances—Roux's Digression on the Mekong Right Bank—Crossing of the Sé-kiang—The Pou Mas—Linguen, a Pretty Valley—Near the Salwen Basin—Stop at Mienning—Ruse of our Followers—The Makotou Stabbed—Chinese Character—Mong-Ma—Dismissal of François—A Mutiny Averted—Yünchou—Elephants—Chunning-Fou—Bridge over the Mekong—Valley of the Yang-pi—Plain of Mêng-hua-ting—Lake of Tali (Er'hai)—Arrival at Tali-Fou.

WE remained at Ssumao four days, undergoing rather than enjoying a well-earned rest for man and beast, in about as indifferent a lodging as was possible. It was a kind of caravanseraï composed of a series of courts round a centre block containing a number of cells all on the ground floor. The first night I occupied a corner one, the walls of which were literally crenelated by rats, who performed such a saraband and squeaking concert over and around my body that I was fairly driven to take refuge with Roux, who had only a few rovers, and those of more respectful manners. Yet this was the best hostelry in the town; and, by a curious coincidence, two other Europeans had, we were told, only left it the day previous. These were a couple of Englishmen, one an officer: from all the information we could gather they seemed to have travelled from Burmah, and to be returning as

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they had come, by Puchi Fou and Tali. This news relieved us greatly, as a dread took us lest we should have been forestalled in our projected route. None the less did it behove us to press forward,—explorers were already increasingly common in Yünnan; it was a race between French and English, and an eager rivalry had arisen even among Frenchmen themselves. The field of the unknown grew daily narrower, and blank spaces were vanishing



Street in Ssumao.

with remarkable rapidity. Hitherto we might congratulate ourselves: we had filled in the first portion of our work, and that in a country declared by the English to be impracticable. Colquhoun had written that, notwithstanding the promise of his inception, he could not advance from Manhao by the right bank of the Song-Coï; while, according to Bourne, the district which we had just traversed was without any means of communication. This state-

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ment is erroneous. Roads abound—the most insignificant village is connected with the one next to it.

No sooner were we rested, therefore, than we longed to be off. Except in the outskirts, where we picked up commercial information, there was little to repay inspection in Ssumao itself.



Pagoda in Ssumao.

Most Chinese towns are alike,—the same shops, the same trades, the same alleys with their wooden signs, and pagodas displaying hideous dragons. There was no getting about in the streets without a loafing retinue, and no remaining indoors without a crowd of idle gapers. Drive them out with a stick at one door and they flowed in again at another, to the sore trial of one's temper.

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In the confined space in which we were cooped up, the germs of various minor maladies contracted *en route* began to declare themselves, and rheumatism, neuralgia, headache, and general slackness prevailed; while, in proportion as the moving accidents of travel were lacking, difficulties assumed exaggerated shape, and a mild form of nostalgia succeeded to the excitement of the road. But man proposes and—in China—man also disposes. To our followers this was a paradise which they were in no hurry to quit. Luckily our relations with the local magnate were so cordial as to console us in some measure for the delay. He was a well-educated mandarin from the neighbourhood of Chang-hai, and gave us every attention and help in his power, from which we derived considerable benefit both then and after.

We got but little information out of the natives of the district. A Lolo brought me a manuscript which he could read but not interpret, being, as he averred, a treatise in an obsolete dialect on religious subjects. I engaged this villager to write me some modern Lolo; and a young Chinese, who had brought two packets of tea as a gift, with a request that we should remove a swelling from his neck, offered himself as intermediary and scribe. He wrote down some words in Chinese which he then read to the native, who in turn rendered them into the Lolo language and characters. By this means I obtained an interesting document. It was a common appeal among these folk that we should cure them of various complaints, chiefly of the interior. My usual advice was—give up smoking opium, first of all. This was enough for my patients.

April the 11th was finally fixed for the start. The makotou and the mafous, in supplication for the road, made votive offerings to Buddha in the shape of a fowl, a pig's head, a jar

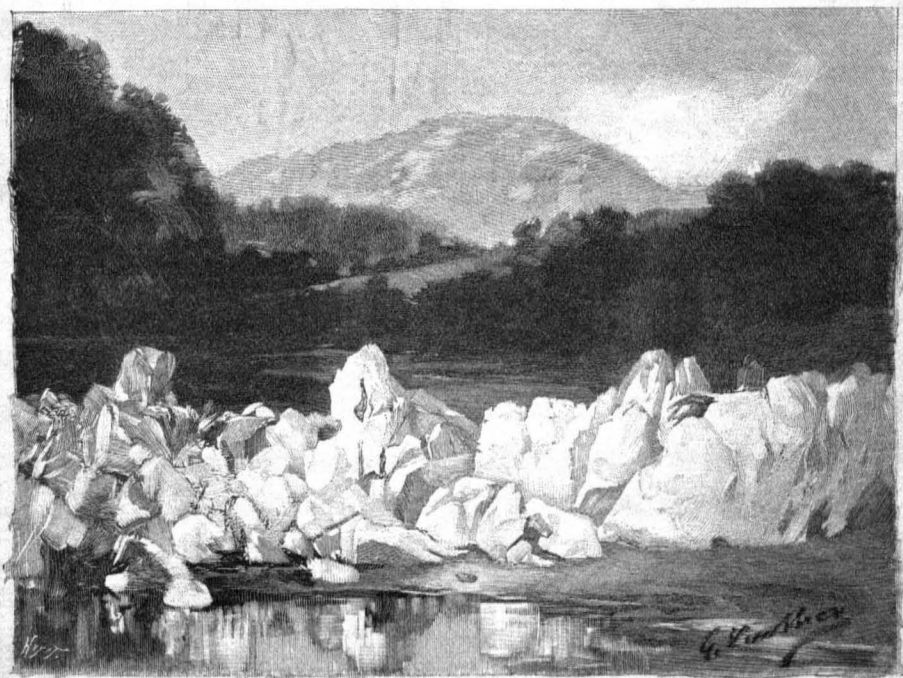
FROM TONKIN TO INDIA

of tchaotiou, and joss-sticks. The joss-sticks duly burned, while Buddha, like Don Cæsar de Bazan behind the bars, was only regaled by proxy. But the men made good cheer.

At the last moment, of course, difficulties cropped up to retard us. First, a squabble between the makotou and the innkeeper over a sixpence, which I left them to settle. Then a more serious difference arose in our own ranks. Some time previously one of our fellows, a Mussulman, openly denounced François to me for peculation. The disclosure had fanned the interpreter's existing hatred of the followers of the Prophet, and, notwithstanding that the man was a willing hand, he demanded that I should summarily dismiss "the despiser of pork," on the ground that he smoked opium. This was frivolous, seeing that they all shared the vice. A violent altercation ensued between François, the makotou, and the Houi Houi (Mussulman), in the course of which the last named vigorously and publicly landed one of his tormentors a punch on the head, and the other a kick behind. These straightway fled to me with their dishonour, and declared themselves irreparably insulted, and unable to proceed. Having witnessed the whole scene, our sympathies were all with the spirited Mussulman, who had only given two rogues their due; but we could hardly dispense with the interpreter. Luckily, the porter solved our embarrassment by himself requesting his discharge. We found that, on the purchase of a couple of mules here for a hundred and thirty taëls, François and the makotou had pocketed thirteen taëls as commission; and similar jobbery went on in other matters. To be robbed with our eyes open seemed inevitable: we could get on ourselves without these knaves, but what sort of information could we hope to extract without them in this wretched country!

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However, we got off at last with a brace of soldiers lent us by the mandarin to carry a letter of recommendation to the village chiefs. Four routes led to the Mekong; we chose that going most directly westward, leaving our northing to be made more gradually. On quitting the plain of Ssumao we entered a pretty country, where the sun's rays lit up hills covered with pine clumps and valleys fully cultivated, and the air was fresh and



White Rocks in Valley.

cool on green lawns. The first night out we slept beneath a pagoda, defaced with plaster deities grotesquely streaked, and seeming in vain to assay our terrors with their threefold regard. What a miserable conception the Chinese have made of their pantheon! It is hard to comprehend how they have distorted the fine ideas of Buddha by representations that are nothing but shameful, repellent, and debased.

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Half the next day was spent in the search for some of our best mules, stolen during the night. We blamed the makotou, and the makotou blamed us; but we only recovered one whose legs were hobbled, with the slender satisfaction of sending back the soldiers to report the theft to the mandarin at Ssumao.

In the evening of the 13th (April) we sighted a high range of terraced limestone cliffs with long crests broken into isolated peaks, cones, and spurs, amid a sea of pines; a wild chaos of piled rock like that which strikes the eye of the traveller in the Kai-Kinh, between Phu-lang-tuon and Langson. We doubled the chain, and halted in a Paï village. The scenery we were in was strange. Imagine a devil's punch-bowl, wide and deep, the green centre embossed with grey stones and shadowy pines, while its sides were lined with tasselled lianas and clinging plants. The vegetation, which was thick and soft below, changed as it reached the ridge, and took the ruder character of its surroundings. Gaunt rocks thrust forth white and naked heads, detached yuccas lifted their broomstick tufts against the skyline; aloes and hundred-handed cacti roughened the rim. The impenetrable bush harboured many wild animals—stags, roe-buck, bears, and they picked up and showed us the horn of a goat.

The inhabitants told of a grotto hard by, which is the object of pilgrimages from Ssumao and Pou-eul-Fou. We found it a deep excavation in the limestone hill. A small chamber at its mouth served as a residence for two guardians, whence descended a stair into a spacious hall in which were two very ordinary pagodas with yellow hangings, scented joss-sticks, and some sufficiently vile and many-coloured statuettes of Buddha. With a torch we were led into an inner cave, which contained a number

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of rather fine stalactites, like organ pipes. The Chinese, who make marvels of mites, see gods in these, before which François failed not to prostrate himself. Some certainly bore a distant resemblance to dragons and elephants, and one was curious as producing a hollow sound when struck. The guide spared us none of these prodigies, so that we gained the upper air with relief. No doubt it is an interesting cavern, but not to be compared with those of Laos and Pakai below Luang-Prabang.

In the evening the villagers, exultant in the violent death of a pig, danced before us. The performers, four in number, joined hands and alternately contracted and expanded in a circle, afterwards separating as in a quadrille. Their movements were supple, and in cadence to a double-stringed guitar. The women remained as spectators. They had a different dress to any we had before seen, being of a horizontally striped material wound round the figure for petticoat, with a short loose jacket fastened at the side, and a large turban crossed in front, something after the fashion of the Alsatian knot, and falling in flaps behind. The lobe of the ear was pierced with a large wooden spindle. These little Pai ladies with their pale tinge were less unattractive than the Chinese; Sao, at least, found them more to his taste; but to us they were very wild. The evening ended in song. The troubadour wailed in falsetto, imitating a woman, beginning each strophe with a high note which gradually died away; then, a pause, and *da capo*. After a bit it was monotonous.

On the 15th (April) we were fairly in Pai country. The people said they came here many years back from the vicinity of Yunnan-Sen. It was curious to meet here, as among the Lolos, with folk who had come from the north and east, rolled back by the Chinese into the refuge of the mountains of Yunnan, which seems to have

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been for many of the native races what Thibet has proved to certain animals—an asylum rather than a creative centre.

At Long-tang, the next evening's halt, we found the village *en fête* for the marriage of the toussou's daughter. We made ourselves at home in a pagoda, a regular Laos temple with pointed wooden roof, red pillars, and door garnished with gold and silver arabesques. The interior exhibited the votive table, bronze candlestick, and altar with marble or gilt Buddhas draped in yellow under large umbrellas. Behind the gods were three stone cones stained red, and in a corner the chair whence the priests spoke. Banners, scarves, and streamers with long inscriptions overhung the platform. The night in this abode of sanctity was marred by the devotions of the rats, which left us not a moment's peace. Nor were they the only nuisance in Long-tang. Contrary to our experience among the Laotians, the inhabitants, steeped in copious libations, became more inquisitive and familiar than was pleasant. They were of an individual type, and nowhere in China proper had we met with such independence of manner. Had it not been for the presence of the men of our own troop, we should not have known we were within the Celestial empire.

As in Laos, the bonzes were distinguished by a long yellow toga, shaved heads, and a string of beads in their hands. The laity wore their hair in a knot at the back or side of the head, with or without a cotton turban of red or yellow design. The queue was discarded as a mark of emancipation. Almost every man we met was tattooed in blue from the waist to the knee, so thickly as to give the appearance of pantaloons. Others, like the Burmese, had figures or dragons in red, enclosed within a rectangular pattern, on the breast. In physiognomy their eyes were straight, complexion bronzed, forehead slightly prominent, lower part of the face shapely, with small

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mouth, and here and there a moustache or scanty whiskers; but the lips were thick and the teeth blackened. Betel chewing was the fashion. They were clothed in a short vest and either wide blue and white trousers down to the feet, ornamented with blue, red, or yellow stripes, or simple blue woollen drawers. All had the lobe of the ear pierced and enlarged as a receptacle for flowers, or dried leaves, which served them as cigarette papers. There were also a few large hats of soft straw to be seen. Many displayed from a vest button or the ear a thin silver disc with Chinese characters, presents from the military mandarin at Ssumao to the soldiers of the toussou. An unusual thing about the houses of this place was that, instead of being on piles, as is customary among the Païs, the walls rested upon the earth and the half cone roofs of russet thatch descended to within three feet of the ground. They looked like molehills or an African village.

Taking a turn by the banks of the river, where the women were bathing as on the Mekong, I met our escort returning from Ssumao, without the mules. They brought a line from the mandarin dissuading us from going among the tribes of the Mekong, where, he said, we should encounter sickness and robbers. This terrible prospect caused François to spit blood and tremble. In the evening we had to open a consulting-room for the folk who flocked to us even from a distance for remedies. Besides the villagers, our own men were suffering from a variety of ailments, and were difficult to tend. Say what we might, they would not keep their sores or wounds from the air. Sao's legs being in a bad state, we gave him some carbolic acid. Presently the most doleful howls were heard. He had thought to effect a quicker cure by applying the acid undiluted to the raw, with dire results. We tried to alleviate his anguish with ashes, white of egg, and honey, and, after

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suffering a night of martyrdom, he got better, and the self-inflicted cauterisation contributed to a rapid recovery.

As we again approached the Mekong, present misery and future fears caused several desertions among the mafous, with whom, unfortunately, some of our effects also usually disappeared. We experienced a feeling akin to elation on regaining the banks of the great Asiatic river on which our campaigns, our old advanced claims, and our explorations have bequeathed so many rights to France. With its name are indissolubly linked those of the dauntless men who gave their lives to establish French supremacy in its valley, from Manhat, Lagrée, and Massie, down to the unknown heroes of the Thibet Mission. Athwart its waves that rolled their waters from the far Thibetan snows, my mind's eye caught the three colours of our flag; and there arose before me the record of conquest in all its steps. First, the acquisition of Cochin China in the south; the rule of the admirals; then the advance northwards into the interior; the explorations; the mighty task begun by Lagrée and ended by Garnier; with the excursions of Manhat, Harmand, Nérès, and how many others! Possessions increased; the Indo-Chinese empire was created; Annam was placed under our protectorate; and whilst we let Upper Burmah escape us in the west, in the east our troops sealed the work of Jean Dupuy by giving us Tonkin. In face of England's ever-growing appetite, Jules Ferry made certain reservations relative to the Mekong valley; but years passed, and the territory which statesmen had acquired was like to be lost again. Backed by the English, Siam stood at the door of Huë, whilst tracts on the left bank of the Mekong were counterclaimed by the English Foreign Office. Our timorous diplomacy, clogged by the fear of complications, seemed unable to grasp the situation. It needed a death like Massie's, or a bold stroke, such as that of Commander

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Bary, to arouse the apathy of the Quai d'Orsay. The Siamese troops were dislodged, and the idea of a buffer State was abandoned. We have made an end of backsliding.

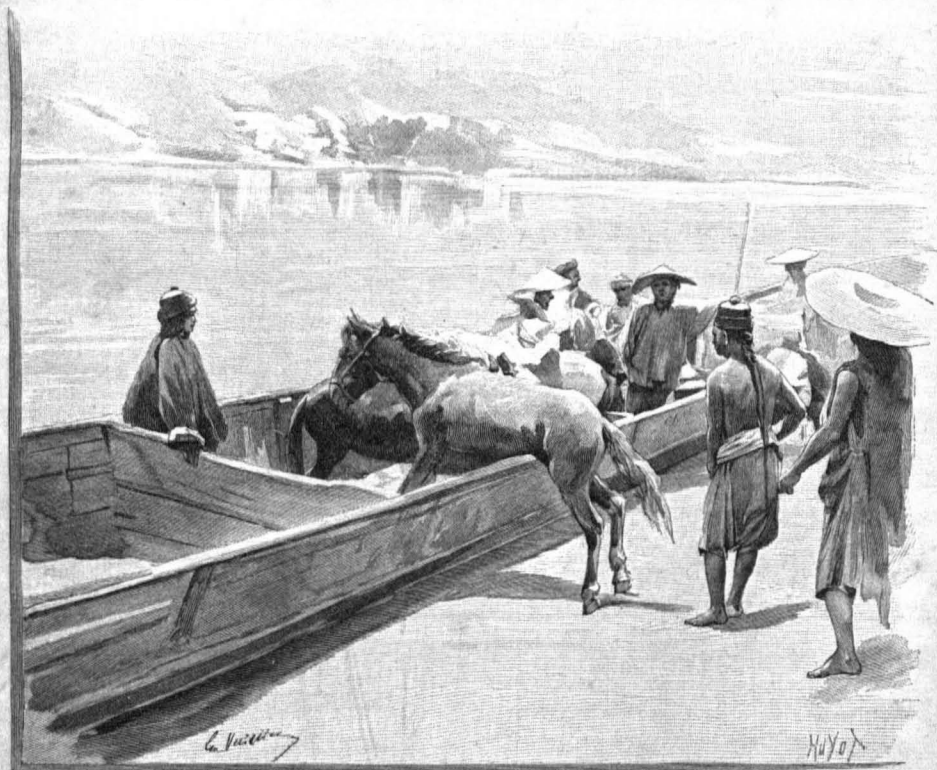
A diplomatic victory has been gained; we must guard against an industrial defeat. Our neighbours, who know full well that railways are the means of real colonisation, think to establish a line running from Mandalay in the direction of Xien-hong (Kiang-Hung). Nay more, the first rails have been laid. It imports us to retort to this new move of England with a similar one of our own; and to this end it is absolutely necessary for us also to have a railway penetrating China. We have a long lead in the matter of position; but again I repeat, beware of the fable of the hare and the tortoise. It is impossible to forecast the future. But a moment may be predicted when the framework of China will fall to pieces, and then,—first come first served,—those that have the best perfected scheme of communication will win.

With these and similar reflections I solaced the period of delay until the whole caravan arrived. We then set about crossing the Mekong at Notcha Tian-pi, which was effected by relays in two ferry-boats 55 feet by 6½ feet, and was rendered arduous by the height of the freeboard, which called for jumping qualities in the mules, which all did not possess. The craft were managed by two sweeps 23 feet long—one in the stern like a rudder, worked by three men; the other athwartships forward, with seven men on it.

The river here ran at the base of steep hills, between shores of sandstone and quartz, on which I once more noted the pretty dwarf palm, like the sycas, though with more delicate leaves, that I had observed in Upper Tonkin. The depth was consider-

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able, for the boatmen could not touch bottom, the current running two knots an hour; but both above and below there were rapids of far greater strength. Its breadth at the time of our crossing (18th April) varied from 119 yards to 162 yards. In the rains there is a rise of upwards of 39 feet, and its width then must be over 200 yards. The water was cold, $66^{\circ}2$ Fahr.,



Embarkation of Mules at Notcha Tian-pi.

whilst the shade temperature of the air stood at 95° . I had remarked this chill before, when comparing its waters at Pakai with those of the Nam Ou.

At Notcha Tian-pi there was a little Chinese post for the customs on tea coming from the right bank, Mong-hai, Mong-se, and Mong-yang; duty, one to two "tens" the hundred Chinese

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

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

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

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

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



A Lochai.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On descending from some higher spurs we reached a gently



Roux at Work.

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

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

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

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

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

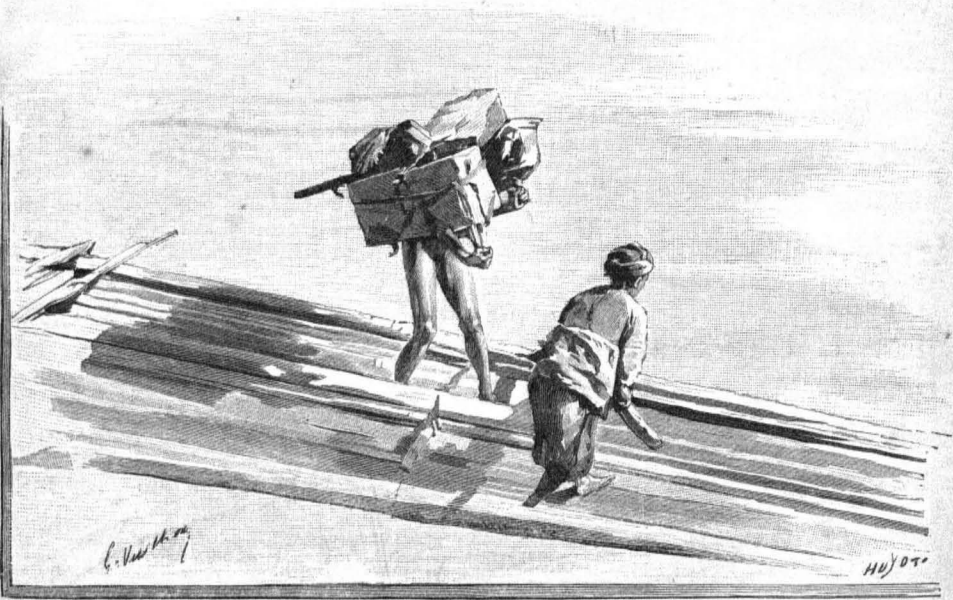
A torrent turned us down towards the Mekong again, and we touched it a little below the confluence of a considerable river called the Sé-kiang. The waters of the Mekong here ran low between sandy shores, varying in width from 87 yards to twice that distance, but rocks marked high-water level up to 217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

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

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

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



Raft on the Sé-kiang.

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

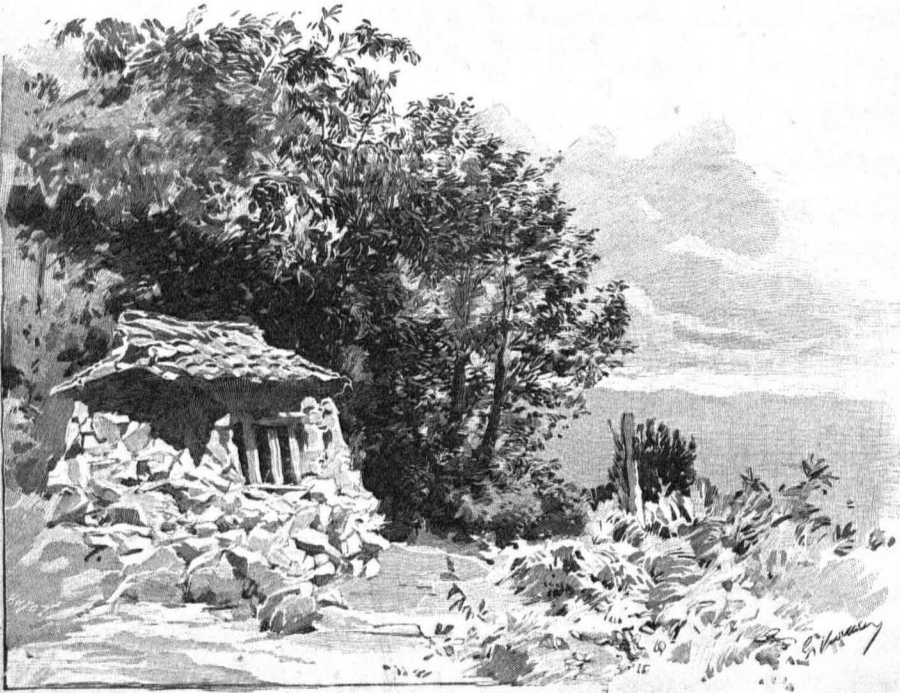
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the burdens. Our own boys proved good body servants: Nam managed with only four hours' regular sleep; but then in his ordinary avocations he took three hours over what anyone else would do in one; his cooking was certainly that of a somnambulist. Briffaud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

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

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



Little Pagoda on Hill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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