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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then Lichatan, the new makotou, approached with four mafous

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

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

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

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

Numerous mule caravans crossed us, the leaders' heads adorned

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

Carriers met on the Road.

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

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

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

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

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

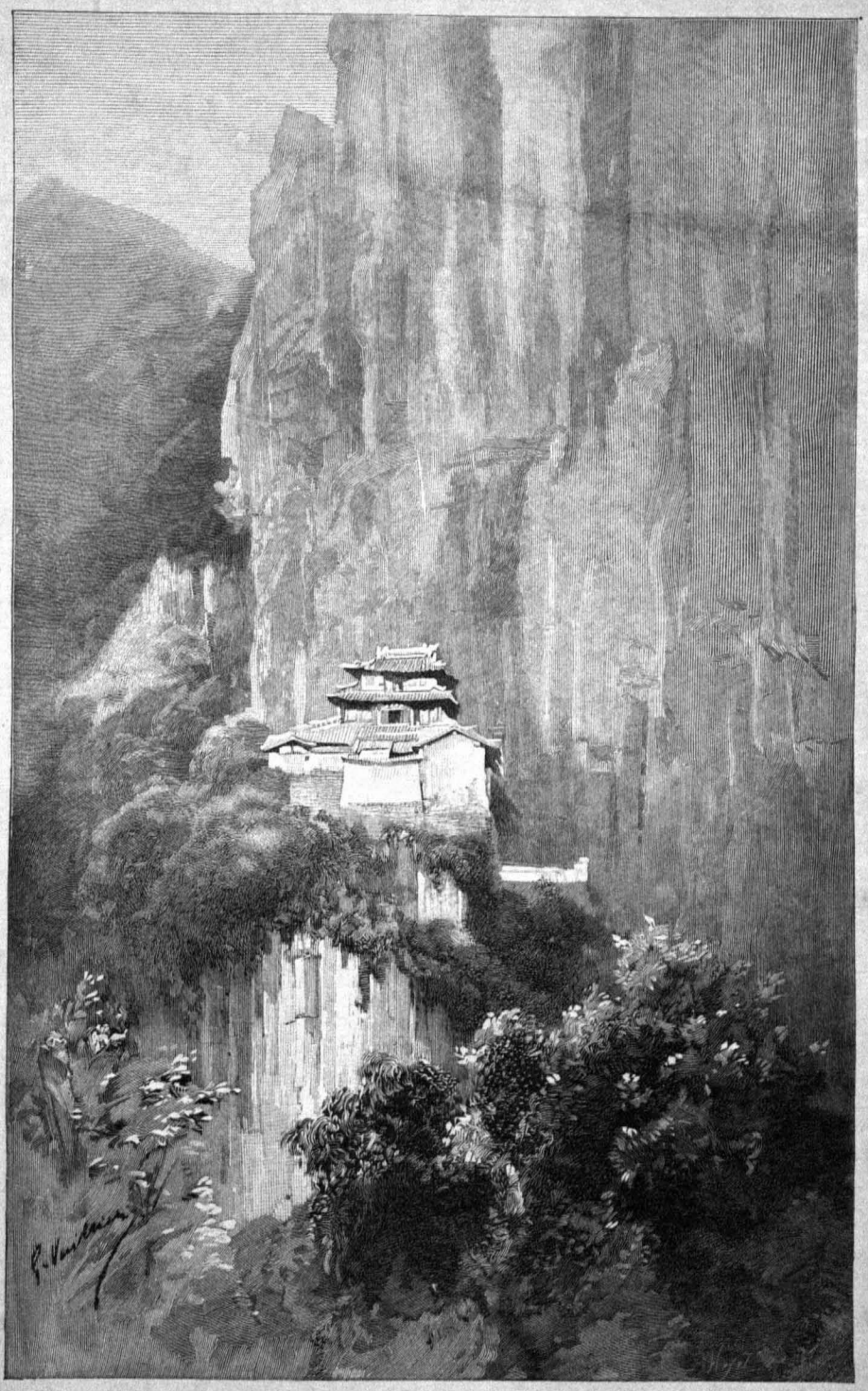
The march of the 21st (May) was only broken by an incident that might have had a different termination. We were riding along the brink of a sharp declivity, and Briffaud had just remarked on the danger of a slip, when hardly were the words uttered before I saw Sao fall from his mule and roll over and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

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

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

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

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



Pagoda Khou-an-yn-Miao.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Father Leguilcher.

CHAPTER IV

TALI-FOU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

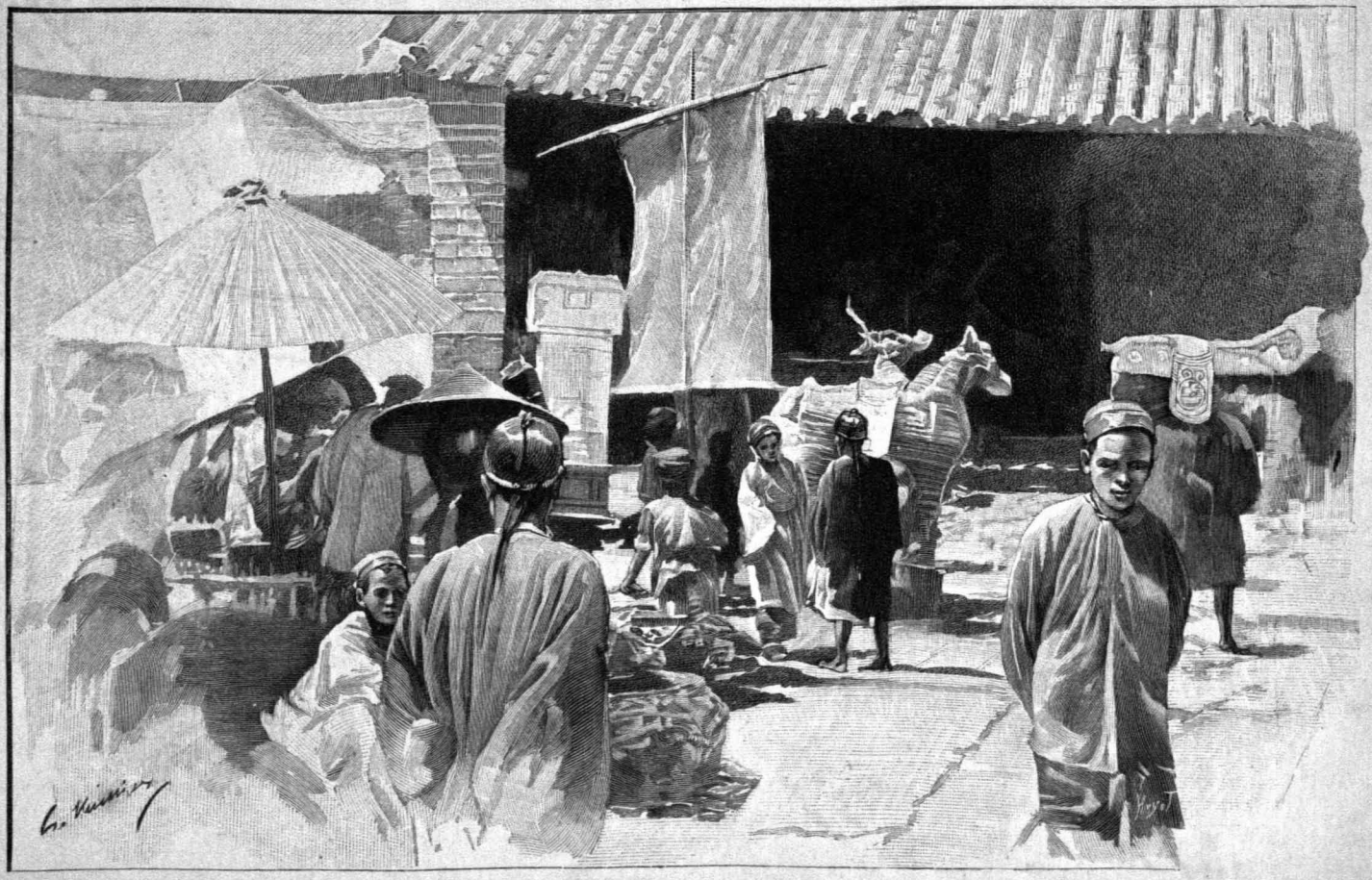
The Father told us that it was no specific witchcraft that was attributed to the Christians, but such idle superstitions as the supposed evil augury of cutting a fowl's tail-feathers, that sufficed to inflame the fanaticism of the Chinese against them. In the days of their worst terror the Christians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

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

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

The Pet.

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



Street in Tali-Fou.

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

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

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

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

Tali-Fou Woman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

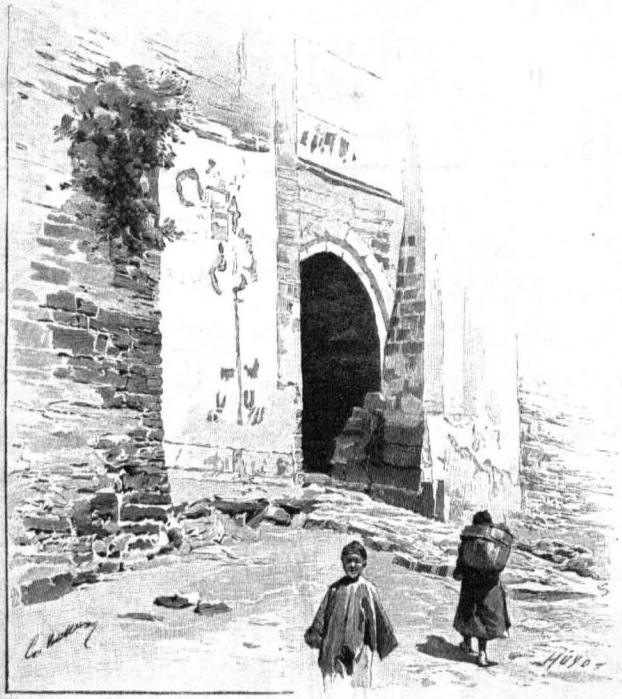
Lake Er-haï.

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

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

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

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



Main Gate Tali-Fou.

CHAPTER V

FROM TALI TO TSEKOU

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

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

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

Some of our Escort.

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

We had experienced no difficulty at Tali in procuring strong

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

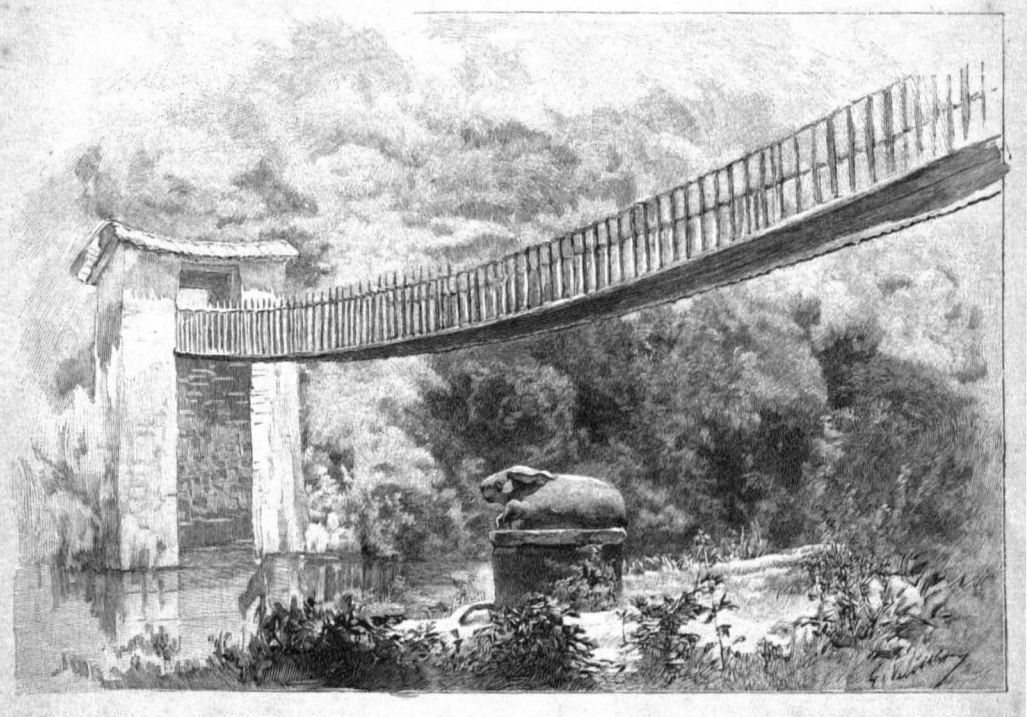
taken for boys. The older women wore the black turban, Chinese fashion, covering the hair knot. Amongst these folks one met with some pretty faces and more regular features than the Chinese. The men, on the other hand, differ but little from the latter.

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

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

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

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



Hanging Bridge over the Yang-pi.

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

measure thus obtained is 2 lbs., Chinese, eight tsiens. A pound is worth thirty sapecks. The salt is sent to Teng-Yueh and Yung-Tchang, but does not go to Tali. Work is only carried on for seven days in a month, and about 3,000 lbs. of salt are despatched in that time. The workings are common; anyone can share in them by paying to the mandarin a rent, which varies according to the number of labourers.

As we left Tien-eul-tsin we noticed pagodas on the hillside above some rocks, on which were engraved inscriptions. In the middle of them appeared a figure of the goddess Khou-an-yn, in the pose of a madonna with flowing drapery: the head was in profile, with a hood encircled by an aureole. Similar designs exist in Japan. Farther on we passed another salt-mine village, from which arose columns of smoke, before coming to Yün-long-cheou, a town only by virtue of its administration. The mandarin, who entertained us, had a garrison of but thirteen men. Here we were on the bank of the river Pi-kiang, which flows from the mountains of Likiang into the Mekong at two days' distance.

The directions furnished us as to the route to follow were vague. They were to the effect that we ought to reach the Lan-Tsang-kiang (Mekong) in two days, and should be able to cross it by a bridge. But on the other side we should find ourselves in the territory of the "barbarians," according to Joseph, and with paths impracticable for mules. The approaches to the Salwen were regarded with dread. A local proverb says, "He who would cross the Loutze-kiang should sell his wife before he starts." Our men did not seem to make any actual demur to going forward; they doubted our persisting to any distance, but, on our attempting to procure an extra mafou for three more mules we had bought, we found it impossible to induce

anyone of the district to follow us farther in a westerly direction. One of our other mafous prepared himself for all eventualities by offering to the gods in the pagoda where we were, rice, tchaotiou, and pork, and by burning candles before the two altars with repeated prostrations.

From Yün-long the route ascended over a low shoulder into a wooded and turfy country, in which we passed through a Lolo and Minchia village of long arched dwellings. Straw was drying in the yards stacked on horizontal bars in layers to a height of 19 feet, and covered by a small pent-roof. As the village was crowded with another caravan, we encamped beyond in a fir-grove hard by a torrent, and enjoyed the seclusion and magnificent prospect at a height of 7,800 feet. This enjoyment would have been more generally shared by the rest of our troop could they have divested themselves of some foreboding for the future. Only that morning, in conversation with Joseph, I had learned of a road which branched northward from the bridge over the Mekong. "But," said he, "we must not think of taking it, because there's sickness in the district; because the mountains are stupendous; because, in a word, the Lissous are there!" I was content to abide the issue, and let them talk.

The 26th (June) was very hot, and the glare from the slaty rock trying; but in the afternoon we came in sight of the muddy Mekong, and presently joining its course, turned up the left bank. The volume of its waters that came tumbling down with tumult and in waves shouldering each other as if panic-driven strengthened our previous conception of its force. We found the bridge a little farther; it was merely a footway on chains between two stone piers such as we had seen before, with the river forming a boiling rapid underneath. The bridge

itself was sixty-six paces in length, but, reckoning from the edge of the wood where the piers commenced, the width of the river at this point was about seventy-six yards. Going northward up stream this is the last bridge on the Mekong before those which span the two arms at Tsiamdo, on the main road between Pekin and Lhaça. After crossing the river a large gateway confronted us, through which we entered the street of the village of Fey-long-kiao. On either side the regular white buildings with their grey roofs, backed by the darker hills and coffee-coloured water, imparted quite a charming air to the place. Within, it was the same as other Chinese towns, squalid and dirty, like a woman who hides the ugliness of age beneath a showy dress.

We put up in a room above the gateway, reached by a narrow ladder stair. The basement was given up to idols. But instead of the tawdry images we had grown used to, with grotesque features staring at you in ranks like dolls at a fair waiting the day of destruction, I was astonished to find myself before deities of a much more venerable aspect. On the right was a little old figure, with a cowl like a monk's upon a gilded head adorned with a flowing white beard. He reminded me of Father Christmas. In the middle of the altar was another, indistinguishable save for some traces of a former gilded splendour in the dark wood of which he was graven. At the feet of the large ones were minor divinities, or they may have been priests, in a sort of cassock, and black with age. These austere gods seemed to watch with the same air of immovable disdain the damage of the wasting years, while the river without repeated in its ceaseless roar the unchanging tale of centuries which rolled before their feet.

Naturally, our first care at Fey-long-kiao was to put questions regarding the route. The replies were uniformly discouraging.

"South-west there were roads leading into Burmah,"—thank you for nothing. To the north?—There was but one, and that ascended the left bank of the Mekong. But in proportion as they insisted that it was impossible to travel by the right bank, that the country was impassable, perilous, peopled by savages, so our desire to make the attempt increased. The farthest Chinese village was two days' march north-west of Fey-long-kiao. We would attain that, and then it would be time to see what more could be done. Anyway, I was determined to go on till some more real obstacle than the fears of our men should stop us.

As predicted, it took us two days to reach Lao. We went up by a fairly good zigzag path over the chain that divides the Mekong basin from that of the Salwen. The first night we halted in a hut about 1,000 feet short of the summit. We were astonished to find here Manhao, the mafou who at Mienning had stabbed the makotou. He related that the latter, recovered of his wounds, had gone back to Mongtse with François, and preferred a request to be taken back into our service. It may be imagined what reception I gave to one who had proved so ready with his knife. Throughout the latter portion of our ascent we were escorted by two soldiers, as a protection against attack from Lolo or Lissou robbers. I confess I placed more reliance in my revolver than in the cross-bow and trident which formed the armament of our warriors. On the col I remarked on either side of the path a row of small sharpened bamboo stakes buried in the ground to pierce the bare feet of possible brigands. The Moïs of Annam use a like method of defence.

We dropped down into the Salwen basin between wooded hills that sheltered rare hamlets. Round them the fields under cultivation were fenced with palisades of interlaced bamboo against the

incursions of wild animals. The fauna of the mountains was rich in deer, chamois, monkeys, and wild oxen, but we heard of no tigers.

We stopped at Lao, where the gaping crowd of Chinese had a more cut-throat look than usual. They could give us no clearer information than at Fey-long-kiao. One route led to the Salwen, which they called the Cheloung-kiang, but it was not possible to go farther north because of the *jejeu* (savages). We resolved to see for ourselves, and next morning moved off slowly, for it behoved us to be patient with our mafous, who, though tired, were performing their work well. The way wound up the defile of the torrent we had begun to follow on the day before ; brushwood and boulders obstructed the passage, and the mules had to pick their footing cleverly among the treacherous shingle. At sundown the column was checked for half an hour at an abrupt landslip. The makotou, who had been in advance, came back with the news that the path was choked by a mass of rock, and that several of the animals had rolled down the slope. As night was approaching, we camped where we were, on a bank of shale. Above, the mouth of the gorge was dimly outlined against a triangular patch of sky, and the dark bushes that lined the channel were lit with dancing fireflies. The men beneath the sheltering pack-saddles talked together in low tones by the glare of the fire till far into the night, while without the circle of light the shadowy forms of the mules moved or lay among the reeds. Little by little silence fell over the camp, and the echoing torrent alone broke the stillness.

Apart from the arduous nature of the road, the day had offered little of incident. We had sighted some natives fishing down stream with bamboos, to which a bunch of worms was tied ; they thrust the rod under the large rocks, and netted the catch in an

osier basket with the other hand. The fish thus landed averaged about 8 inches long, the breast and belly were broad and the head flat, with a wide mouth like a dog-fish. The flesh was palatable.

It was on leaving the shingle camp that the real struggle began against obstacles more formidable than we had yet encountered. The path got worse and worse, and the men had to precede the mules, pick in hand, and break a track across the shoot of rubble and loose stones. By this means we won a precarious foothold, though in some places the projecting crags thrust us out over dangerous declivities. Stepping cautiously in Indian file, we escaped any worse accident than the fall of one mule, which luckily recovered itself unhurt.

The valley flora was unlike that of the 5,000-feet plateaux we had traversed. Here the trees had dense foliage, their lower boughs often covered with fruit; acacias grew close, and fig-trees smothered in gigantic creepers and a broad-leaved moss. On every side were orchids, and ferns with spiral fronds twining round the central stem. The prolific forest teemed with plants of rare grace and tropical profusion. But its sunless depths and rank undergrowth exhaled miasma and a fever-laden moisture; so that, although the temperature was not high, we perspired in the damp heat at each heavy step, and breathed a tepid vapour that made us believe the reputation for insalubrity given by the Chinese to the valley of the Salwen.

Our camp of the 29th (June) was still by the torrent. Our men had exhausted their provisions—a lesson to them to be more provident, and to attend to our orders that they should always carry three or four days' supplies. Fortunately, we had a ham and some rice to share with them. In the morning, as I went to bathe in the river, I discovered a liana bridge swung from

two mighty trees, a tight-rope dancer's line above the flood. A wild-looking being was just about to step on to it, emerging from I know not where. At sight of me he stopped short in startled amazement; then abruptly faced about, and, scrambling down the left bank, plunged into the reeds and disappeared. The whole scene called up before me descriptions I had read of travellers in South America, and I pictured myself in for an adventure with those ferocious savages of Aymard, who with snake-like glide and stealthy bird-call creep upon you unawares. Putting aside fancy, it seemed like enough we should make acquaintance with savages. We were now in really undiscovered country: no European had ever hitherto penetrated so far.

It was near noon before we debouched upon the valley proper of the Salwen, the gradients of the sides being less steep than those of the Mekong. The Cheloung-kiang, Lou-kiang, or Salwen, as it is variously called, flows at its base in an average breadth of 120 yards; its waters are easily distinguished from those of the Lan-tsang-kiang (Mekong), for while the latter are reddish brown, the Salwen's are a dirty grey. At the point where we struck it the current seemed less rapid than the Mekong; the temperature of the water was 66° Fahr. The level of the Salwen is only 3,087 feet, or 1,625 feet lower than the Mekong. Without admitting a shallower depth than is the case, it is difficult to believe that so great a body of water can issue from so short a course as that indicated by the latest English map of Thibet, published in 1894. The impression we derived was of a large river coming from far.

We ascended the valley by a well-defined path to the neat village of Loukou, built after the Chinese model. It was girt with maize-fields guarded by palisades or mud walls. The

Briffaud on the Liana Bridge.

population consisted of Chinese, Minchias, and Lissous. The natives are ruled by a Lissou toussou. This magnate, after an exchange of cards, invited us to lodge in his house; but we preferred the open plain outside the village, as the search for some missing mules necessitated a halt of two days instead of one. We made the toussou a present of a handkerchief, some pictures, and a box of powder, and he paid us a visit, dressed in white and with his hair long, a sign of mourning. He was a half-breed, with more of the Chinese than Lissou in him, and of much intelligence. His family had migrated hither from Setchuen with the coming of the Mings. To his official occupation he added that of a trader, with thirty mules and six men employed in the traffic of salt from Yün-Loung to Yün-tchang and Teng-Yueh. This toussou knew the district well, and gave us useful information beyond our expectation. He said a path, which though insignificant was practicable, went hence in a northerly direction. It was confined for several days to this valley, trending first towards that of the Mekong and afterwards back on to the watershed between the two. The route scaled one high mountain, but without snow. For eight days' journey we should find subject Lissous, then for two or three the *jejeu*, "*qui reguntur a nullis hominibus et vivunt ut animalia*," as Joseph put it. The friendly toussou promised us a letter to a neighbouring colleague, and provided us with a guide who would also act as an interpreter among the Lissous. This new member of our caravan, who likewise served as a mafou, was a tall, erect man, with a marked aquiline nose and straight-set eyes; in his copper complexion he resembled a Redskin. Among the inhabitants of the village we observed many who seemed to have little in common with the yellow race. One woman I

noted: she was bronzed, with a projecting brow and arched eyebrows. Her eyes, instead of being lustreless, were deep-set and straight, and the underlid was fuller than those of the Chinese. Her nose was short, and wide at the base, and her face broad at the temples and tapering to a pronounced chin. Her whole countenance denoted greater sensibility and vivacity than the Chinese, and was nearer in its general aspect to the European type, reminding me of gipsies I had seen in Russia. She was a Lissou.

The toussou gave us particulars about other routes. According to him, there existed a path by the right bank of the Salwen, which traversed first a large watercourse known as the Long-Song-kiang, then the My-le-kiang, and ended in the Long-Tchouan-kiang. It was difficult to identify these rivers. This route was peopled by the Lansous, noted for the beauty of their women, and the Pou-Mans, who live not by agriculture but by hunting. We employed our rest in questioning the guide as to the tribe to which he belonged. I studied the Lissou dialect, which resembled that of the Lochais and the Lolos. By his account, the Lissous came here four (?) generations ago from Nang-king, which accorded with a similar tradition among the Lolos. Farther on we were to learn that the Lissous themselves spoke of a country where they had formerly lived, where there were elephants. They must, then, have come from the south.

Our mules being all collected by the 4th (July), and our men rested, on the morning of that date we again moved forward. For the whole of that day we were in the Salwen valley; now above, now beside the river. Few people were to be seen, and little cultivation; rice, maize, and cotton in flower, which must be annual, as the plants were little more than a foot high. In

all directions were strewn limestone fragments amid scanty herbage, with here and there a cactus to give the scene a likeness to Africa. The river alternated between broad reaches lapping sandy bars and foaming rapids like the Mekong. The spectacle formed by the misty spray of the cataracts was grand in the extreme. The Salwen bore down on its bosom large trunks of trees which, caught in the eddies, or held in the backwaters, accumulated in every creek. The water had begun to rise.

We continued on the 5th (July) the ascent of the same well-wooded valley, passing a Lissou village, Oumelan, where the house-walls were chiefly composed of horizontal logs, to which were hooked wicker hen-roosts, and small wooden shelters for the pigs; the lofts were raised upon piles. On one post I perceived a coarse white drawing of a quartered bird, no doubt intended, as among the Hou-Nis, to ward off evil spirits. To our request for chickens, answer was returned that there were none. As they were running about in all directions, some moral suasion, backed by money, was required to overcome the scruples of the owners. The site of our camp would appear to have been a common one for wayfarers from the smoke-blackened rocks. We were in a clearing beside a leaping cascade; behind, on the slope, rose a monster tree, whose roots served as an arbour, and whose twigs made our couch. In one corner Nam established his kitchen, by the light of a lamp of antique shape; a little farther Chantzeu, curled up among the roots, sought oblivion of the world in opium; below, the mafous were stretched beside the packs. Under a white covering Sao nodded over his pipe, and as he dreamed of the palms of Tonkin probably consigned the whole celestial race to perdition—a sentiment which I could cordially indorse. By the water's edge some logs from the mafous' fire still flickered, showing the philosophic Fa coiled in a

hollow tree which he had selected for his bed. The mules were allowed to stray among the scattered herbage, under the guard of three mafous, who, having fired their pieces into the air to scare the wild beasts, straightway went to sleep. We slumbered under the protection of the gods, in the shape of three painted images on a stone in a niche, before which remnants of egg-shells, feathers, and a few white rags fluttering on the bushes bore sacrificial witness to their holy character. We felt almost as barbaric as their worshippers.

Heavy rain woke us in the night, and did not abate with daylight. We were now entering the rainy season, and had a pleasant prospect for the next few weeks.

6th (July).—Still threading the Salwen valley. We passed out of the jurisdiction of the toussou of Loukou into that of Ketsouy, a miserable village, where actually the chief was absent. But his wife attempted to supply his authority with considerable urbanity, and sent us eggs and goats gratis. *Apropos* of toussous, we learned that the dignity is hereditary, and in default of direct heir a successor is chosen from among the other members of the family. As in the province of Yünnan, he receives rents from his subjects, but nothing from the Chinese Government. Every year he must remit an impost in kind, or some articles of value, to an itinerant Imperial functionary, or attend in person at Tali for the purpose.

Another day on the 7th (July) of the same work, up hill and down dale. The valley was tortuous, and we were occasionally high enough to get superb views; the course presented similar bold features to those of the Red River. The ridges dividing the tributary gullies were of limestone origin, and scarred the face of the valley with crags and cavities, often encroaching on the bed of the stream with grey seamed brows draped with bushes. But the clouds

hung low and hid the peaks. The conditions were unfavourable to photography, and we passed, a draggled train, through the Lissou village of Oua-ma-ti, where the men wore their hair in pigtails and the women in two small horns above the ears. The bad weather lent our troop a strange appearance. Sao's get-up, a motley of European and Annamite equipment, was highly grotesque. On his head was a wide Chinese straw, on his body a shrunken blue jacket made in Tonkin, and on his legs a pair of my old pantaloons. The shoes and gaiters I had given him made him a groom in his lower extremities, while revolver, gun, and bandolier transformed him into a soldier above. Add to this the scientific air lent by my photographic apparatus on his mule, covered with a yellow mantle, and at a distance it would have been hard to say what he was.

Lissou Woman.

Stress of weather made us glad of the shelter of a hamlet called Lotsolo, in the midst of maize and indigo culture. Here the men

wore Chinese garb. The women had a dress with parti-coloured sleeves, an armless waistcoat, blue with minute white checks and a brown border, and an apron and broad sash. Their costume was completed by a turban of, in some cases, a blue and red scarf, fringed with cowries. Almost all had small coral ear-rings, said to be peculiar to these Lissous, who were known as Koua-Lissous (Lissous of colour, cf. back, Koua-Lolos), in distinction from the Ain-Lissous of Loukou. Some of these women were not bad-looking. One girl we caught sight of with quite regular features, and in the morning she was induced for a few needles to parade for our inspection. She answered to the gentle name of Lou-Méo.

At Lotsolo we met with a good reception, and I began to feel quite friendly with the Lissous, of whom we had heard such alarming accounts. I went into one of their houses, and found the occupants squatted round the fire warming tchaotiou, a rice spirit of which they are great connoisseurs. They had never seen a Yangjen (European) before, nor yet mules; our arrival therefore was an event which they celebrated as a fête. They invited me to drink, and we observed a custom here which we met with farther on. Two people quaff together out of a two-handled bamboo vessel. Each holds one handle and incites the other to imbibe more than himself. This mutual loving-cup is regarded as a pledge of amity and alliance. In answer to my questions, the natives could not recollect hearing of their tribe having come here from elsewhere. They knew the Lolos possessed a writing, but they themselves had none. A curious marriage custom is observed among them. The wedding feast over, at nightfall the betrothed retires with her parents into the mountain, and the swain has to seek them; which quest successfully achieved, the parents withdraw, and the newly-wedded couple remain till morning upon the hillside,

when they return to their homes. They have to repeat this ceremony for three nights before they may settle down. This custom naturally precludes any marriages during the rains. They admitted in confidence that the bridegroom was generally in the secret as to the direction in which he might find his party. Joseph recounted a like custom as prevailing among the Lolos of Lower Yünnan in the neighbourhood of the Yangtzé.

On leaving Lotsolo we at last quitted the valley of the Salwen for one of its affluents, by a slippery path, which often called for the services of the pick. A light rain continued to fall, and I pitied the mafous, whose toil was severe. To add to our discomfort at night we were tormented by clouds of mosquitoes, that effectually murdered sleep.

On the 9th (July) we held on our upward course. The men, accustomed to fine weather, seemed down-hearted, and scarcely one of them was capable of good collar-work, so that they loaded up in dejected silence, which boded ill for the harder times yet in store. Some distance from our camping ground we came on a really bad bit of path, where we had to scale a veritable rock stair. It took three mafous to hold up each mule, and one of the latter having been arduously hauled to the top, took it into his head to try and re-descend. He lost his footing, and in a moment was rolling head first down the declivity with his load bumping at his sides. The fall looked fatal, and we made our way to the bottom of the ravine, expecting to find him in pieces. There he was, however, miraculously sound, save for some cuts and scratches. The example seemed contagious: first one and then another went down, till four had followed suit, and we began to wonder if it would be our turn next; it was perilous to stay in a valley where it thus rained mules. We had to turn

all hands into mafous, ourselves included, and by dint of great exertions, and forming a chain to pass the scattered contents of the packs from hand to hand, we eventually picked all the cases out of the bushes and torrent and got them to the top, where we were rewarded by finding that the rest of the animals had strayed into the woods; where most of them passed the night. These contretemps meant a short stage and much grumbling, hardly allayed by a ration of tchaotiou. The next day was therefore devoted to a rest, and to preparations for climbing the mountain which reared itself before us. We also got out our thick clothes, for it might have been winter, and we longed to reach a less rigorous climate.

On the 11th (July) we made an early start, as the ascent had been described to us as hardly to be accomplished in one day. Also our guns and carbines came out of their cases, in readiness for the savages who were said to be likely to assail us half-way.

The road at first entered a forest, and though the gradient was steep it was less severe than I had expected, and the mules got on fairly well. The woods were beautiful, and reminded me of some parts of Thibet; the mighty boles were hidden under a coat of moss, and the long grey beards that hung from their boughs seemed a mark of venerable age. At the base of some we found small altars formed of branches, erected by the superstition of the Lissous to ward off evil spirits. As we mounted, the trees grew more stunted and gnarled, and presently gave place to lean bamboos overtopped by Alpine larches. Here and there I was surprised to notice fine magnolias side by side with the red and white bark of the wild cherry. At the end of four hours, during which, notwithstanding the prevalent moisture, we had not found a spring, we came out upon the grass of the summit.

We had ascended so far faster than we had anticipated, and without hindrance from other sources than those of nature. A report had spread among the Lissous that we were devils, and so we were respected. On the col we were at an altitude of 11,463 feet, and astride the watershed between the basins of the Mekong and the Salwen.

The pass as well as the mountain is called Fou-kou-kouane, in Lissou dialect Lamakou, the "Gate of the Tiger." A post consisting of a few Lissous dignified with the name of soldiers occupied a bamboo shanty, ostensibly to ensure the safety of the route, which was further guarded on either side by the buried bamboo splinters before described. The crest was marked by scarred and jagged rocks, amid which the track led on to a small plateau covered with long grasses, where the rich flora testified to a constant dampness. I saw two beautiful species of lily, white and red, myosotis, yellow ranunculus, sage, and several kinds of orchids. We did not find here the short grass usual on high summits, nor any gnaphalium. We pitched at the head of a green slope on a narrow shelf overtopped by a big rock, from which, when I climbed it in the rain, the caravan was so entirely hidden by the high grass that no one passing within thirty yards would have suspected that the grey mass sheltered fifteen men. The weather was execrable; we were in the clouds; the thermometer stood at 50° Fahr., and it was hard to believe is was July.

Next morning the men were depressed; they had no idea of bearing up against external influences, and the route was resumed in silence. After proceeding a short distance we came to a stream running into a pool, whose rim lipped the base of a cliff. Taking it as a guide, we turned aside, and after a few

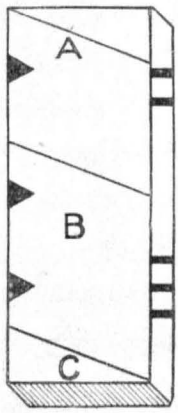
steps found ourselves confronted by a stupendous wall of black and grey seamed rock, which stretched above us and below. The rivulet, leaping in cascades from stone to stone, bored through a fissure in the scarp, and disclosed a recess in shape like the prison of Dionysius' Ear. Peering into the entrance, we discovered a vaulted cavern, under which the water ran over a bed of white pebbles. Scared by our intrusion, birds of blue plumage flew out into the retreats of the mountain. The spot had an air of wild grandeur, which suggested some subterranean home of primitive man; but here was no trace of humanity. In China such a cave would have been decorated with statues of Buddha. Instead, the adornment was by Nature's hand: grey rocks strewn upon verdant mounds, thickets of shapely rhododendrons, larches with their horizontal boughs dark below and vivid green aloft. A veritable faëry ring, and spot of witchery; the scene it might have been of some Walpurgis revel, with its environment of high mountains, deep woods, and quaint rocks, with the chasm dimly descried in the mist, and over all a sense of awe.

From here the route was a descent; at intervals posts, with cross pieces marked with notches, indicated the whereabouts in the undergrowth of the sharpened stakes, but these in the dark would have been invisible. As there is no writing among the Lissous, they adopt the following method of conveying their messages or transacting business: — For a contract between two parties, they take two bits of wood about 12 inches long by 1½ inch wide, care being had that they should be identical in all points, and cut on each face a similar number of notches, generally a little larger on one side than the other. The "*mouké*," as the Chinese call this tally, is thus a reminder. Each notch signifies a word or phrase. In cases of

an agreement made before witnesses, should one of the contracting parties break a clause, the other may call upon him to produce a "*mouké*," and verify it in presence of witnesses. If used as a letter, the messenger must repeat the meaning of each notch. Here are two examples :—

No. 1 "*mouké*" has reference to a Lissou custom. A thief has been expelled from a village; a residence is assigned him under the patronage of someone who will be answerable for him.

"*Mouké*" (1).



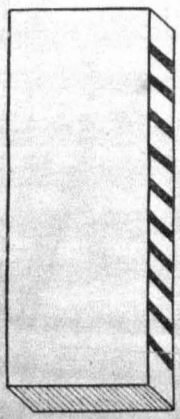
The toussou has said . .
. . The toussou has warned me off
. . and forbidden

if you have a patron . .

you may dwell in this place . .
. . to dwell in this place
. . because I have robbed
. . he is always stealing mules and horses.

A and *C* are spaces on the board representing the arbitrator.
B represents the patron.

"*Mouké*" (2).



. . The toussou has given (me)
. . to me . . . (here follows name of bearer)
. . his daughter
. . eldest (or 2nd, 3rd, etc.)
. . to wife
. . age of wife in years
. . „ „ months
. . „ „ days
. . date of her birth.

After this digression let us resume. In the afternoon we entered woods of pine and holm oak, the latter a speciality among the trees of Thibet. At night the men made a great fire, for there was no stint of fuel, and a picturesque oval-shaped camp was formed round it, while we took a long rest before the morrow.

13th (July). — Descent continued; we shortly sighted the Mekong again running in discoloured rapids. Coming so recently from the Salwen, it seemed small, and its valley more confined and less green than the latter. Hamlets, with a few rice-fields, began to appear, and near them large drying stacks like gibbets. We stopped in the Minchia village of Piao-tsen, surrounded by a white mud wall with half-demolished flanking bastions. When we entered the enclosure there were but few houses to be seen, and the ground was chiefly occupied by tobacco plantations. Here we were only a three-days' foot journey from Fey-long-kiao; but I did not regret the elbow we had made, since it had allowed of our exploring the Salwen, and deriving much useful information towards the solution of an important geographical problem.

At Piao-tsen we installed ourselves in a pagoda, and here we celebrated the Fourteenth of July with a sweet omelette and cigars. For eighteen days we had not seen what the Chinese term a *ta tifan*, or place of any size, and our regaining a little more comfort was the signal for four of our men to abandon us. I made no attempt to prevent them; our troop must weed itself out into the survival of the fittest for the still more arduous work remaining. Among the deserters was Chantzeu, a man who had been with us ever since Mongtse, and who had had less toil and more indulgence than the others. We had been

particularly good to him, giving him more pay than he was entitled to; and yet here, in the prospect of increased labour, the ungrateful hound left us without even a word of parting. The makotou continued to give us satisfaction, and, after two days' suffering from what we at one time feared to be a whitlow, was now nearly fit again. The only fault to be found with him was

Attachment of Cord Bridge at Piao-tsen.

his inability to make the mafous obey him; when they refused a task, he did it himself.

The defection was supplied by four Minchias, and we were again able to set forward. As we left Piao-tsen we saw the first cord bridge over the Mekong. It was constructed of two hawsers of twisted bamboo, made fast to a stake on either bank, propped by big stones. For the crossing a small wooden saddle, called *liou-pang*, was attached to a running line (*liou-so*), and the person secured in it by leg and shoulder straps. It behoved