# A Fly on the Wheel
# or
# How I Helped to Govern India

*By*
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**FIRMA KLM PRIVATE LTD.**
**ON BEHALF OF**
**TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE**
**AIZAWL * MIZORAM**

Printed and Published by
FIRMA KLM PRIVATE LTD.,
257 B, B.B. Ganguly Street, Calcutta-700012
on behalf of
TRIBAL RESERACH INSTITUTE
Govt. of Mizoram
Aizawl



First Edition — 1912
Reprint — 1977



Printed by Rakesh Bagai
at Rakesh Press, Naraina Industrial Area
New Delhi 110028

## A NOTE

For facilities of scholars engaged in research on various aspects of Mizo Culture and History, this rare book is reprinted by the Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, with the help of grants received from the Department of Education, Govt. of Mizoram.

Tribal Research Institute
Aizawl

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# PREFACE

It is now more than thirty years since I published this book of my youth in India; from the Mutiny into which I was plunged, a boy fresh from Addiscombe, to the end of the first Frontier War against the marauding Lushai tribes on the South-Eastern Frontier of Bengal, during which last operation I acted as political officer.

India has greatly changed since those days: changed as I myself am changed. I read the book in its new edition and wonder at the boy who so lightly went forth to face the unknown.

I can only add here that the book was entirely written from diaries, kept carefully for my home-folk, and that if there are mistakes or misconceptions I cannot alter them now. Such as they are recorded here, so they were real and true to the young fellow who wrote them down long, long ago, with no views as to publication. The "old fellow" who now reads the book over for the last time feels that he cannot touch this fresh young work without marring it: they are the vivid impressions of his youth.

> "Naught feared this body of wind or weather
> When youth and I dwelt in't together."

T. H. LEWIN.

Parkhurst,
*January* 26, 1912.

# CONTENTS

# A FLY ON THE WHEEL

OR

## HOW I HELPED TO GOVERN INDIA

" Jours à la fois heureux et triste, jours devorés par le travail et l'enthousiasme, jours comme on n'en voi qu'une fois dans la vie."

LACORDAIRE.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

It was pleasant on the breezy heights above Demagree, with the slumberous murmur of the bees around me, and the odour of the wild thyme floating in the air, to lie on a soft couch of husked-rice straw, in the shadow of an old "jum" house, looking far away out over the winding reaches of the river, which wound like a silver ribbon through the valleys below. A beautiful azure and black butterfly came for a moment and settled on the stock of my rifle, which lay beside me, and then flew away, scared by the approach of some Lushais who came grunting up the path with their loads, in true hill fashion.

All things are finite, from the softest and most rosy-hued dawn to the longest and most wearisome of nights. The expedition was over! I had said farewell to the General and bade adieu to the officers of the 2nd Ghurkhas, pleasant fellows, with whom I had served for so many weeks; and now, far away on the white-gleaming reaches of the Karna-phuli I could see the boats which were carrying them all away, down stream to Chittagong, leaving me once more alone in my hill solitudes.

It was time, indeed, to have done with campaigning, for the heat was growing apace, and the sun beat down so fiercely that the ground grew too hot for even the hard and horny feet of the hill men; the glossy dark-coated guyals sought the shelter of the densest thickets, moaning to each other in sympathetic anguish at the torment of the forest flies; the smaller hill-streams had begun to threaden from the heat, sadly straitening their finny tenants, so that the shallows swarmed with fish, and many a savoury mess was to be obtained by roaming along the sandy banks at night armed with a torch and a dao, with which latter weapon effective chops could be made at the unsuspecting fry.

Not long, however, was I allowed to indulge in idleness or idyllic retrospection, being speedily summoned to Calcutta, where a council was held to decide on future frontier policy in regard to the Lushais. The campaign was the talk of the moment in Calcutta, and I made many acquaintances in consequence when I went there in April, 1872. General Brownlow was specially good to me, and lost no opportunity of praising my services and enhancing their value.

He was my ideal of a true English gentleman, and I took a great enthusiasm for him; not, assuredly, because he spoke well of me, but because he always thought of others first and of himself last. I considered, and do still consider it, a great piece of good fortune to have served under his command. With a rough and domineering or even an unsympathetic commander I could not have worked so well; therefore, indirectly, whatever good work I did in the campaign was mainly due to my General.

The opinions I had formed as to our future frontier policy were given very flattering consideration by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. I returned to the hills with orders to establish a permanent post at Demagree under an English officer; and for this purpose Lieutenant Gordon was appointed my additional assistant.

He and I returned to Chittagong together on the 25th of April, and at once proceeded to Rangamati, where I resumed charge of my own district, setting out immediately afterwards for Demagree to introduce him to his new work. We had no time to lose, for the rains were expected to set in at any moment, and before we left Kassalong the monsoon burst upon us, and the river came down in flood with a rush and a roar, giving us uncommonly hard work to get along. The current was so rapid in places that our boats made head against it with great difficulty; every little rapid became a foaming torrent, into which Gordon and I had to step waist-deep, with our men, to haul the boats through. At night, to make our case worse, we were attacked by swarms of sandflies, creatures so minute that they penetrated the finest mosquito-curtains, and whose bite was so venomous as to cause sores. The only way to baffle these small but malignant enemies was either to adopt the native mode, and muffle oneself from head to foot in a thick

cotton mantle, or to sleep in the smoke of a sort of ants' nest, which was plentiful in the jungle, a piece of which if lighted would burn slowly, giving out an aromatic fume which was abhorrent to the sand-flies. In either case success was only partial, and the result was a restless and disturbed night, with the bright stars overhead, their light partially defining the dim hill ranges, while the monotonous roar of the rushing river smote the ears in never-ceasing reverberation.

In olden times I used to think of these hills as beckoning me eastward ; now, how many and varied had been my experiences among them, how unforeseen the events which had occurred. Truly nothing occurs but the unexpected.

At Demagree I chose the site for our new permanent post, and made the necessary arrangements for the men's food. I was the better able to do this as I had in hand a considerable quantity of surplus stores, left behind by the expedition. From this stock, also, I was glad to be able to befriend the Sylus, who, in consequence of the havoc we had wrought with their granaries, were now hard pressed for food.

I paid a visit to my friend Rutton Poia in order to introduce Lieutenant Gordon to him. We found the chief in fine feather : his power and importance had been wonderfully increased by the part he had played in the recent campaign, and he consequently beamed as upon a benefactor.

There being no adequate accommodation for the rainy season, I did not propose to remain myself or to leave Gordon at Demagree, but intended moving up there permanently in October or November. Having put matters in order, therefore, and left a strong guard over the stores and munitions, we returned to Rangamati. This little station was now quite gay and lively, as compared with the time when I had lived there alone like the bumble-bee. Now there was Gordon, who was Assistant-Commissioner, together with Messrs. Knyvett, Crouch, and Bignell, who had been appointed to the Frontier Battalion under my command. It was strange to think that not so long ago I cut my way through the dense forest growth that then clothed the ground where our houses now stood, while a flourishing bazaar occupied the site of my old " jum." The formerly jungle-clad hills around were gradually becoming soft sweeps

of grass whereon cattle grazed, while the country was thickly dotted with small homesteads and cultivated fields. My mission in the country evidently was to act as pioneer; for, having established this comfortable settlement at Rangamati, I was now, during the ensuing cold weather, to move forward to Demagree and there undertake the same work again.

The Lushai expedition had whitened my head and brought me much ill-health; the doctors strongly advised my seeking change of air by a voyage to England, or at any rate that I should apply for some other district, but I could not tear myself away from my dear hills, where the work became more and more absorbingly interesting.

This was, in truth, a wonderful year for me. Almost every measure of reform or improvement which I had advocated was sanctioned by Government. Chiefest among these measures, was the permission to advance small sums (aggregating, however, £4,000) to the hill people, as loans with which to purchase ploughs and cattle, and so enable them once and for ever, as I hoped, to abandon their old nomadic system of "jum" culture and to settle down to own, and hold land, as permanent cultivators. This movement, if successful, bade fair to change the face of the country and to permanently ameliorate the condition of the people.

Numbers of our quondam enemies, the Sylus, came in to visit me, for my name had become great in Lushai-land: they called me father, and named children "Thangliena" after me, it being, as they averred, a name of power and good fortune. I thought sometimes of King David's psalm, "A people whom I have not known serve me . . . as soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; but the strange children dissembled . . . the strange children failed and trembled in their hill forts"; and I thanked God, very humbly and sincerely, in that He had strengthened my hands and prospered my work.

The cold weather came on apace, and we began to prepare for action. Lieutenant Gordon, with Mr. Bignell, and a strong detachment of the Frontier Battalion, were sent to take charge of the Bohmong's country to the south; this part of the district was chiefly subject to raids from the Shendús, who came from the Arracan hills, and they, having been unscathed

by the expedition, would probably be as "peart" as ever. Mr. Crouch went to take command of the Demagree post, while Mr. Knyvett remained in charge at Rangamati. For myself, Government had directed that a thorough exploration should be made of the Southern Frontier, and had directed me, if possible, to lay down a line which might serve in future as the boundary from Demagree to Arracan. For this purpose, a special officer of the Survey Department had been deputed to accompany me and map the country through which we passed, it being entirely unknown and said to be uninhabited.

I took with me fifteen picked men, well armed, and ten hill coolies to carry our food. The Government Surveyor, on his part, moved with a guard of military police and a number of coolies to carry his baggage and heavy surveying implements. Altogether his party numbered ninety souls.

My own notion was to do the journey as light as possible, in rough frontier fashion, our only road being the wild elephant tracks; but much against my judgment, the party was increased in numbers until it reached the above unwieldy dimensions.

We set forth accordingly at the end of November, and dragged this weary tail after us for nearly a fortnight, until the Government Surveyor decided that his instruments could be conveyed no farther, and, as food was running short, and he had succeeded in mapping a very considerable extent of hitherto unsurveyed country, he determined to return to Demagree.

On the 17th of December, 1872, I parted company from my companion and plunged joyfully into the pathless solitudes of the primeval forest, the home of the tiger, the rhinoceros, and the wild elephant. Once we lost our way, and our food supply ran dangerously low; once a tiger steadily followed our small party for two days and two nights, mewing round the camp in the darkness like a gigantic cat, but not otherwise molesting us.

Christmas Day dawned upon us through the gleam of interlacing branches and tangled underwood, seven days' journey at least from any human habitation. My Christmas dinner consisted of boiled rice and spring water, with sundry

unknown roots and berries; my tobacco fortunately held out, or I should have indeed deemed my lot a hard one, for there is no slavery like that of the votary of nicotine.

We marched one hundred and fifty miles through absolutely unknown country: here and there we met with great cleared spaces in the jungle, the elephant's parlour, pillared by enormous forest trees, and the ground as smooth and well-beaten as a threshing-floor. Here Behemoth had made his sport, for hard by, great trees were uprooted and crushed, the branches being thrown hither and thither as by a gale of wind, while the earth showed great tusk marks and the print of huge rolling sides.

One morning, as we marched along, a large rhinoceros trotted playfully in front of us for some distance, and on another occasion a monster snake, full twenty feet long and as thick as my thigh, slid his slow gleaming bulk across our path.

We slept on the ground every night under the trees, and a very hard bed Mother Earth afforded. In camping out thus, I generally found it impossible to sleep later than three or four in the morning; either the increase of cold at that hour, or the turning of night towards day, brought back consciousness, and one sat up and gathered together the embers of the dying fire, shuddering at the dense sea of mist and darkness and the unknown unknowable forest that beleagured us round.

Sometimes in our day's march, which averaged about twenty miles, we had to pass along the edge of, or to scale, precipices, where a downward look meant vertigo and destruction, and at evening we had only our rice and roots to comfort us; but at length the journey was successfully accomplished, and that portion of the frontier roughly demarcated.

We reached our southernmost outpost at Chima, in the Bohmong's country, and thence to Gordon's head-quarters on the Sungu river, arriving very worn and ragged, with prodigious appetites. After inspecting Gordon's posts, and arranging matters with him, I returned by river, *viâ* Chittagong, to Demagree as fast as possible, and settled down once more to my work there.

The Lushais now resorted in crowds to the small bazaar which had been established at Demagree. Here my faithful servant

Nurudin had, on my recommendation, been appointed Jemadar, or trade superintendent, on a salary of £60 a year. His future was thus secured, and his fidelity well merited the reward, the more so as he was in every way fitted for the post.

My mother had sent him out from England a double-barrelled gun, with good store of ammunition, as a reward for faithfully following me through the campaign, and a few days after receiving the present he brought me a carefully-penned missive, which he begged me to forward to his honoured patroness. It ran as follows :

MADAM,—With most respect and humble submission I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your favourable reward of one musket and seven hundred ammunitions. For this I am much thankful to you the kindness which is always awarded me by you and my master I shall be remembrance in my life.

(Signed) NURUDIN.

My experience during the campaign had added greatly to my knowledge of the Lushai language, and I occupied my leisure in preparing a hand-book of dialogues in that tongue, with a large vocabulary, which was afterwards printed and published by Government.

My residence at Demagree opened out quite a round of fresh occupations. At one time it would be a Lushai chief, with a score of followers, who came to pay a visit to Thangliena, and who would sit drinking silently, with no apparent intention of ever removing himself ; or there were the hundred and one questions to be attended to, concerning the drill, discipline, food and equipment of my small force.

The food question was, in truth, the greatest difficulty I had to contend with, for the Lushai villages in the neighbourhood had no surplus for sale, and consequently everything required for the sustenance of my garrison of one hundred and fifty men had to be brought in boats from Chittagong, a distance of one hundred and eighty miles. Then there was the hospital, where I, poor physician, had to prescribe for fifteen or twenty sick men, until later on, when, much to my relief, Government sent us a native doctor.

Beside all this, there were trees to fell, ground to clear, and houses to build, together with twelve elephants to superintend ;

not to mention the writing and, more tedious still, the copying out of the copious official reports upon every sort of subject which were required by Government, such as frontier policy, codification of law, vaccination, revenue settlement, education, survey, &c.

All sorts of curious cases came to me for decision. A girl fell at my feet one day, and sued for a divorce because, she said, her husband beat her mother every morning. But perhaps the most original and difficult case which came before me for decision was as follows.

I was walking up and down one evening, taking exercise in front of the mat house which sheltered me at Demagree, watching some of my men playing at quoits, when of a sudden there appeared a fugitive, like Man Friday coming to Crusoe. Bare-headed, bare-footed, with his clothes in disorder, one of the Frontier Battalion soldiers approached, running for his life. He was a simple, good-natured fellow, who had been sent to carry letters to the outpost on Sirthay Tlang, the hill-range above Demagree. This was his story:

"Sahib, I was going along with the letters"—here the quoits were abandoned, and a crowd of listeners pressed around us—"I was going along with the letters which I had received from your highness, and had reached the small water-fall halfway up the hill, where I stopped to drink. After I had drunk I proceeded on my way; but I had not gone above a musket-shot, when a great tiger came out and stood in the path. Then I feared for my life; and the tiger stood, and I stood, and we looked at each other. I had no weapon but my kukri (a Ghurkha knife), and the Government letters. So I said, 'My Lord Tiger, here are the Government letters, the letters of the Honble Kumpny Bahadur (the Honourable East India Company), and it is necessary for me to go on with them.' The tiger never ceased looking at me, and when I had done speaking he growled, but he never offered to get out of the way. On this I was much more afraid, so I kneeled down and made obeisance to him; but he did not take any more notice of that either, so at last I told him that I should report the matter to the Sahib, and I threw down the letters in front of him, and ran here as fast as I was able. Sahib, I now ask for your justice against that tiger."

This was a new mode of stopping Her Majesty's mails, so I sent out a party to prepare a trap for My Lord Tiger. It was most unreasonable behaviour on his part, for, as my men said, we never interfered with him. This stoppage of the road was a declaration of war, and we killed him not long afterwards.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts proper, of which Rangamati was the head-quarters, were managed during my absence very ably by Mr. Knyvett, the Superintendent of Police, who was vested by Government with the powers of a magistrate for the purpose; while the Bohmong's country, or, as it was now called, the Sungu Sub-Division, was in charge of Lieutenant Gordon. The whole, however, was under my charge, and required constant supervision.

I had formed a high opinion of the little Ghurkhas, who, under Colonel Macpherson, had done the fighting of the expedition, and I obtained permission to send to Nepal and get emigrants from there to colonise my frontier wastes. These Ghurkha colonies were established on the Myani river, a northern affluent of the Karna-phuli, and early in 1873 I set out from Demagree to visit them, and see how the settlement was progressing.

The country where these villages were located had previously been uninhabited, through fear of the marauding Lushais, and my idea had been to establish there good stockaded villages of courageous, stiffnecked people like the Ghurkhas, who should serve as a buffer between the Mong Raja's territory and the independent Lushai tribes to the east.

As I poled up the Myani, my dug-out canoe was brought to a standstill in a somewhat novel and unexpected fashion. A wild elephant (a big tusker) was taking a bath, and filled up the whole of the small stream with his huge body. Now the water was too shallow for us to effect a retreat with any speed, so that, had we insulted him in any way, he could easily have caught and punished us. I had with me, moreover, only a light double gun, which was of doubtful efficacy against such a mountain of flesh. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to wait patiently until His Majesty had concluded his ablutions, when he solemnly stalked up the bank into the forest and we were able to pursue our journey.

That same day I witnessed another equally curious and unusual spectacle. The banks of the stream rose on either hand, high and steep, the margin, however, affording a pleasant, passable path. I had got out of the boat to stretch my legs, and, more from idle curiosity than any other reason, I climbed the steep slope on the right to see what sort of country lay on the other side of it.

As my head topped the bank, I found myself looking into a small, grassy, basin-like clearing, on the opposite slope of which, facing me in the sun, lay a most beautiful tigress, with two small cubs tugging lustily at her teats. It was a fascinating sight, and fortunately, as the sun shone right into her eyes, I was able to observe it at my leisure.

Presently the two little ones left off sucking, and began to play in the most graceful and fantastic manner possible, until the sound of my boatmen singing, as they poled the boat upstream, put an end to my enjoyment, and I retired as quietly as I had come, lest Madame might resent the intrusion on her domestic privacy.

I stopped for breakfast at a small Tipra settlement on the bank, on the chance of getting some milk or eggs, and as I rested for a while in the headman's house, a beautiful ribbon-snake, of the most vivid grass-green, slender and long like a whip-lash, slowly wound its way through the bamboo of the roof over our heads. The good man informed me that it was quite harmless, and was never disturbed, as it was thought to bring good luck to the house which it visited.

After inspecting the Ghurkha settlements, and also visiting some villages of Tipra immigrants who had settled under their wing, I made my way to the camp of my friend Captain Hood, the Superintendent of Government Kheddas—in other words, " Elephant-Catcher Extraordinary to Her Majesty "—who was out, in pursuance of his function, and from whom I had received an invitation to share in his sport.

The wild elephant is found in all the remoter valleys of the Hill Tracts, in herds of from thirty to forty, or, where food is plentiful, in still larger numbers, and once every two or three years the Khedda Superintendent organizes a big hunt to catch

elephants, which are afterwards tamed and broken for the Government service.

The males seldom exceed nine or, in rare instances, ten feet in height. Twice round an elephant's foot gives the measure of his height at the shoulder. They are said to live to the age of one hundred and fifty years in a wild state, but no hill man that I ever met could remember to have seen a dead wild elephant. Probably when their powers fail them they retire to die in some very secluded spot. The domesticated elephant does not, as a rule, live more than eighty years.

There was an abundance of elephants in the forests at the head of the Myani river, and on my way to join Captain Hood we fell in with a herd of the great beasts. They were walking calmly along the ridge of a hill, the females and calves in advance with the tuskers as rear-guard. When we came in sight they halted, and I did the same, expecting that they would disperse and fly, as wild animals generally do at the sight of man; but instead of doing so, the herd huddled together, and a large, solemn tusker came to the front with uplifted trunk and flapping ears, charging us without more ado, and scattering my party hurriedly down the slope.

The only way to escape from an elephant who charges, if you have not got an heavy rifle with which to stop him, is to run down-hill, for if you attempt to run up-hill he has you in a moment, but down-hill his bulk baffles him, and he must perforce move with caution.

The herd which we thus met had probably been previously disturbed by Hood's scouts, for elephants do not usually seek the heights at that season, but keep to the valleys and streams from November to April, mounting to the high lands in May, to visit the salt licks, and to avoid the flies and ticks which render the forest uninhabitable during the rainy season.

I once went out elephant-hunting with Rutton Poia, and, as the Americans say, we had a high old time, so high, indeed, that I was thankful when it was over. The Lushai mode of elephant-hunting consisted in surrounding the animal, perhaps about fifty of us in a circle, and then blazing away to the centre. The consequence was that the bullets flew about as in a general action. We killed the elephant, it is true; but two of the

Lushais were wounded, one with a bullet, the other by a chance spear-thrust, and the wonder was that at least half of us were not left on the field. I had no intention of repeating this experience, but hoped with the Government Khedda to see a hunt of a different sort.

I joined Captain Hood just in time to witness the drive. His scouts had found a herd of about thirty elephants in one of the lateral valleys, and had placed men all round to keep them, if possible, undisturbed. At the mouth of the valley the khedda had been constructed, and to drive the herd into this was the object in view. The khedda was an ingenious sort of trap; a thin fence of bamboo was first constructed, in shape like a fan, extending outwards (at its broadest part being, perhaps, four miles wide), but, as this fence narrowed in, it increased in size and strength, changing from split bamboos to whole bamboos, and so on, until at length it became a stout fence or palisade of young tree trunks. At the narrowest end, where the two sides of the fan approached to a point, the khedda was constructed. This was a great circle of some fifty yards in diameter made of stout tree-trunks set close side by side, end on, in the earth, buttressed outside with supports, the whole being firmly bound together and fastened with withes of tough green cane. Inside the khedda a deep ditch was dug, so as to prevent the elephants, once caged, from approaching the fence to destroy it. An entrance was left, four yards in width, above which hung a heavy portcullis garnished on the inner side with sharp bamboo spikes, which could be dropped into place at the critical moment by cutting a rope. The fan-shaped or funnel-like fence which led up to the khedda grew weaker as it receded from the khedda, because the elephants do not try to break through it until it narrows and they become thoroughly terrified; before this, should they stray to the right or left, and reach the fence, their delicate sense of smell tells them that the hand of their enemy, man, has been at work there, and they recoil, suspicious of traps, and so go on inevitably to the khedda.

An elephant's power of scent is, indeed, wonderful: Hood told me that he had known wild elephants to get the wind of his tame ones at a distance of two miles.

At early dawn thirty men had been sent to the head of the

valley by a *détour*, with orders to drive the herd down to the khedda ; fifty more were spread out right and left, in ones and twos, along the funicular fence ; while Hood and myself, with his best men and the trained elephants, were in reserve at the khedda.

As the sun rose all preparations had been completed, and far away up the valley we heard the shouts of the men, mingled with the noise of shots and drums, as they drove the herd down on us. Slowly the noise drew nearer, the men on the right and left along the fence taking up the shout as the elephants passed them ; closer and yet closer came the din, rising at last to an infernal uproar, and as I peered out cautiously from behind the tree where I was stationed I saw the herd approaching.

In front of all came a huge tusker, who seemed to dominate the whole herd, so large was he. They pushed forward in hot haste until they reached the main stockade, and here, for a moment, they hesitated. The noise, the shouts, the explosions of fire-arms, were redoubled ; the leader turned, trumpeting with unlifted trunk, as if conscious of his danger, but the smaller elephants hurried timorously past him, entered the stockade, and, after a slight hesitation, he followed them. In a moment, Hood cut the cord, and down fell the portcullis. How many had entered the khedda it was for the moment impossible to say, but five of the herd had been left outside, in Hood's anxiety to secure the tusker, and these now bolted to the right where I was posted on the other side of the fence ; in their mad rage they charged the strong fence, and smashed it down as if it had been made of reeds, seeing which I and two of the khedda men, who were just outside, bolted for our lives. One of the men, unfortunately for himself, ran in the direction which the elephants followed in their flight, but immediately perceiving his mistake, he threw himself sideways into a clump of high grass on the left. I thought he had escaped ; alas ! no. The hindermost female, who had her calf trotting beside her, put out her trunk and scented the poor fugitive ; another moment, and she had trampled his life out.

The excitement became intense. Such a noise ! such a Babel of tongues ! the screaming of elephants, the reports of guns, the shouting of men, all mingled in one infernal chariyari.

The khedda was surrounded by men, some holding spears, others fire brands, whose duty it was to prevent the more adventurous of the captive elephants from approaching or injuring the khedda. The big tusker made several attempts to descend into the inner ditch in order to pull down the stockade, but was driven back by lighted fire-brands and the firing in his face of blank charges of powder.

The sun was now westering, and the process of tying-up commenced : an operation that to me, as one of the uninitiated, seemed by far the most dangerous part of the business.

The tame elephants entered the enclosure, each bearing two men on her back, one of whom guided the tame elephant, and engaged the attention of the wild one which was to be tied, while the other man slipped off behind and dexterously tied together the hind legs of the newly-caught creature. The most combative and largest of the wild elephants were the first selected to be thus disabled ; the smaller ones were attended to afterwards. The magnificent tusker was accordingly first tied, and when thus hampered was led out of the enclosure between two tame elephants (another pushing him from behind when necessary), and was securely picketed with strong ropes to two great trees in the vicinity. It was a wonderful sight, and one never to be forgotten. Night set in before the work of tying up was concluded, for it was necessary to secure safely each captured elephant before the men were permitted to rest from their labours ; but when all was over, Hood expressed himself as satisfied with the result, having obtained twenty-one fine elephants.

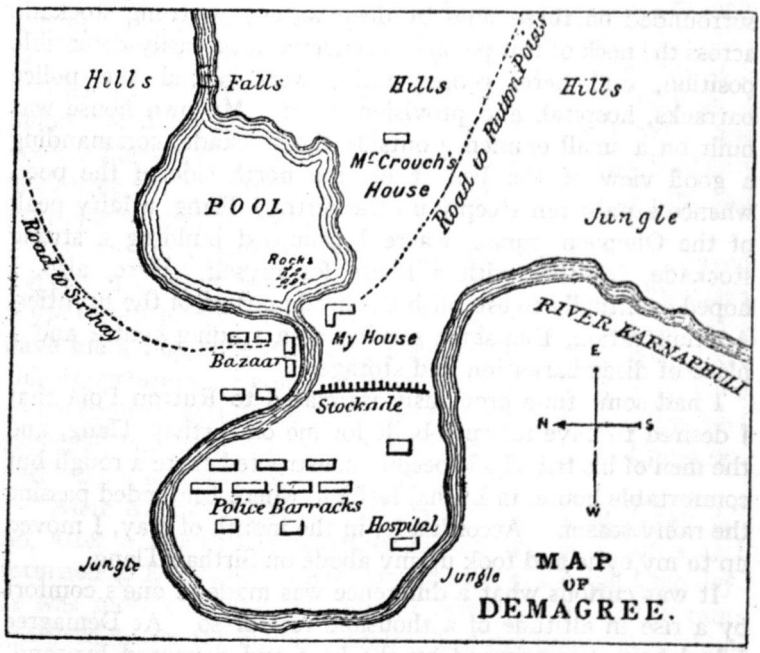
The next morning we went to look at the captives, chief among whom was the majestic tusker aforesaid, evidently the king of the herd. Some food had been given him, grain and plantain shoots, but he would have none of it. There he stood, swaying his body backwards and forwards with a restless never-ceasing movement, looking thoroughly untameable.

" Don't go too near him," said Hood, " he is still dangerous, I think."

As the words left his lips, the elephant seized the stem of a plantain-tree which had been given him for food, and hurled it at us with surprising force. Fortunately neither of us were

struck, and we retired promptly to a more respectful distance. This grand creature, I afterwards learned, refused all food, and finally starved himself to death, but never gave in!

Captain Hood intended making another khedda, and subsequently captured nine more elephants; but I could remain with him no longer, and returned with all speed to Demagree, having to superintend the establishment of the new stockaded




post on Sirthay Tlang, the hill-range in the immediate vicinity of our new settlement.

I had found by the experience gained during the last rains that the valleys were only healthy during the colder season of the year, and I was consequently anxious to move as many of my men as possible to the heights.

Demagree itself was very picturesquely and conveniently situated, and was well calculated to serve as a depôt and storehouse of provisions, which could thus far be brought by water. The river Karna-phuli here breaks through a hill-range

by a narrow gorge of black rock, over which it foams, in two small falls, down to a still basin of clear green water of about half a mile in circumference.

The hills, which rise in long ranges to the east, trending north and south, shielded the place from the cold winds, while the level shores of the basin offered facilities for building. On the south-western side of the basin a bed of rock deflected the river, causing it to make a bend, and thus to form a small peninsula surrounded on three sides by deep water; a strong stockade across the neck of this peninsula rendered it an easily-defensible position, and here, consequently, were placed the police barracks, hospital, and provision depôt. My own house was built on a small eminence outside the stockade, commanding a good view of the bazaar on the north side of the pool, whence a path ran steeply up the Sirthay Tlang, a lofty peak of the Ohepoom range, where I proposed building a strong stockade, together with a house for myself. Here, also, I hoped eventually to establish the headquarters of the Frontier-Administration, Demagree serving as a trading centre and a place of disembarkation and storage.

I had some time previously intimated to Rutton Poia that I desired to have a house built for me on Sirthay Tlang, and the men of his tribe had speedily constructed there a rough but comfortable house, in Lushai fashion, where I intended passing the rainy season. Accordingly, in the month of May, I moved up to my eyrie and took up my abode on Sirthay Tlang.

It was curious what a difference was made in one's comfort by a rise in altitude of a thousand feet or so. At Demagree I had been overpowered by the heat and devoured by sand-flies, while at Sirthay I had to clothe myself warmly and keep the doors shut. The house which my Lushai friends had constructed for me was made of rough unhewn logs, plastered outside with mud, and the walls inside covered with bamboo matting, very comfortable in its way, but decidedly savage. This was afterwards christened Uncle Tom's Cabin by my assistants, and was dear to me, not so much as a dwelling, but as an emblem of diplomatic triumph and recognition of chiefship by the Lushais.

I must needs confess, however, that the wind whistled at

times very keenly on my lonely hill-top, and I gazed enviously at the crested falcon which perched on a dead tree near the house, wishing that I had a warm suit of feathers like his, instead of some thin old English garments which kept out neither wind nor weather. I missed also the care and attention of my servant Nurudin, who was at the Demagree bazaar as Superintendent.

My household, which consisted almost entirely of hill-men, became demoralized without the major-domo Nurudin; they lost my clothes, they broke my lamps, they dropped my concertina into the river, so that I was never able to play on it again; and, as a crowning misfortune, they selected a fine conical black rock, and from the back of one of the elephants they dropped upon it the box containing my stock of wine and beer, newly arrived from Calcutta.

Just two days before I moved up to Sirthay I had received by post a cookery book, from the study of which I promised myself both pleasure and profit. The keen air of Sirthay also gave me a fine appetite; but, alack! my faithful cook took this opportunity for going on leave, while his hill-deputy came to me smiling, with the intelligence that the bottom of my best saucepan had burned itself out, and that the store of potatoes and onions was entirely exhausted.

"Allah Akbar!" I said, "who can struggle against Fate?" So, after a month's comfortless sojourn on the mountain, I returned to Demagree, where, at any rate, one could keep dry. It was most cool and pleasant at Sirthay, but as the rains gathered power the clouds literally filled my house, everything becoming as wet as if I had inhabited a cavern at the bottom of the sea. It was impossible, with the rain falling in sheets, to get about much, so I occupied my time in putting into Burmese Professor Max Müller's translation of the "Dharma-pada: the Path of Wisdom or Virtue." This I afterwards had printed for distribution among the Khyoung-tha of the Hill Tracts, by whom its sententious philosophy was highly appreciated.

I busied the men in planting a thick cactus hedge along the stockade at Demagree, and also, whenever a break came in the rain, I practised them in rifle-shooting. It was as well to be prepared for any emergency. Small parties of Lushais

frequently visited me during the rains, bringing presents, such as fresh vegetables from their "jums," the leg of a wild pig, or a quarter of venison. I was able by this time to converse with them pretty freely, and amused myself by collecting from their lips a variety of stories and legends. These visits involved, of course, the consumption of much drink, and I devised a plan whereby I was able to hob-nob with them to their heart's content, for while they drank undiluted rum I quaffed freely from a decanter of toast and water. The necessary appearance of roystering was preserved, and all parties were pleased.

I moved up again to the heights of Sirthay Tlang as soon as the rains abated somewhat of their fury, for the loneliness and wild grandeur of the place had a strange attraction for me. I carried with me two Lushai cats, and treated (unsuccessfully) for a parrot, feeling it necessary to preserve the "Crusoe" *ensemble* as much as possible.

I remember one afternoon standing on the verge of a mighty brown rock that crowned the hill close to my house on Sirthay; I knew that beneath me the valley fell in a sheer dip of hundreds of feet, but instead of the usual fair woodland landscape, there rose up, striking me dumbly in the face, a mighty wall of grey mist, blotting out earth and sky alike. Piled up to heaven, and stretching far away on either hand, it rose before one, dim, white, mysterious, and, as if possessed of an individuality of its own, there would come now and again a slow uneasy movement in the white mass, as if something were stirring in its folds, like a snake in its coils. One could not look long enough; "Krey ma wak," as the hill folk say. The sight was fascinating, and gave one an impulse to spring out into the soft white fleece. And this mist would pass away as quickly as it came. That same evening it was quite clear, and there was a glorious sunset; so I scrambled down a neighbouring ravine, and watched the rushing torrent cast its masses of topaz-coloured water over the dark rocks, foaming, raging, roaring, and tumbling headlong down, with such an uproarious outpouring of living strength, that I shouted aloud in sympathy with the wild water.

The day was dying peacefully as I climbed back to my cabin. The light faded away off the far-away purple hills in the How-

long country, lingering last, for one tender moment, on the scarped scaur of the great Mui Fang Tlang, the range of hills which had stood between the right column and the column commanded by General Bourchier. Far down below in the valley twinkled a light from the dwelling of some savage householder, and on the evening air floated the mournful wailing cry of the guyal, as they slowly wound their way home from the woodland to their master's house, where a handful of salt awaited them. I sat long, looking eastward, dreaming of fresh explorations, new adventures (dreams never, alas! to become realities), until nightfall compelled me to seek the warmth of the cheerful wood fire which I found burning on my earthen hearth in true Lushai fashion.

I had much at heart a plan for inducing the principal Sylu and Howlong chiefs to accompany me to Calcutta, there to pay their homage to the great ones of Government and to see the glories of the metropolis, and I had to this end frequently thrown out feelers while conversing with chiefs who came to see me.

It was, however, no easy task: the entire ignorance and simplicity of the Lushai mind freed them from the inducements which would influence men in general. What, indeed had they to gain? and had they not their lives to lose? In asking them to place their lives and liberties in my hands, to undertake what in their eyes would be a long and perilous journey to a foreign country, over unknown "lakes," and in strange and wonderful steam-vessels, it was perhaps hardly to be expected that they would readily lend their ears to the voice of the charmer. Still, I lost no opportunity of urging the idea upon the attention of such chiefs as came to visit me.

One day, the chief Saipoiya, a leader and influential man among the Southern Howlongs, came to see me with a numerous following, and to him I forthwith propounded my scheme in glowing colours: he would receive presents from the Governor-General; he would see such wonders as none of his ancestors had ever seen or ever dreamed of; and, moreover, he would be quite safe, for, as I pointed out, his brother-in-law, Rutton Poia, had agreed to go, and this he would not have done unless assured of safety. All this and much more I pressed upon the chief,

who was evidently much tempted by the proposal. His followers, however, did not at all relish the idea, and a wily old karbari put forward the views of the opposition, in logical form, as follows :—

" It is true, and we believe all you say, Thangliena ; we have known you for a long time, and your tongue is straight. Your words are very good words, but it is wise to look at both sides of a matter. Is it not so ? "

A murmer of assent from all, in which I joined.

" You say," continued the karbari, " that the Big Chief in Calcutta, the Gubnor Gendel, is more powerful than you are. Is that the case ? "

" Yes," I replied. " He is very great ; certainly more powerful than I am."

" Well, then," rejoined the karbari, " suppose he orders Saipoiya to be speared ? " Sensation.

It is needless to say that Saipoiya did not go to Calcutta. He took leave of me, asseverating that, although he was indeed my brother, yet he was no relation of Lord Northbrook's, and would not, therefore, visit his village. I had many such interviews to go through, and arrangements to make with the authorities at the other end ; for I had set my nets on as large a scale as possible, and wished to take with me to Calcutta a fairly representative troop of my wild men. If one had to play the part of showman it was well at least to have a good show.

I had to arrange so that the chiefs should remain as short a time in Calcutta as was compatible with their seeing everything and being seen by those in authority there ; for, should the health of any member of the party suffer, I should have been personally responsible to the tribe, and should have to compensate his relatives with blood-money, for the *lex talionis* prevailed to an alarming extent amongst my barbaric friends.

After a good deal of manœuvring I at length started for Chittagong accompanied by seven chiefs with a select number of followers, the party numbering altogether twenty-seven. From Chittagong we went by steamer to Calcutta, the journey being performed without any noteworthy incident, save that I was struck by the impassivity of the Lushais, their astonishment, if they felt any, being expressed by an apparent increase

in the stolidity of their demeanour. Throughout the journey they steadily maintained an attitude of suspicion, which chiefly manifested itself by a pertinacity of attachment to myself, never allowing me to be out of their sight.

On arriving at Calcutta, tents had been pitched for the accommodation of the party on the "maidaun" or large grassy plain which forms the lungs, as it were, of the city; and I had hoped to take up my quarters at the Club hard by, in my usual fashion; so, after putting them in a carriage at our place of disembarkation, under charge of Nurudin, I was entering another vehicle myself, when I felt my coat-tails firmly clutched from behind; turning, I found the chiefs, who refused to return from following after me. Vainly I expostulated, and explained what was proposed for their comfort; but the fear of Lord Northbrook was upon them, the great white chief who was more powerful than I, and they would not let me go. Another tent, therefore, was pitched for me in their camp, and I remained with them during their stay in Calcutta.

They went in due course to pay their homage to the Lieutenant-Governor, as the head of the Bengal Government, to whom they gravely bowed as to an equal, presenting him with the usual offerings of elephants' tusks and home-spun cloth. They objected, however, to visiting Lord Northbrook, and were not taken there.

The magnificence of the City of Palaces did not apparently impress them, nor the dwelling of the Lieutenant-Governor, palatial as it was, although a solid silver sofa, supported by silver lions, which occupied a conspicuous place in the drawing-room of Belvedere, held their attention for a brief space. Two of them lost themselves in the streets one evening, and were brought back late at night by a friendly policeman, much to the relief of the remainder of the party, who had become very silent and depressed through fear of Lord Northbrook. After this they never wandered far from the tents, unless under my charge, or with Nurudin.

They slept very little, but sat together in the tent, talking and smoking far into the night. On the whole, the balance of their minds inclined in favour of their own hill-tops, where there were no mosquitoes (the plague of Calcutta), and where the

ceaseless jostling of strange men troubled them not. They were not disturbed by the crowd of idlers which daily thronged our camp to gaze at them ; perhaps because this was in accord with their own customs, for in the Lushai villages I was mobbed to death, and never enjoyed a moment's privacy.

Once, and once only, were they roused to enthusiasm, and that was when I took them a mile at full speed on a fiery, snorting locomotive engine, which was placed at my disposal for the purpose by the Traffic-Manager of the East India Railway. This fairly frightened the dignity out of them, and when safely arrived on the earth again, they shook their heads, confessing that the power and wisdom of the Sahibs was altogether wonderful.

They remained in Calcutta a fortnight, and then departed to their hills, under the charge of Nurudin, laden with a variety of presents and purchases. They were well pleased with their visit, and more than well pleased that it was safely over, and they bade me farewell with effusion, begging me to follow them with all speed. Doubtless, in after ages tradition will hand down the wonders seen by these chiefs when they went with Thangliena to visit the Lord Sahib in Calcutta.

This visit of the Lushai chiefs to offer their homage personally to our Government formed a fitting sequel and, as I regarded it, a culmination of the Lushai incident. To the Calcutta idlers who came to stare at the wild men encamped on the "maidaun," they seemed but a handful of barbarians, with unkempt hair, clad in curious tartans, and armed with strange weapons ; but to me, who had lived among them, and knew the nature of these men, and the authority wielded by them among their own people, it seemed a wonderful thing that I should ever have succeeded in pursuading them to trust their lives in my hands.

Honest fellows they were, and true, in their own wild way. I never saw them or their hills again, for the Home Government refused to sanction the proposals made by the Government of India for the reconstitution of the Frontier administration, and I saw no chance of being able to carry out efficiently the work on which I had set my heart, to which I had pledged my faith, and for which I had worked so long.

I think, also, I was out of spirits, as I certainly was out of

health. The life which I had led in the hills was one involving the extremest hardship and personal responsibility. Without friends, without society, and (until the last year or so) without the companionship of a fellow-countryman, and now, added to this, the lack of any recognition of my services, filled me with such a chill sense of disappointment, that I felt it impossible to renew work on the old terms.

I had disregarded the doctor's advice at the end of the Lushai campaign, in order to complete and consolidate the effects of the expedition; but I could hold up no longer, being really ill; and so, once more, somewhat weary and broken, I returned to England, and, a few years later, left the service, with the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and a pension of £190 a year.

Looking back now, with the wider philosophy which years have given, I can see that the Indian Government is perhaps wise in not encouraging individual effort. A public servant's idiosyncrasy must not be too strongly developed, even for the *good* of those under his charge. Things may go better for a time—for his time—but the difficulty of replacing such an officer, when removed by death or promotion, is an insuperable objection. A high Indian official once brusquely but pertinently remarked in my hearing, "We don't want personal influence; we want men who will obey orders."

Talleyrand's maxim, "*Surtout point de zèle*," is, perhaps, too cynical as applied to our Indian bureaucracy; but a zeal that involves the outlay of Government money, and risks lives that may have to be avenged, is to be deprecated rather than encouraged. I knew and loved my hill people. I lived among them and was their friend. They admitted me into their homes and family life as few Englishmen have been admitted. I ate with them, talked with them, played music at their feasts, and joined in their hunting expeditions. They concealed no thoughts from me; I had their confidence. They gave me their sons to educate, and invited me to the marriage-feasts of their daughters. I was ready to spend and be spent in their service. But, after all, I was only "a fly on the wheel"; they were not *my* people. I did but represent and make known to them the impartial justice, the perfect tolerance, and

the respect for personal freedom which characterise the British rule in India, gaining for it the respect of all creeds and all classes, and making it, in spite of many blunders, misunderstandings, and mistakes, the strongest and wisest Government, since the old Roman Empire, that this world has known.

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Look not mournfully into the Past. It cometh not again.

Wisely improve the Present. It is thine.

Go forth to meet the shadowy Future without fear and with a manly heart.

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