

MY JOURNAL DURING THE BHOOTAN CAMPAIGN,  
1864-5.

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BY CAPTAIN F. G. E. WARREN, R.A.

OF the kingdom of Bhootan we know next to nothing—a beautiful shadow of doubt covers all connected with it. Its government is a joint-stock business, the head of the firm being the strongest man in the country at the time being; we know the names of certain functionaries, though what their functions are we can only guess at. The religion is Buddhism, with a servile devotion to dirt.

Bhootan is about 250 miles in length, east to west, and 90 miles in breadth, north to south; of this a long stretch varying from 20 to 25 miles in breadth and the entire length of the country lies in the plains, the remainder in the mountains of the Himalayas; thus the country boasts every degree of climate, the overbearing heat of Assam, the bracing air of England, and the cold of Greenland.

Our earliest connection with the country was in the beginning of this century, and since then all our correspondence with it has had reference to outrages committed by the inhabitants of Bhootan on British territory and subjects.

The long stretch of plain country before mentioned is divided into eighteen districts, called dooars, from the word Dooar *anglicè* Gate, and are named after the mountain passes or gates which lead into the hills. Most of the dooars were wrested by the Bhooteas from the Assamese previous to our occupation of Assam, while other dooars had been held by Bhootan for a considerable time. On our occupation of Assam we found that Bhootan had been receiving rent for certain of these lands, and this payment we continued.

Robberies, murders, cattle-lifting, and violence of every description followed one another in rapid succession—Bhootan the aggressor, England the sufferer. In 1828, 1834, and 1836 we find we remonstrated in vain, down from the hills came the gangs of robbers, and the wretched inhabitants of our frontier led an unenviable time of it indeed.

In 1838 Captain Pemberton was deputed to go to Poonakh, the capital of Bhootan, to make some satisfactory settlement regarding these outrages. He went by the eastern road, *viâ* Gowhatty and Dewangiri, and found the country in the throes of revolution; the Paro Penlow held the west, the Tongso Penlow the east country, the nominal ruler, the Dhurm Raja, being nowhere. This happy prince is (like the Chinese Emperor) supposed to be something god-like; he is called an incarnation, and is in reality a puppet. The method of choosing his sanctity is sweetly simple and innocent. The shoes and drinking cup of the late departed Dhurm Raja are placed among



numbers of others, and the chosen successor (a child of tender years) will point out those of the late Simon Pure; then follow rejoicings and drunkenness *ad libitum*.

Captain Pemberton could do nothing. In 1839 we have more outrages. In 1841, in retaliation, we attach three Assam dooars; in 1843 we agree to pay Bhootan a revenue for these of £1000 a year, besides £500 for another district, thus actually paying the ravager for his crimes.

In 1855 two Bhootan princes arrived in our territory, claiming an increase to this black mail, and on its being refused they on their return journey home plundered British subjects to the value of £286, torturing men to disclose their treasures. We demanded the culprits and restitution; both were denied, but we stopped the money from the next year's revenue, and were content. Thereupon the Tongso Penlow addressed a threatening letter to the British authorities, backing it up by outrages and robbery. We remonstrated again, using the now tiresome threat of occupying the dooars, and saying that should they apologize for their naughty conduct we would raise the black-mail by £200 per annum more. The answer to this was three further outrages and the murder of a British subject, just to vary the monotony of the thing.

The Bengal government seeing some extenuating circumstances, resolved "not to proceed at once to coercion," and the consequence was that in the next four years there were recorded 33 more cases of outrage, 45 British subjects being carried off into captivity, and in one single case over £2000 of property being plundered.

In 1861 the Bengal government decided to do something. One of the dooars was occupied, and the Bhootan authorities were informed that this district would be held until the captives were restored and the guilty parties punished. On this occasion the Governor-General's agent, Colonel Jenkins, acted with too much decision, for he threatened Bhootan with further annexation in case of their refusing the British demands. On the Bengal government pointing out his error to him Colonel Jenkins expressed his regret and was forgiven.

Still the outrages continued, not single exceptional cases, but in different districts, and in 1862 the Bengal government decided to send a mission to Bhootan. This mission left in the spring of 1864, and the Papers on Bhootan, presented to the House of Commons in 1865, furnishes the following particulars:—

"Mr Eden seems never to have officially reported to the government of India his departure or progress. The letter of 21st April, received here on 5th May, appears to be the first official report of any kind laid before government. It communicates to government the entire failure of the mission. After pressing into the country in spite of as plain warnings as any native government ever gives that the mission was unacceptable, and in spite of insolent treatment on the way, the envoy reached Poonakha on the 13th of March, where he found the Deb and Dhurm Rajahs were puppets in the hands of the Tongso Pillo, the successful head of the late insurrection, and the very man who had been most injured by the annexation of the Assam dooars. By this man, who refused to treat except on condition of the restoration of the Assam dooars, the mission were subjected to unheard of treachery and insults, were derided, buffeted, spat upon, and



threatened with imprisonment and the stocks. With difficulty the mission obtained permission to return after the envoy and Cheebo Lama had signed an agreement in duplicate that the British government would re-adjust the whole boundary between the two countries, restore the Assam dooars, deliver up all runaway slaves and political offenders who had taken refuge in British territory, and consent to be punished by the Bhootan and Cooch Behar governments, acting together, if they ever made encroachments on Bhootan. The envoy resolved to sign this document after considering in concert with the other officers of the mission and rejecting the only other courses which appeared open to him, viz. first, that he and Cheebo Lama should remain as hostages on condition of the rest of the camp being permitted to return; and, second, attempting to escape by night. Both copies of the agreement which he signed were marked as signed 'under compulsion.'

"There are three important points on which the envoy appears to have departed from the explicit instructions which were given to him:

"1st, He seems to have pushed on ahead, leaving the presents\* to be brought up afterwards, whereas he was told to open his negotiations by delivering the presents.

"2nd, He commenced his negotiations by delivering to the Durbar a copy of the draft treaty, thereby showing his whole hand, although several of the clauses were alternative, and some of them he was required not to press if they interfered with the political objects to be obtained. It is remarkable that the only clauses to which formal objection was made, however insincere and treacherous the Durbar may have been, were those articles (8 and 9) on which government entertained doubts, and one of which the envoy was instructed not to press.

"3rd, Although the envoy marked the documents as signed under compulsion, he gave the Durbar no reason to believe that he had done so; on the contrary, the papers appear to have been signed with all the formalities of a voluntary engagement, and the envoy accepted presents for the Governor-General. All this was a deliberate violation of the last paragraph of the instructions of 25th September, 1863.

"The envoy asks instructions as to the disposal of the presents, consisting of three ponies and some pieces of silk, whether they are to be sold or returned through the Dalimkote Soubah; he also seems to have received a letter to the Governor-General, which he has not yet submitted."

The consequence of the treatment of this mission by the Bhoteas, was the war in 1864-65, when the government decided to attack the dooars or level country of Bhootan.

The two Penlows before mentioned have full power of life and death, and for the government of their respective countries they have under them officers styled Soubahs and Jungpeus; but these men's power is most

\* He has not furnished the list of these presents, which he was told to submit.



unstable, a new aspirant to the honour has but to bribe the Penlow and he is allowed to try his hand at ousting him who holds the appointment; a fight takes place, and the victor is allowed to hold authority on the payment of a few more bribes. The people do not appear unhappy, neither do they seem to be tyrannized over—at least I speak of the native Bhootea; the Bengalee slave, however, leads a miserable existence, his very nature being unable to bear against the cold climate of the mountains.

The monasteries taking away as they do so many of the able-bodied men, leave a large proportion of unmarried women, and the existence of polyandry makes the disproportion between married men and women still greater; hence vice and immorality reign throughout the country, and the natural consequence, disease, commits fearful ravages among the people. An intelligent Bhootea of the superior class told us that there were few men or women in Bhootan who had not suffered from the terrible scourge.

I cannot but believe that this is the main cause of so few Bhooteas reaching an advanced age, for the climate is pre-eminently good. Small-pox also prevails to an alarming extent, nearly every full-grown man is marked by it; their dirt, vice, and gluttony lays them open to all diseases. They are besides inveterate drunkards, never losing an opportunity that presents itself of becoming intoxicated off a vile spirit made from millet, the taste and smell of which is equally sickening.

The Bhootea is armed with bow and arrows; he has besides a straight, heavy sword, without a hilt, which he uses for all purposes, for felling timber and carpentering as well as for fighting. The Sepoy has a matchlock and helmet, the latter made of iron or brass, with a flap of chain-armor hanging down the back. The arrows are often poisoned, but not one of our men wounded with a poisoned arrow died from the effects of the poison, so it may be safely considered harmless. The catapult is extensively used in their forts, and is a formidable weapon of defence, the steep sides of the hill presenting every advantage to a falling mass of stones, which reach into steep gullies not visible to a matchlock man. The Bhootea is an admirable woodman, and few surpass him in rapidity and dexterity when building stockades. In appearance he is fairer than the inhabitants of Hindostan, of decided Tartar physiognomy, stoutly built, and with little or no hair upon his face. His dress consists of one garment, only a long wide dressing-gown, fastened by a sash or piece of cotton round the waist; in the breast of this coat he carries all the articles he requires for his toilet, and also his wooden drinking cup, without which he never moves.

This dressing gown is, when new, of brightly coloured cloth, often in stripes, which gives a gay appearance to the picturesque savage, armed, as he always is, with sword, bow and arrows, but as it is never washed, these colours soon become indistinct.

Early in October, 1864, I received orders to proceed to the eastern frontier of India, to join the force then assembling for the invasion of Bhootan. After making all arrangements incident to a journey over 1000 miles, I proceeded towards Calcutta, for I found it impossible to obtain the slightest reliable information as to the most direct route to the place mentioned as my destination, Cherrapoonjie.

On arriving at Calcutta I discovered that this most direct route was by steamer, up the Brahmapootra; and I was further informed that the corps



I was about to join had left Cherrapoonjie, and that my best plan was to proceed to Assam. Two of the bases of operation, Goolpara and Gowhatty, being in that country and on the Brahmapootra.

Having received orders to proceed to Assam, by the steamer "Koladyne," I embarked with several other officers similarly bound, the steamer having two other craft filled with stores and ammunition, for the necessities of the campaign.

The vessels used on the Ganges and Brahmapootra must be of low draught, and hence it is necessary that the cargo should be carried in boats, called flats, as the machinery and coal are found to sink the steamer itself to the fullest maximum draught of five feet. These flats are fastened on either side of the steamer, and by this means we were enabled to pass over the numerous sand banks that render the navigation of these great rivers so dangerous, and besides to carry a very large cargo. When moving troops along points accessible from the river, they can be carried on board these flats, two decks being built for such a contingency. In the present case we had on board a company of native sappers and miners, under Lieutenant Urquhart, and some 200 coolies, intended for the carrying of the future sick and wounded.

It was subsequently discovered by the passengers, that they might have been saved the inconvenience and expense of ten days' voyage in the steamer, as at the lapse of that time we came to a town on the Ganges, called Koostia, where the Eastern Bengal Railway has its terminus. This place is reached in four hours by rail from Calcutta, whereas, we had taken ten days by water, having had to pass through the elaborate winding passages of the Sunderbunds, the delta of the mighty rivers, Ganges and Brahmapootra, a stretch of country, well known for its deadly climate.

A few more days saw us on the waters of the Brahmapootra, which we had entered by a connecting and natural channel from the Ganges; but the scenery presented the same monotonous continuance of low sand banks and paddy fields; and it was not until we approached Assam that the dead level of the horizon was broken by the rising up of the Garrow hills on the left bank.

The days had been hot and the clouds of sand blown from the banks, whenever the wind arose, had made our journey a rather trying one. At night mosquitoes would occasionally attack us savagely, should we have stopped in the neighbourhood of their haunts: for so intricate and dangerous is the course of this river to ships, that it is necessary to anchor at sunset every night. If near the bank, the native soldiers were permitted to land and cook their dinner, their creed forbidding the cooking of food on board ship; they are thus obliged to subsist upon parched grain during the voyage. The frugality and abstemiousness of the native soldier makes him doubly valuable in a campaign of the nature we were about to enter upon, as the commissariat arrangement for his diet and comfort are far more simple than those necessary for British soldiers.

The passengers consisted, as I before mentioned, of officers, bound to join the Bhootan expedition, and among them was a Captain Austin, one of the mission under the Hon. Ashley Eden, who had gone to the Bhootan capital of Poonakha the previous year, and whose ill-treatment had brought about this the latest of England's little wars.



It had been decided that Bhootan should be entered at four points. The two on the right formed the right brigade, under Major-General Mulcaster; those on the left formed the left brigade, under Brigadier Dunsford. Taking from the right, they were to move upon Dewangiri, Bessin Singh, Buxa and Darlingkote respectively, points about 40 miles apart *as the crow flies*, but an indefinite distance apart when the totally unknown nature of the country came to be considered.

As no roads existed, all the carriage of the different columns had to be effected by means of elephants, or coolies; but the supply of these fell far short of the requirements, and hence the forces under the junior officers suffered under considerable difficulties. The small number of coolies it was found possible to collect, and their continual escape from the work imposed, rendered them a useless dependency. Had arrangements been previously made for having them enrolled and placed under proper officers (as was done later when the war had virtually ended), then these coolies would have proved a valuable assistance to the force.

Considering the high pay given to these men and the considerate way in which they were treated—for I never once witnessed or heard a single case of their ill-treatment—it is difficult to account for their aversion to the work, unless as was generally said, they believed that we were marching to certain destruction, so high an opinion had they of the power of our enemies.

Another method for carrying supplies which was greatly depended upon, was by bullocks, droves of which were sent from districts in our own territory; but as some forty bullocks would be under one or two men, the others having deserted, and as these animals turned deaf ears to the alluring language of men not accustomed to them, they had at last to be almost abandoned. The commissariat officers would strive desperately to use them, and did so at first with some success; but the nature of the country, which allowed them to stray, and the rank nature of the grass on which they had to feed, soon reduced them in numbers and condition, and their carcasses were left at our camping grounds, marking but too plainly the line of our march. The drivers of these bullocks, like the coolies, evinced the greatest repugnance to the campaign, so different from the general feeling of camp-followers, who know that when following an army they have every chance of pillaging to their hearts' content, and accumulating a fortune.

The right centre column, that to which I had been appointed (for the purpose of commanding the artillery details), assembled on the right bank of the Brahmapootra, opposite to, and five miles below the town of Gowalpara, at a village called Jogeegopah, or the "Cave of the hermit." The tall rank grass was cleared and we were soon shaking ourselves down to that degree of acquaintance so essential to the enjoyment of a campaign. Our little force consisted of a wing of the 12th Regiment Native Infantry, and a wing of the 44th Regiment Native Infantry, 50 Sappers, natives also, with two guns and two rocket apparati, altogether about 700 men, under the command of Colonel Richardson, of the 44th Regiment Native Infantry, a gallant officer who had distinguished himself greatly by the bold, decided, and rapid manner in which he had broken any power of the Cossiahs that dared to assemble on what he called his dunghill in the Jynteah and Cossiah hills; he successfully attacked and took every stockade that was there built, and was the first in at every one, and he had active men to emulate him in his



hardy Ghoorkas of the 44th. At last a Cossiah bullet broke his shins and quieted his ardour, or rather his pace. This Cossiah campaign was one of England's little wars of which nothing is known at home, but in which there was much silent endurance and untold privation.

The 12th Regiment consisted of men of different classes; the old Sepoy, tall, straight, and spindle-shanked; and the more warlike though less cleanly Patan and Sikh. The men were dressed in red, with red turban, a telling uniform for parade but one scarcely adapted for the concealment necessary in hill and bush fighting. The 44th Regiment, principally hill men from Nepal, called Ghoorkas, were dressed in dark-green, and though badly armed (having the old heavy brown bess) they had the look of men meant for hard service; they were fresh from the Cossiah campaign, the best school in which a soldier could be taught stockade making and taking, and how to march well with little to eat and less to wear.

The climate at our rendezvous in Assam in October was cool and pleasant; the dews at night were the heaviest I have ever known, but the force remained healthy. Game abounded in the neighbourhood—buffalo, pig, and deer were killed in considerable numbers; as also smaller game, such as partridge, bustard, and wild-fowl. Tiger and bear, and also rhinoceros were known to abound, but the jungle grass was so high and dense at this season of the year that they could not be seen, though often within a few yards of the excited and expectant sportsman. The wild buffalo is identical with the tame, owing to the villagers never keeping tame bulls, but trusting to the wild ones for their offices; several tame cow-buffaloes fell victims in consequence, but as the owners got well rewarded, I rather believe that they assisted in more than prevented the deaths.

The commissariat arrangements for an advance could not be completed, in consequence of the carriage necessary for baggage and provision having been taken by other officers of different columns. However, at length Colonel Richardson determined to go on as best he could, and accordingly moved off with one half (or right leg) of his force to Bijnee, the nearest point in Bhootan territory (where a detachment of our force had been early sent), returning the baggage animals to bring up the other half (or left leg).

Two mornings after Colonel Richardson had left, several elephants arrived in camp, and I was desired to follow with the sappers as an escort; a number of bullocks were given me for baggage, as also provisions for three days, and anxious to get to the front, we gladly prepared for our start.

A herd of bullocks was driven towards the lines we occupy, and among terms of endearment and cries of rage the soldiers proceeded to lade the brutes; but alas! no sooner would the gentle bile (*anglicè* bullock) have his load fairly and equitably poised than with a wriggle and a twist he would jump it off his back, and, turning round, stare innocently at the ruin. In one instance, when a well-packed load had been cunningly and securely fastened, the gentle animal performed a series of buck jumps that would have done honour to a "Waler."\* Some of these animals when laden would walk demurely away (every man was engaged assisting others when

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\* Waler, a horse from New South Wales, proverbial for their buck-jumping qualities.



once his own work was done) and penetrate far out of sight into the tangled wilderness of grass that lay outside the lines, and would be found only after a weary search.

When at length some 20 or 30, more tractable than the rest, were collected and driven in the direction they were to go (we could not talk of roads), there was first passive resistance, which gradually grew into livelier rebellion and finally into a furious stampede. There was no marching in that method, as all the little force was engaged in "woo'ing" and loading, in catching cattle and making dashes at one that broke back; so to get away from that place and not be obliged to undergo another such melancholy start we put heavier loads on the elephants we had got, as I knew that stores of meal, &c. (all that was necessary for the rations of native soldiers), were collected at our halting places ahead.

A march of twelve miles brought us to the village of Lotabaree; the road had been distinctly marked out, and we proceeded rapidly. The nullahs we had to cross had been bridged for men and cattle, but the elephants had to ford the deep, muddy streams, and in one instance one of these huge animals took over an hour extricating himself; he had once before been "fixed" in a quagmire and now refused even to attempt to go on, but trumpeted in a crying, feeble manner.

The whole of this first day's march lay through a wide plain, now covered with dense jungle grass high above a rider's head, now spreading out into a short expanse of shorter but equally rank vegetation; twice we passed through villages with a considerable amount of cultivation around, all rice, with its single field of mustard. The houses were entirely built of bamboo, the walls being plaited sheets of that invaluable tree, and the floors raised about one to two feet above the level of the ground, with mats of bamboo matting laid down here and there. The inhabitants are a poor race, without energy—content to live as their fathers did, eating rice and keeping up the mummery of caste.

The civil authorities had collected as many of the able-bodied villagers as they could, as coolies, to carry loads; we had some eighty, but as I before said, so determined were they to get away that they had to be placed under a guard. And now, when we arrived at Lotobarre, it was amusing to see how they cooked, eat, and followed the dictates of nature by word of command. Any more respectable-looking, or as was believed, more trustworthy coolie who was trusted, made his escape, causing the greatest inconvenience, as his load had to be carried by some other method, and we were already heavily laden.

The second march led us through a country similar in general appearance to that of the day before. Passing a small village about half-way, which, with its few acres of surrounding cultivation, looked like an oasis in the midst of the wide plain of luxuriant jungle grass; our path led us close to one of the hills which rise so strangely out of the unbroken surface of the plain; its slopes were covered with an impenetrable tangle of forest trees, interlaced by thorns and creepers, while at its foot lay a ditch of boggy morass surrounding it on all sides. As a fastness for defence it would be difficult to find one more suitable, but man seldom if ever attempts to penetrate here, and the wild elephant, the tiger, bear, and buffalo have it all their own way.



Eight miles brought us to the village of Salmara; again it was necessary to provide the troops with grain from the stores at the place—the tired-out deputy of the commissariat with his helpless horde of bullocks was nowhere; indeed, the followers of this department of the army had to do without rest or food during this part of the campaign, uninterrupted and sleepless vigilance being necessary to keep together and drive on, the herds of bullocks, whose pace was tediously slow and whose propensities were all to straying away and grazing.

At Salmara we lost the services of the only medical officer attached to the 44th Native Infantry, the Artillery, and Sappers. This officer had previously suffered from the sun, and it was now necessary to relieve him from the work and exposure incident to a campaign; this left the whole medical duty to one assistant-surgeon, Dr Caird, and as the force was divided, there was one portion without any medical assistance whatever, but the matter weighed lightly on us, as all our healths were excellent, and the prospect of active service left little thought of anxiety on our minds.

The only provisions we found it possible to purchase at these villages in Assam were fowls, and these were sold exceedingly cheap. The people presented a contented appearance, and their houses were well built and snugly enclosed by palings of split bamboo.

From Salmara we had a march of twelve miles to Bijnee, over the same kind of country as before; the old bed of the river Aye had about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet of sluggish running water in it—the elephants forded, the men crossed on rafts which had previously been prepared for the purpose. The new bed of the Aye, two miles further on, was filled by a rapid clear stream of water, six feet deep, the passage of which detained us somewhat.

On approaching Bijnee we caught sight of the tents of the 44th, and after crossing another stream, joined the advanced force, and for the first time had our camp in Bhootan territory.

Bijnee—on a tributary of the Monass which runs three miles to the east—is a town of about one hundred houses, and boasts an old fort; it is owned by a Ranee, who possesses land on both sides of the boundary line. All the inhabitants who can, build an upper storey to their homesteads, in which they live above the wet and miasma of the rainy season. Wild animals of the larger kind, such as elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, and tiger abound in the swamps around, their tracks are over the whole country; we heard tigers growl repeatedly, and saw several herds of buffalo, but unfortunately at the season of the year we were there the jungle was too dense and high for success in sport; Captain Shuldham, however, killed two buffalo here.

It may be as well to mention how the guns and ammunition of the artillery were carried. The two guns (12-pr. howitzers) of 3 cwt. were slung on either side of an elephant, on whose back was placed a cradle made for the purpose; the gun carriages were packed on another elephant, and the two-pair wheels slung on either side of the same animal. The ammunition—100 rounds per gun, together with the box of implements—went upon five other elephants, packed in the common small magazine boxes, which hold eight rounds in each, forming loads too cumbrous and heavy for carriage by mules, coolies, or by any ordinary method when travelling difficult mountain paths; one other elephant carried the forge, materials, and tools, the supply of which was of the scantiest kind. The elephants



chosen for artillery purposes are the best that can be procured, and of those attached to us in this instance three were "koonkees," as those are named which are employed for catching their wild brethren. The two rocket-stands, rockets, and sticks were carried on another elephant.

The men employed as gunners were the company of Eurasian, or Native Christian Artillery, commonly called half-castes; they were rationed and clothed the same as English troops, a matter to be regretted in a campaign, in consequence of the great extra trouble it caused the commissariat in having to supply fresh meat, rum, and vegetables; but Captain Cordner, who commanded this company of artillery during the Cossiah and Jynteah campaign, assured me that the better feeding greatly increased the strength and endurance of the men; I must say, that the ease with which they completed long and wearisome marches over sticky, bad ground, often wading knee deep in water, with a burning sun overhead, reflected great credit upon them; their small size and delicate frame, however, was not quite up to the heavy and laborious task of mounting and dismounting the ordnance and heavy gun-carriages when coming into action, or packing up when ceasing fire.

The objection to the 12-pr. howitzer employed was that it could not be carried, either on a mule, or by two men when slung on handspikes, and taken by a narrow mountain path; but the greater weight of metal gave the gun far greater precision of fire and range. These guns were, I believe, identically the same as what are employed in boat service in the royal navy, and not Armstrong guns, as is everywhere reported when speaking of those of the other half-battery which were lost in the disaster at Dewangiri, and which were attached to the force called the right column. These guns were never intended by any artillery authority to be used purely for mountain service, neither were the arrangements for the carriage of ammunition and stores equal to such a service; indeed, in the simple and very necessary requirement of rope, there was at first a lamentable deficiency, and materials for repairs there were none.

The following days the remainder of the force, consisting of the 12th Khilat-i-Ghizie regiment, under Colonel Stevens, arrived at Bijnee, and the general orders for the guidance of the columns about to enter Bhootan were promulgated. Amongst other regulations every man, of whatever creed he might be, was obliged to take quinine daily, as the low, marshy, uncultivated country we were about to pass through bore the worst of characters, and by competent judges was named pestilential in the best of seasons, and deadly in the rains.

In the absence of medical men to the different corps some officers had to attend, and, indeed, personally weigh out and deliver the dozes of quinine. It was laughable to see the distortions of face as the obnoxious draught went down, but the peremptory orders of the Commander-in-Chief prevented any objections on the score of creed, as is too often allowed in the army of India. After a time the men grew to like the medicine, and I have seen the same who would at first spit the flavour away, actually grumble at the smallness of the dozes a week afterwards. I ought to mention that the use of arsenic as a cure and preventative for fever was also recommended: a medical record of the respective qualities of these medicines would be interesting and useful.



The commanding officer, Colonel Richardson, pushed on from Bijnee with a small escort as far as Sidlee, the seat of a rajah, some 25 miles to the north-west of us. He found the road (we will call a winding track by that name) passable for the force, and we accordingly marched, going on the right and left leg principle as before, the artillery and sappers going with the advanced leg.

The first day's march to Choppagoree proved a tiresome one of 15 to 17 miles—the sun very fierce, and the scantiness of water making it oppressive to the soldier. The country was an open plain covered with grass, sometimes low, and at times rising into a forest of dense jungle. Five miles from Bijnee we had to cross the Aye river again; the ford here would only just allow the elephants to pass laden—the stream was very rapid, the water very cold and beautifully clear. One village of some twenty houses we passed half-way; it boasted a good number of goats, pigeons, and fowls, and had a little rivulet at hand, in which our men slaked their thirst.

We passed at the very foot of a considerable hill, of I should say about 750 to 1000 ft. high; as usual, it rose straight from the unbroken surface of the plain, no undulating waves of land marking where it joined, the natural ditch of shaking bog surrounded it apparently on all sides, and the interlaced forest of trees and creepers covered its slopes; the open ground around was in places trodden over by wild game, the tracks of elephants and rhinoceros confused in those of herds of buffalo—some freshly made that morning; here and there the ground had been scraped up by bears in pursuit of the nests of the white ant, of which food they are extremely fond.

At Choppagoree there was no village, a square of sheds had been erected, and a few straw huts of more comfortable pretensions gave shelter to some of the officers; for myself I preferred a tent, as these places of general entertainment have usually a number of occupants small, exceedingly vicious and in great number.

At this place two officers went out with their rifles at night, hoping to see some animals emerge from the jungle at their customary feeding time at night; they told us that when the bugles in camp blew tattoo, the jungle was filled with the stamping and rushing of wild animals at the strange and unusual sound. Later they saw and wounded a bull buffalo, and saw a gigantic elephant, the circumference of whose footmark, twice told (the usual and very accurate method of measurement) would have given him a height of 11 feet.

The dew at night was here, as at all other places we had passed, extraordinarily heavy—the tents being literally saturated as if by a heavy fall of rain, and their greatly increased weight making their carriage a matter of difficulty.

From Choppagoree a short march of seven miles brought us to Sidlee, our approach to which place was marked by large tracts of rice fields heavy with grain, a narrow nullah, or little rivulet with steep, foul banks of loam and clay, gave us a sample of what we might have before us. The leading elephants trod the earth into a perfect swamp, and those behind had to use great exertion to free their legs from the sticky mass of deep mud; even men sank into it at places up to their forks—the banks above and below the spot we crossed were steep and deep in mud, fringed with high dense forests of null or nurkooll grass.



The Raja of Sidlee bears his kingly title by Bhootea sanction, he being a tributary of that country. Our advent evidently discomposed him seriously, and although cringing to the temporary invaders, he believed not in the stability of our power, and refusing us information, gave great trouble and annoyance; in several instances his falsehoods were proved before we had been many days in the country, but through all he bore the same meek, subdued, and slavish air that characterizes the Oriental, and which so soon changes to swagger and tyranny when the power moves to his side.

The village—it is nothing more—consists of about 60 houses, grouped under a picturesque clump of trees, on the banks of a clear, swift-running little stream, while miles around stretches the plain of waving grass, here and there the brown colour of the herbage which covers the drier portions becoming streaked by long lines of the nurkooll jungle, which, springing up from the low beds of old streams, bears its evergreen leaves in the hottest season of the year.

A present of milk and sweetmeats was brought into camp for the officers of the force, by the mookteah, or prime minister of his petty majesty; but the rice, which our camp-followers required for their food, was at first refused, and when sold, it was at such a ruinous price that the coolies, seeing their wages would be swamped by the ordinary necessaries of life, deserted in numbers.

In answer to our inquiries as to the existence of any neighbouring villages, we were informed that only a few deserted hamlets lay to the N.N.E., that emissaries from Bhootan had preceded us and taken the yearly tribute, leaving with it but a week before our arrival. The raja claimed the country from here to the foot of the Himalayas as his by right, and that the Bhooteas had reduced him from an independent prince to a vassal. These pretensions were put forward, no doubt, with the view of his claiming these lands should we hold the country finally, well knowing our policy of keeping up the power of native chiefs, under our protection and care, a policy introduced since the mutiny shook our empire in India.

To test the accuracy of the raja's statement as to the nakedness of the land, a reconnoitring party of 20 men, mounted on elephants, pushed towards the N.N.E. Passing a village which lay to the right of their track, and within view of camp, they first came upon an inhabited one of about ten houses, five miles off, and the same distance further on, their eyes were greeted by a large plain of cultivation, in which lay a straggling mass of some 80 houses, with every appearance of comfort and plenty; pigs, fowls, and goats abounded, and as for any houses being deserted, the raja's statement was falsified at once. This village was named Doorpergoan.

We obtained two guides to lead us to a village called Bowtee, said to be five miles away, and by a track which led us across the branches of a tributary of the Aye (if not the Aye river itself), at their junction, we reached that place—at one time threading our way through a mass of jungle-grass which rose high above us on either hand, as we were seated on the elephants, forming an arch overhead; so dense and impenetrable was this growth that the eye could not pierce one yard in any direction. Just before reaching Bowtee we had to cross about 100 yards of desperate morass, which was covered with stunted shrubs and high grass, in which our elephants floundered and struggled, now sinking deep in on one side, in their attempts



to extricate a leg; now rolling the other way with a groan of helpless grief, and anon trumpeting shrilly as the iron goad of the mahout was plied to drive them to greater exertion. The smaller animals are far the best in these places, they sink less deep, and are more active in their movements. It is interesting to see these vast creatures taking advantage of every branch to support them; now twining their trunks round a tree to lift themselves, now treading on a fallen piece of timber, knowing it presents a larger surface to the ground—again using their trunk as a fifth leg to rest on as they extricate their hind quarters. The riding during this time is not easy to five closely-packed men, on a guddee, or mattress of straw.

Bowtee had about fifteen to twenty houses, rice fields laying around; another village adjoined, but as we had to return nearly fifteen miles, it was advisable not to go further; we had seen enough to know that the raja of Sidlee's words could not be trusted, and that it would never do to see with other than one's own eyes. At this place, as at Doorpergoan, half the men appeared to be the worse for liquor, and one of our guides got wonderfully communicative and unpleasantly sociable.

We bought some fowls at Bowtee, paying double the market price of Sidlee, to show the inhabitants that the white-faces were unlike the Bhootea robbers, and we then returned to camp. When re-crossing the river I could not but regret that want of fishing-tackle prevented my casting a fly in the deep pool close above us, into which a swirling eddy swept, well knowing that all these rivers were full of the Mahsèr, or Indian salmon.

A state visit was paid by the raja of Sidlee to Colonel Richardson; the raja was a large fat man, oily and false, a true Oriental potentate. He came carried in a kind of sedan chair, attended by two gold sticks in waiting, and a tribe of obsequious followers. A present of a rhinoceros' horn was given to our chief, who showed by his manner that he was not best pleased at the raja's falsehood and insolence in closing his markets.

The point our force was making for was one called Bissen Singh, of which little was known, except that it lay in the first range of hills; as to what it was, a village, a town, a fort or stockade, or "no local habitation but a name," of this we knew nothing. We were told that between us lay no village, that it would take three days to reach it, travelling from sunrise to sunset; that there was no road, scarcely a track, which no one of Sidlee knew for a certainty, and that this path lay through a howling wilderness of forest, swamp, and jungle, or as they termed it, "bilcool jungle hye."

We were now told that we were here to await the arrival of Major-General Mulcaster, who after taking Dewangiri with his right column, was to cross to us of the right centre and personally superintend our forward march. This, as it would cost more than a fortnight's delay, was gall and wormwood to our anxious wish to proceed, as we had just heard of the success of the two columns of the left brigade, one of which had taken Dalingkote, the other Buxa, after a brush with the enemy. Besides, as the intended route of our column was kept secret, working parties could not be employed in making a road, as might have been done, right up to the foot of the hills. A road to the probable first day's halting place was made by our chief's direction, and so well did Lieutenant Garnault of the engineers perform this work that when we finally did advance, this march was completed with a celerity and ease most satisfactory to all.



During the time our force halted at Sidlee to await the arrival of Major-General Mulcaster, shooting parties pushed in all directions, always finding the same wide-spreading plains of waving grass, and to the east and south an occasional village of Mechees and Garrows. These two tribes are the only human beings who can, however feebly, withstand the terrible nature of the climate of the dooars at its worst periods, and the entire absence of an aged or grey-headed man shows how dearly even they pay for the possession of the soil, sharing the produce with the wild animals of the forest and the still more insatiate tax-gatherers of Bhootan. By the sweat of their brow and in terror of their lives do they till the soil and share its teeming fruits, for so rich is the land that the world cannot show a tract to excel these dooars in richness and luxuriance.

When the dense masses of jungle, the wild fields of rank vegetation, are cleared—when the rains are led off the soil and not allowed to form death-giving marches, then most assuredly will this country be a by-word in the east; the land being canalled by rivers, which would bear the produce to the banks of the mighty Brahmapootra, while forests of the most valuable timber cover large surfaces of land. A comparative fresh climate can be found in the low mountains that rise from the plain, and the high slopes of the Himalayas, with a climate unsurpassed by any on earth, are in the very view of the plains. Tea already gives large profits in the kindred district of Assam, whose only drawback is the inaccessibility of the hills; we hold the passes into these in our hands—surely no government will throw away the prize now in its very grasp, a prize that will bring millions of rupees into its treasury, open out a valuable and new district to English enterprise, and permit the reward of those who have toiled long and stoutly in her service.

The Mechees are a gentle, unwarlike race, easily satisfied with what supports life and scantily clothes their bodies; so are the Garrow tribes who come from the Garrow hills on the south and east banks of the Brahmapootra, but alas these inoffensive colonists have been but too often obliged to forsake their homes and fields owing to the intolerant oppression of the Bhootea; I saw many and many a deserted hamlet as I marched through the dooars, with every mark of having been but lately inhabited, while at times the surface of the ground showed spots which had once been squared out with cultivation, but where the site of the village was lost in jungle. The revenue paid by these villages varies considerably in different districts, and I take it that those nearest the hills suffered the most from the marauder, as it was in their neighbourhood that most of those deserted were seen. Mr Metcalf (the deputy commissioner attached to one of the columns) affirmed one day that the revenue paid by certain of the villages to Bhootan will be less than what is to be demanded by the Bengal government now; but one important item must be carried in mind, that the revenue is the only tax with us, while the supplies, presents, and bribes to Bhootea collectors formed not an unimportant item before. In the eastern districts of the dooars, the Mechees and Garrows complain of no outrages from their mountain masters, the slave-drivings and robberies appear to have been of late years directed chiefly against the petty raja-dom of Coorh Behar, but if these statements were believed, then in the Sidlee, Bijnee, and Rephoo dooars, the desertion of villages—especially that of the once large town of



Cutchabarry—would be unaccounted for; for from personal inspection I saw that the want of water for the latter place could have been remedied by a few men in a week, the old water channels leading from the Surrumbundee being still in existence and but slightly injured.

From Sidlee two routes led towards the interior of Bhootan by way of Bissen Singh, as the first point in the hills was named. The more direct route was said to be through jungle and forest, with a scarcely perceptible track, suffering from scarcity of water and abundance of wild beasts; it was said that even the Bhootea seldom traversed it, and he bore a high character for endurance and woodcraft. The other road led away from the direct route to the villages of Fagneeragoan and Dootma, and after a wide sweep to the S.W. to the foot of the mountains. The straight and less known path would take a single traveller three days, walking from sunrise to sunset; and from Pokeehaga (the name of some spot where the ascent began), it would take half a day, or as our informant expressed it, from sunrise to "there," pointing to where the sun would stand about noon—for the natives of Sidlee had but a vague and dangerous idea of distance. The easier path would, it was said, take six days.

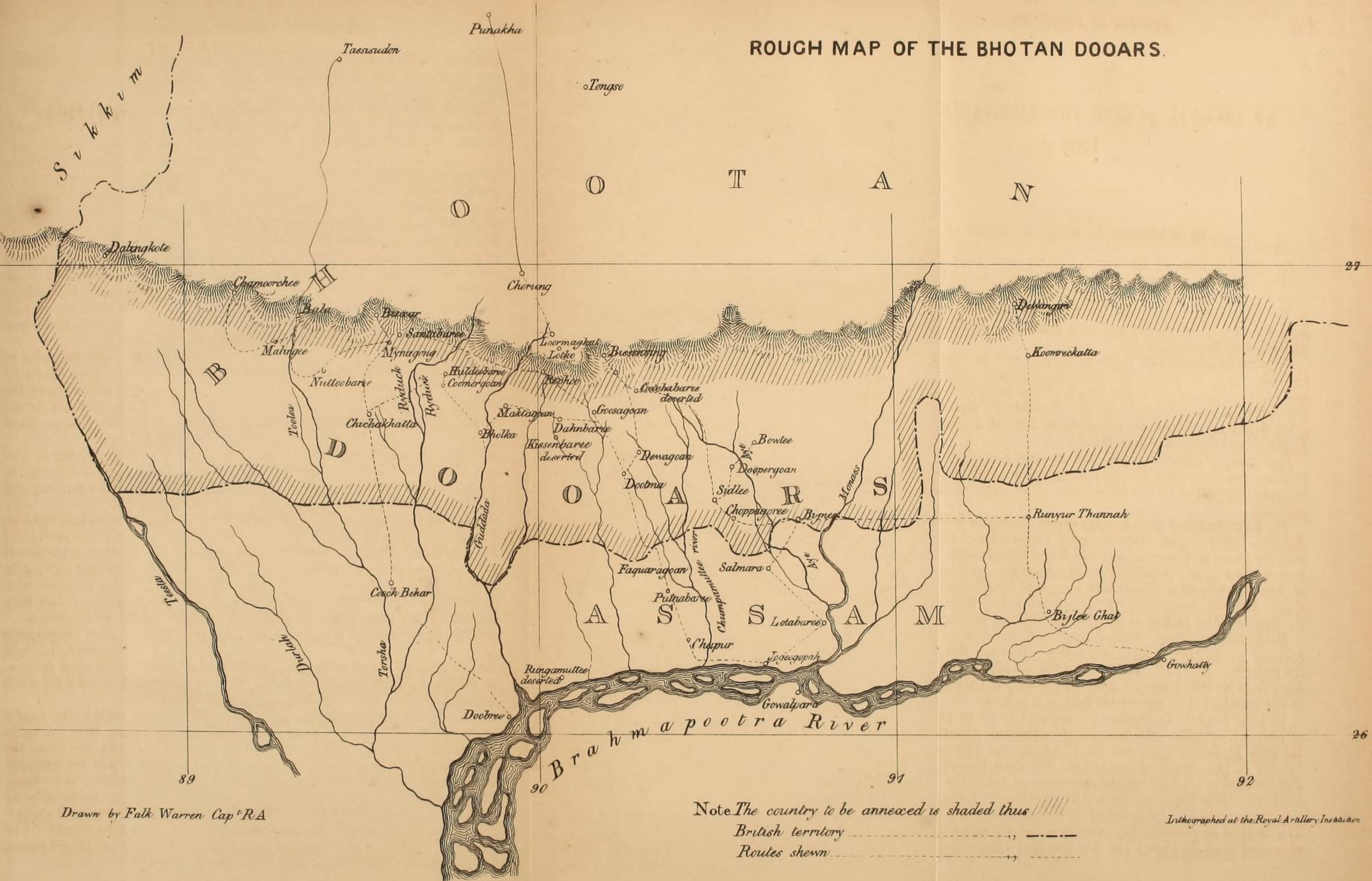
As our column suffered from a scarcity of baggage animals, and as we would be obliged to carry our provisions with us any way, the shortest road appeared to have advantages, especially as the winter time was fast passing, owing to the delay of our having to wait the result of Major-General Mulcaster's operations against Dewangiri; besides, as either road was then a *terra incognita*, it was as well to take the shortest. So our practical chief, Colonel Richardson, directed the field engineer to clear the direct path, and in a short time Lieutenant Garnault was driving a wide passage through the dense wilderness of grass that spread far on our onward way. Working with a rapidity scarcely to be credited, this indefatigable officer soon cleared the dry growth of grass by a systematic plan of prairie-firing. Marking the direction of the wind and setting up marks on high, he fired the jungle, and miles upon miles of an impenetrable wilderness was soon so clear that a deer would have been visible at a mile's distance. Working parties under the sappers, well supported by armed parties, cleared through the burnt embers a 12-foot way, and before long an excellent road was completed to the spot which would mark our first day's march.

The appearance of these conflagrations was, at times when the wind was high, indescribably grand—a perfect wall of fire would travel with wonderful rapidity over the wide face of the country, with a roar quite appalling. Even when at a safe distance to windward the elephants would trumpet shrilly and tremble with fear at this revelry of their great dread, fire.


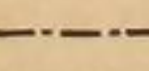

The arsenal of His Highness the Raja of Sidlee did not present an imposing, praiseworthy appearance. Two or three old honeycombed guns, of the smallest calibre, one burst at the first reinforce, lay just inside the gate, about which lounged some dozen Bengalese, not the most desperate of warriors. This armory was also the barracks of His Highness, it was full of spears with imposing-shaped heads and fringes of scarlet tassels; matchlocks more or less dangerous to the person using them, three of large bore and evidently meant as wall-pieces, and at the most, some thirty swords completed the warlike stores of the place. The powder (made at Sidlee itself) was of unequal grain, dead in lustre and filthily dirty; no wonder that



ROUGH MAP OF THE BHOTAN DOOARS.



Drawn by Falk Warren Cap<sup>t</sup> RA

Note. The country to be annexed is shaded thus   
 British territory   
 Routes shewn 

Lithographed at the Royal Artillery Institution