Tuesday, October 8, 1889.

HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL SIR FREDERICK ROBERTS, BART., V.C., G.C.B., G.C.I.E., R. A., Commander-in-Chief in India, in the Chair.

THE LUSHAI COUNTRY.

BY COLONEL R. G. WOODTHORPE, C. B., R. E., Deputy Quarter-Master General, Intelligence Branch.

Not very long ago the Lushais and their country were as little known to the general public as the Akas who formed the subject of my last lecture, and any mention of them would have elicited such remarks as "Never heard of them; where do they live?" &c., for the last expedition against the Lushais in the cold weather of 1871-72 has been almost forgotten and since then, till latterly, they have been fairly quiet. Last year, however, as you know, the murder of Lieut. Stewart within our own territory necessitated a punitive expedition, and the name "Lushai" again became familiar as a heading to telegrams and newspaper letters. and this winter again, operations on a large scale are to be carried out in their hills both from Bengal and Burma. I say their hills because I believe that all the tribes, though we know them by different names, such as Lushais, Chins, &c., are closely allied and may be considered practically as one race. The northern column of the Lushai expedition of 1871-72 reached a point, Lungvel, only 30 miles west of Fort White, and we were visited by some representatives of a tribe known as Pois. living to the south-east of Lungvel who were really, I have no doubt, what we now call Chins; for when I made an excursion to India in 1887 with Major Raikes, we there received a deputation of Tashon Chins. whom I at once set down as Pois. The names given to all the tribes on our north-east frontier are somewhat arbitrary and are seldem recognized by the tribes themselves. Garos, Nagas, Akas, &c., are all names given by the dwellers in the plains to their neighbours (and usually enemies) in the hills; and it is generally very difficult and often impossible to trace the origin or meaning of these names. The term "Kuki" was formerly applied generally to the dwellers in Lushai-land, but this term Mr. (now Sir John) Edgar tells us is of foreign origin, and was given to the hill tribes by the Bengalis, and he adds, "I have never found a trace of any common name for the tribe among them, though they seem to consider different families as belonging to a single group, which is certainly coextensive with what we call the Kuki tribe." It will be impossible in the limits of this paper to touch on all the different families inhabiting

these hills. Captain Lewin has very fully described them in his paper on the "Chittagong Hill Tracts," and for the purposes of this lecture, and with reference to the military operations, it may perhaps be sufficient to consider the country as inhabited on the west by "the Lushais" and on the east by "the Chins." Mr. Baker, a former authority on our north-east frontier says that the word "Lu" means "head" in the Kuki tongue, and that the Lushais may perhaps be the ruling or head clan among all the other tribes. Other authorities agree with this and say that the Lushai family supplies the other tribes with their chiefs who can only marry among themselves. Other derivations are "Lu" head, and "shai" to cut, "head cutters" (Captain Lewin adopts this derivation and says that the generic name is "Dzo"); and "Lu" head, or hair, and "shai," long, "longhaired," However, these traits are not the peculiar characteristics of this tribe but are common to all the hillmen on our northeast frontier. Mr. Baker also says the Lushais are divided into two clans, Marshai the northern and Simshai the southern; if this is so, "shai" here would have neither of the two meanings above given. "Chins" is a term given to the eastern Lushai tribes by the Burmese; it is the same as Khyens, but the pronunciation is more nearly that of the former spelling. I was told when surveying the Chindwin river that it is so called from the fact of its forming the eastern limit of Chin raids in Burmese territory.

The Lushai-Chin country (see accompanying map) may be said to lie between the parallels 92° to 94° of longitude and 22° to 24° of latitude, being a continuation southwards of the Manipur and south Cachar hills, principal ranges of hills run generally due north and south, but between these, smaller ranges are immunerable. The hills in the north-west corner of this area are low and sparsely inhabited, but they rise gradually to the south and east till the watershed between Bengal and Burma is reached; here some of the peaks attain an average elevation of over 7,500', one or two touching 8,000'. Between these ranges flow in deep and narrow valleys many fine streams, the principal being the Manu, the Dallesur, the Sonai, and the Barak with its tributaries, flowing to the north into Sylhet and Cachar; the Kurnafuli and the Koladyne or Kaladan (as it is now spelt) with their tributaries flowing into the Bay of Bengal; and the Manipur river, or Myittha, with its tributaries, flowing into the Chindwin. A description of the route taken by the column of 1871-72 will, I imagine, give a fair idea of the character of the rest of the country.

The country about Cachar is flat and open, but with the exception of the road to Manipur, the communications are not good, and in some places are mere tracks through the "bhils" or swamps, which abound at the foot of the hills and between the low ranges in south Cachar. The scenery all up the Barak is exceedingly beautiful, lofty wooded hills coming down to the water's edge, receding here and there so as to afford glimpsesof more distant ranges, while large rocks and saudy strips diversify the character of the banks. The river winds about very much, the reaches presenting a series of pictures, the elements of which, wooded hills, rocks and water, though ever the same, are constantly varying in arrangement; and in variation of light and shade each differs from the other in some

points of detail, but all are equally beautiful. Alligators bask in the sun here and there on the rocks, sliding off lazily into the deep pools beneath, when a boat approaching too near arouses them from their slumbers.

The character of the country between Mainadhar and Tipai Mukh is the same on both banks, high and narrow spurs separated by deep and dark ravines thickly clothed with cane and bamboo jungle and tall forest trees, from which huge creepers hang in graceful festoons, while between these, tangled shrubs and thorns and long rope-like roots occupy every inch of ground. Elephant tracks or obscure paths used by woodcutters are met with in many parts of these jungles, and it was by means of these that military roads were projected. Tipai Mukh (" Mouth of the Tipai,") where the Tipai joins the Barak, supposed to be on the boundary between Lushai and Manipur was admirably suited for the camp and depôt formed there in 1871-72; a large open piece of sand and shingle on each side of the Tipai at its junction with the Barak affording ample space for all requirements. This open space is no doubt part of the bed of the river, but in the cold season it is perfectly dry. The disadvantage of the situation is that it is low and immediately surrounded by hills rising to a height of 1,000 to 1,200 feet above the river, and every evening as the sun sank behind the western ranges fog and mist slowly settled down upon the camp, remaining till late each morning. The Noonjaibong range, on each side of which flows the Barak, ends here in a very narrow ridge, whose steep sides are almost entirely covered with bamboos; and the banks both of the Barak and the Tipai are very rocky. The road from Tipai Mukh gradually ascends a spur of the Senvong hill, and on the way only a few glimpses of the Lushai hills are obtained at intervals; from a survey station, however, on the summit, a most extended view presents itself, which I shall endeavour to describe as it appeared to us one afternoon in January 1872. a little south of east, the first range is the spur ending abruptly in the hill of Paburchang with every shade of "verdure clad;" beyond this are the high peaks of the northern part of the Kholel range and the spurs of Burpinglong, in which the dark green foliage is broken and relieved in many places by the sandstone and red clay of which these hills are formed. In the distance is faintly seen the northern peak of the lofty Lungleng; south of these and above Paburchang the hill of Chepui appears brown and grey from the numerous jums* which cover its face and the long level sour, on which stood the village of Chepui, which had from this standpoint the appearance of being strongly stockaded; an appearance, however, which is deceptive, and on a nearer approach it is found to be due to the small fences with which nearly every house is surrounded. Beyond Chepui bluff Sucklang stands boldly out against the sky, and extending south from Surklang, Moothelen, and Lengteng, are lost to sight behind the higher portions of the Kholel range, on which is visible the site of Vonpilal's great village, where still stands his tomb, a black speck on a long bare yellow ridge, forming a landmark for miles around.

[·] Jums = fields.

The slopes of this range are much cut up by narrow spurs running down on either side to the Tipai. Looking down the valley of the Tipai the scene is closed by a lofty remarkably-shaped hill, sloping gently eastwards, but terminating abruptly and precipitously on the west: this is known as Momrang. The southern hills are hidden by the near range of Vanbong, a long level mass, with broad spurs, from which much of the forest has been cleared for the villages and jums of the people, who, on Vonpilal's death, removed thither from Kholel; but to the south-west and west Chelfil, Peak L, Noongvai, and Rengtipahar, stretch far away, range upon range, till lost in the golden haze of the afternoon sky. Just beneath the station on Senvong the road turns down a steep spur and soon finds itself once more in the depths of the lofty bamboo jungle which clothes the banks of the Tuibum. Between Tipai Mukh and the Tuibum, near the sites of old villages, many fragrant limes and walnut and cinnamon trees were discovered.

The camp on the Tuibum was in a low unhealthy situation, but the scarcity of water on the higher ground prevented the establishment of a large camp and depôt for stores anywhere but on the banks of this stream. The road between Tuibum and No. 8 camp crossed Paburchang and descended to the Tuitu: the banks of this little river are covered with bamboo, and a very tall, graceful, feathery reed. I may here mention that bamboos flourish in the neighbourhood of every stream till we cross the Moothelen range, after which the general levels are much higher and the bamboo is seldom met with. The path from the Tuitu ascended steeply through old jums, in which wild heliotrope, coxcomb, and other flowering weeds flourished in great luxuriance. Between Kholel and Chepui, the Tipai is still a big stream, flowing rapidly over, and between, immense rocky boulders; the path thence to the village of Chepui ascends through some jums, and then becomes very rocky and difficult, precipitous masses of rock overhanging it, small streams and

miniature waterfalls occuring many times during the ascent.

The Chepui hill consists of three high peaks in a cluster, the northern slopes descending precipitously to the Tipai; one spar is sent out to the north, on which is built the village of Tingridum; to the southwest and south, long level spurs extend; the longest runs due south for about 10 miles, where it joins the Lengteng range. From Chepui we got a very fine near view of Surklang, Lengteng, Moothelen, and also of the Lungtul and Lungleng ranges. All these present features strikingly different from the western hills, being much more rocky and less covered with forest, long grass taking its place. Lungtul, which is perfectly square topped for some distance, presents the appearance of an almost perpendicular buttressed wall, the buttresses being represented by a few sharp steep spurs; trees appear only near the summit, and the rocks peep out through the grass in a series of regular horizontal strata, leng, large and wooded spurs alternate with the steeper faces; in the latter the horizontal strata of rock are again visible; in Surklang, however, these strata are more or less inclined, often lying nearly parallel to the general slope of the spurs and ridges.

This curious hill, or rather mass of large hills, the highest peak of which is nearly 7,000 feet, tossed about in wild confusion, would appear to have been thrown up during some great convulsion of nature. On the south-eastern spur of Surklang is the village of Taikum, which was destroyed on the 20th January 1871. From this village and the approach to it an extensive view over the eastern hills was obtained, some high mountains, towering far off on the horizon appearing to belong to Burma. On the nearer and lower ranges were many villages: those dependent on Poiboi, some of which, Mr. Edgar tells us, went over to Manipur. South of Kungnung our way lay along the western grassy slopes of Moothelen, crossing two or three very rocky streams, and going over the saddle which connects it with Lengteng, descended to the Tuignan, a very pleasant little stream, with a gravelly bed, running through a flat piece of ground, with an elevation of 2,500 feet, and covered with very fine forest trees.

The country for the rest of the route was much more open, the soil was less fertile than heretofore, and on the grassy slopes the bracken abounded. The road between Tuignan and Schlam led up the side of the Lengteng hill and over a very high rocky precipiee, down which a little stream dashed with force; a little further on, descending into the valley of the Tuiva to the right of the path, a magnificent face of weather-beaten rock was visible, extending for about 100 yards, with a height of about 400 feet; on the other side of the Tuiva we came upon a large flat grassy patch of land of a similar character to many which we afterwards passed through or saw, but which we had not hitherto met with.

The group of villages known as Sellam or Chelam, as some of the natives pronounced it, is built on the southern slopes of a range of high peaks, which, rising some 300 feet above the villages, protect them from the northerly winds. The bleak sides of these hills are covered with the stubble of old jums, blackened stumps still standing and huge trunks of trees lying about in all directions. The view looking south and east on a fine day, is magnificent; an endless sea of peaks stretching away as far as the eye can reach, lighted up by a thousand soft and delicate tints; and nearly due south, distant some 14 miles as the crow flies, Dilklang and Murklang towering above their fellows, like too giant warders, guard the entrance to Lalboora's country. Between these and Chelam lie many deep valleys and many high ranges, the sides of which are cut up by numberless gloomy gorges and dark ravines. Very drear and threatening does this country look on a stormy day, and very cold was our camp at night and in the early morning often we went out to find the ground about us white with hoar frost; but during the day usually the sun came out warm and bright, tempering the sharpness of the cast wind.

Beyond this point we found ourselves in the land of pines, rhodo-dendrous and oaks. The march from Chelam took us through Rahmung, a pretty little village perched on the very edge of an immense precipice, and thence through the grassy valley of the Dimkai up through the village of Tulcheng, and so over a spur of Dilklang down to the valley of the Tuitao, here a tolerably wide stream flowing through a flat alluviate

valley; the path crossed and recrossed this stream several times for about 5 miles when it commenced to climb the high hill of Murklang, crossing it nearly at its highest point at an elevation of 6.860 feet. The eastern face is very steep and precipitous throughout; the path by Enjow's village runs along the edge of a rocky precipice, clothed here and there with trees and grass, with a sheer descent of some thousand feet. Beneath nestles a small village, and beyond is a broad and smiling valley, through which, far below, like a silver thread, the Tao winds its way. The beauty of the scene was heightened by the rhododendrons, which clothed the hill on each side of our path, and which were in their full glory of rich crimson blossoms, and by the tall pines which shed their sweet fragrance on our path as we descended the valley of Chumfai.

This is the largest valley we saw, and is about 5 miles in length, and has an average width of about a mile; it has an elevation of 5,000 feet, and the hills immediately surrounding it rise to a height of about 1,200 feet above it. This valley seems once to have been a lake, and the process by which it has filled up seems to be described in the following words by Captain Pemberton in 1835, as that going on in the case of the Logtak lake in Manipur. "The bed has begun very perceptibly to fill up from the deposits of silt from the surrounding heights, which are continually carried into it; and, if this progress continues, a few years will suffice to obliterate the lake." Major McCulloch says: "since 1835 the lake has very visibly filled up. There runs in the lake a range of low hills, the portions of which not covered with water form islands." This was written many years ago and the process is still going on. These words might have been written of the Chumfai valley which is still swampy in places, and the surface of which is dotted over with low hills covered with leafy trees, now apparently isolated, but which evidently at one time were the peaks of a low range similar to that existing in the Logtak lake. A small stream meanders through the Chumfai valley.

From Chonchim, and the heights west and south of the valley a good view is obtained of the surrounding country, that to the south and west is very difficult to make out, being broken and confused, and not presenting the parallel appearance of the northern ranges; the various peaks of the latter are also very difficult of recognition from these

points of view.

The word "tui" will have been observed to occur frequently in the names of rivers. This word means "water" generally. Mr. Edgar tells us that *Tui-tuo* means the "sitting water," in reference to the comparatively level course of that stream. I was unable to find out the meaning of the names of other rivers or streams.

At the foot of the hills and low down in the ravines we find usually plenty of water, but on the higher ranges near the tops of the ridges the water supply is very small, even in the neighbourhood of large villages, as the Lushais do not mind going long distances to fetch it; and as they soldom bathe, they do not require very much. In endeavouring to improve the water supply in the neighbourhood of our camps by digging wells, &c, I was much struck by finding near the villages two streams of water, one tolerably clear and bright, with small pools

formed here and there, the other nearly stagnant, moving slowly through a mass of rank weeds and putrid soil; in one place this singgish stream was slightly stockaded on the side furthest from the village. I think this arrangement may be part of their system of sailitation, and account for the absence from their villages and immediate neighbourhood of those unpleasantnesses which are so common in all the villages I have seen in the Himalayas and elsewhere. If this is so, the Lushais have discovered, the principle so strongly insisted on by advocates of the sewage minure system at home, that sewage floated on to any soil is speedily deprived of any unpleasant odour.

I have said that the country is less densely clad with jungle and bamboo scrub as we go cast, and from what I saw of the Chin hills from the Chindwin and Indin, I imagine that they are more open on the

higher slopes than the country above described.

The principal trees on the lower slopes are, bamboos, India rubber, endless varieties of the mountain ash, the ilex and a tree known in Assam as the nagesur; also several species of oak trees, with fir and rhodolendron on the higher ranges. We were there before the season of flowers, but blackberries, strawberries, violets, and several of the common English wild flowers had begun to show themselves, and in the woods the scarlet rhododendron and a species of dak (Butea) were in blossem. The oaks were hang with streamers of grey moss, and the trunks and branches covered with small ferns and orchids, of which there are a great variety. Cinnamon, wild ginger and other roots are to be found.

Some of the creepers which swing from tree to tree all through these forests contain good clear water, about half a pint of which can be obtained by cutting out, by two clean sharp cuts, a piece two yards long, but the water does not come unless a piece of the creeper is cut right out, the air scenning to stop the flow if the plant is simply cut through.

The country is healthy and the climate from December to the end of February delightful on the hills; there may be a little rain and hoar frost in January. In the valleys the nights and mornings are chill from the mists settling down on them, making trees and herbage damp and

dripping.

These mists as a rule form only in the bottom of the valleys, and from the higher ranges they look very beautiful, like a sea of the softest wool, stretching away for miles, marking out each spur and ravine on the mountain sides like well-defined sea shores. The peaks of the low ranges stand up like little wooded islands, while currents of air below dash the mist against steep out-running spurs like mimic breakers against some bold headlands. The hills extend far away, rising range upon range, purple and blue, till the sun rising above some huge bluff, lights up the mountain sides with the most brilliant tints of orange and green, and changes the cold blue of the cloudy sea beneath into all the varied and delicate tints of mother-of-pearl, while over all hangs the clear lilac and gold of the morning sky.

This cloud effect is not peculiar to the Lushai hills but may be observed all over our north-east frontier. It frequently proves very useful

to surveyors; for often in the garish light of day with scarce a shadow even to throw any feature into relief, the ranges and spurs get so mixed up that it is difficult to determine the courses of the valleys or the separation of the ridges, but the cloudy sea follows each outline of the spurs, and when the surveyor sees what looks like a long arm of the sea running back into the hills there he may be sure lies a large valley. By these means I have often solved some topographical problem from a distant peak, which could not otherwise have been settled except by a toilsome journey of a couple of days at least.

Captain Lewin says that the Lushais when sleeping under trees at night carefully notch them with upward nicks with their daos, and at dawn notch the tree downwards; by the upward notching the dew which falls during the night is absorbed by the leaves and does not drip on to the sleepers; but it is necessary to reverse these nicks in the morning

in order to appease the wood spirits.

The Lushais are great hunters; "every thing" as Captain Badgley says "that runs or flies is game with them, from an elephant to a field rat, from a hornbill to a wagtail." Game is plentiful judging by the numbers of heads we saw in front of the houses. We are told that the animals found in these hills are, elephant, two-horned rhinoceros, tiger, leopard, sambar, hogdeer, metna, bear, pig, and monkey. The last is the huluk or howling monkey, blackfaced, grey whiskered, black bodied, They are easily and tailless, with very long arms, and of great agility. tamed if caught young and are exceedingly affectionate and docile. the forests they are very noisy, their cry beginning with a yelp and ending with a series of jackal-like howls. Among the skulls of birds we saw cranes and hornbills; jungle fowl, partridges, chir, and black and argus pheasants are also met with. In the rivers are mahsir and a small silurus called in the north-west "sol." The Lushais use nets, and also poison the water with the juice of a plant which kills the fish without spoiling it as food; they also build dams and fishing weirs. At Tipai Mukh some officers were very successful with spoon bait, one of them, Captain Cooksley, landing in one afternoon 5 fish weighing in all 82 lbs; the largest turning the scale at 211 lbs. Another day two officers lauded between them 92 lbs. weight of fish.

The Lushais with whom we became acquainted during our journeyings belonged to three different tribes, the Lushais, Paités or Soktés, and Pois. The latter are rather taller and of a fairer complexion than the ordinary run of hillmen, but the principal distinguishing characteristic between the three tribes is the mode in which they dress their hair.

The Lushai parts his hair in the middle, and braiding it smoothly on each side of the face, binds it in a knot on the nape of the neck, secured by large copper or steel hair-pins; the Sokté does not part it at all, but wears it short and standing out like flames round the forehead, which is generally rather high and round; sometimes the hair is twisted into a little tail at the back. The Poi parts his hair at the back of the head from ear to ear, all above this line being drawn upwards and forwards, bound in a high double knot on the forehead and fastened by a small ivory or bone comb, generally ornamented with some little design

in red; but all the hair below the parting is allowed to hang in wavy curls over the back and shoulders (see Fig. 1).

Some Pois once, in camp, were watching a Sikh sepoy performing his toilet, and seeing that previous to putting on his turban, he bound his long hair into a knot on the top of his head, tying one end of the turban into it, they at once hailed him as a Poi and a brother. Bearing in mind these distinctions the following description applies to all, premising that the only women we saw were Lushais.

Both the men and the women are well made, and very muscular; the average height of the former appeared to be about five feet six inches, and of the women five feet four inches. The men are all sturdy follows, thickest as to the neck and shoulders, body light and active, arms and legs muscular and well developed, their arms generally long

in proportion to their bodies.

Their complexion comprises every shade of brown, and their features vary considerably; the generality, however, possessing flat retroussé noses with wide nostrils, thick lips, and small almond-shaped eyes. Among the Lushais though and especially among those related to the reigning families, some of whom were even handsome, we uset with a much more refined type, the nose being thin and aquiline with small nostrils, the lips thin and mouth small. In all, however, the check bones were high and prominent, the face broad and remarkable for an almost entire absence of beard or moustache; even a slight moustache and small tuft of hair on the chin being the exception rather than the rule.

The expression of many was bright and intelligent, and they shewed a wonderful aptitude for quickly understanding anything new and wonderful which they saw during their visits to our camp. Not the least astonishing proof of this was the sharpness they displayed in understanding at a glance the intention of a pencil sketch. I showed a sketch to some Lushais one day, and it pleased them so much that one went away and returned with the skulls of a deer and a pig, and a live hen, all of which he requested me to draw, which I did; and the lookers on pointed out, on the models, each part as it was delineated, even to some discolorations on the skulls, which I indicated by a little shading. Their general expression of wonder is "Amakeh oh.", which they repeat to each other over and over again, when anything more astonishing than usual excites their interest.

Their dress consists only of one large homospun sheet of cotton cloth, passed round the body under the right arm, which is thus left free, the two ends being thrown in opposite directions over the left shoulder, where they are secured by a strap of tiger or other skin, supporting a bag in which is carried a knife, a dao, tobacco, flint, steel, and other little necessaries. The articles contained in this bag are protected from the rain by a kind of shield, made of tiger, bear, or goat skin; the latter, with the long hair pendant, strongly resembling a Highland sporran. This shield is fastened at each end of the strap, and can be easily removed at will (see Fig. 2).

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