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The Lushai Hills

The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission

GRACE R. LEWIS

"A Land
which the Lord thy God
Careth For."



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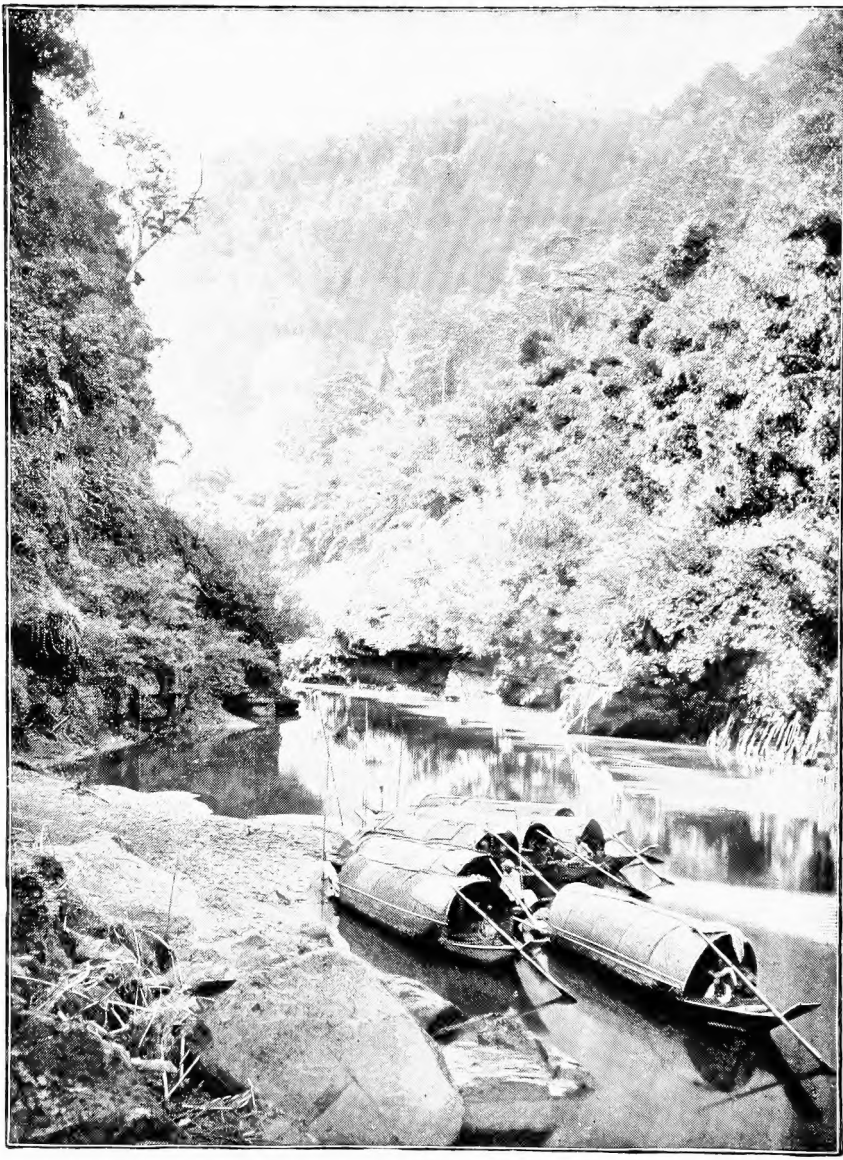
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THE LUSHAI HILLS.



At the foot of the Lushai Hills.

The Lushai Hills.

"A Land which the Lord thy God Careth For."

THE STORY OF THE LUSHAI PIONEER MISSION.

By GRACE R. LEWIS.

"I think that all details become interesting when they relate to, and serve to depict, the characteristics of people of whom we have known little until now, and with whom it is desirable to cultivate more intimate terms."

(Letter from LIEUTENANT SAMUEL TURNER, *Ambassador to Tibet, addressed to* MR. JOHN MACPHERSON, *Governor-General of Bengal, 2nd March, 1784, and quoted in Captain Lewin's "Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein.")*

LONDON:
THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY
19, FURNIVAL STREET, E.C.

Preface.

TO name all the books consulted in preparing this little story might end in wearying my readers. Let me, therefore, only say that, acting on the kind advice of one who is himself a high authority on all Indian subjects, I have gleaned the Lushai lore, here given, from the writings of Government experts published in Blue Books, etc., etc., and out of all of these my indebtedness is chiefly due to the reports of Major Shakespeare, C.I.E., D.S.O., formerly Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.

I have to thank the Treasurer of the Assam Frontier Pioneer Mission and our two heroes themselves for the loan of letters and papers telling of their work in North Lushai.

Being wholly dependent on the missionaries' account of their work in the South Hills, I have given that in their own words, that the story might lose none of its freshness and charm. Much of interest, and even importance, has been withheld for want of space. This little picture is a mere outline to be filled in later by a more competent hand.

GRACE R. LEWIS.

May, 1907.

The Lushai Hills.

THE STORY OF THE LUSHAI PIONEER MISSION.

Part 1.

"The Land whither ye go to possess it is a Land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a Land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."—*Deut. xi. 11,12.*

CHAPTER I.

"A Land Which the Lord thy God Careth For."

IT was Boxing Day, 1893, when our missionaries first saw themselves fairly started for their long-dreamed-of home in the Lushai Hills. Once before they had got as far as Kassalong, attempting to enter it by the south; but the country had not quieted down after the Expedition of 1889-90, and British officials refused to let the missionaries risk proceeding. Months of waiting had brought no nearer hope of entry, and sickness at last drove them to Chittagong, Calcutta, and even to Darjeeling—but not home!

Finally, they tried to get in by Cachar, and were told they might—*a year thence.* By that Boxing Day of 1893 one of them had been on this quest for two years, and the other

the younger man, Mr. Lorrain, for close upon three. But the waiting time had not been wasted: Bengali had been mastered, some use of it had been made in mission work, and in Cachar a few Lushēi words and phrases had been picked up from English officers and Bengali traders, who had been in "the land whither" the missionaries were going "to possess it."

Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge were at this time agents of the Arthington Aborigines' Mission; and yet another link from the homeland bound them together—both were members of the Highgate Road Baptist Church, London.

"They had an interesting journey by boats on a small river which runs from the heart of the Lushai Hills. For seven days they were in the plains, and passed through well-cultivated tea districts, then they plunged into the mountainous tracts, where the tropical vegetation of the banks hedged in the narrow, rushing river, and the boats had to be dragged up innumerable rapids. Their various hair-breadth escapes, and the serious accidents which happened to other travellers in this little changing river, which was shallow and swift, or slow and silent, by turns, claimed their constant attention, but they did not fail to note the varied scenery of the river-sides.

"Here, they were hemmed in by deep cliffs and narrow gorges; there, were banks covered with wild, luxuriant vegetation and tall bamboos. Troops of monkeys disported among the leafy branches, or played on the sandbanks, and once a tiger crashed through the brittle reeds. A wild boar swam across the nose of the boats, while beautiful birds, wild-fowl, and millions of mosquitoes made the journey sufficiently interesting, and at the same time reminded them that they were leaving the borders of civilization. As one

evening they were making a fire on the bank with dried bamboos, some snakes, which had been hibernating in



Revs. F. W. Savidge and J. Herbert Lorrain, in Lushai Dress.

the snug cylinders, dropped out, and as the bamboos crackled and the lurid glare lit up the darkening gorge, a wild chase ensued.

"Day by day they travelled through the uninhabited Northern parts with the mountains, covered with dense forest, towering three or four thousand feet above them, resting only on Sundays, until they arrived at a little settlement of Bengali traders at Sairang.

"With much difficulty they carried their goods up the mountainous roads for some thirteen miles, to a place called Fort Aijal—an elevation of about four thousand feet above



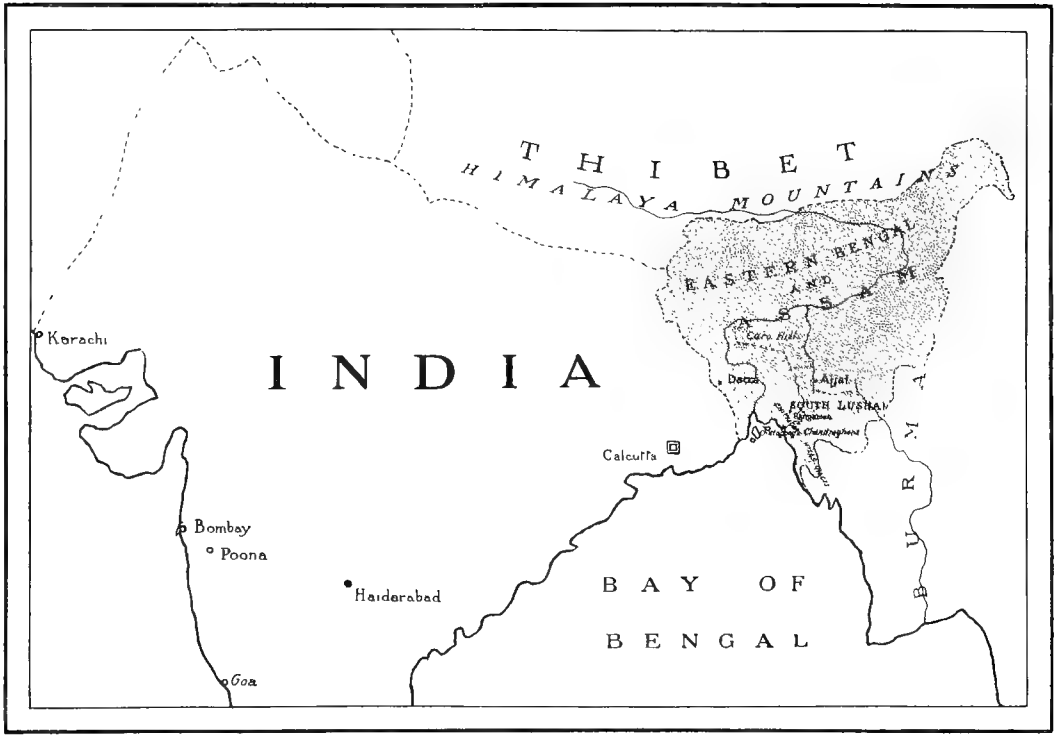
First Mission House, Lushai Hills.

the sea –which was occupied by five British Officers and two regiments of Goorkhas and Bengal Infantry, of which the latter regiment went down when the country was quieter. They set to work to build their house, for which they paid for labour in salt, as the supply of that commodity had been stopped because of the rebellion. The people were apparently quiet, good-tempered, and intelligent. However, it was considered unsafe for them to live at more than one mile from the fort, so they settled between two Lushai villages.

They trusted the Lushais implicitly, and speedily won their confidence by kindness and medicines."*

And now let us turn our attention for a while to the situation, history, and present condition of the country known as Lushailand—"a land which the Lord thy God careth for."

* "Pioneer Mission Work among the Hill Tribes of the Assam Frontier," by the late Rev. T. J. Raybould.


T H I B E T
HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS
EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM
INDIA
Karachi
Bombay
Poona
Hairderabad
Goa
Calcutta
Dacca
Aijal
SOUTH LUSHAI
BAY OF BENGAL
BURMA

CHAPTER II.

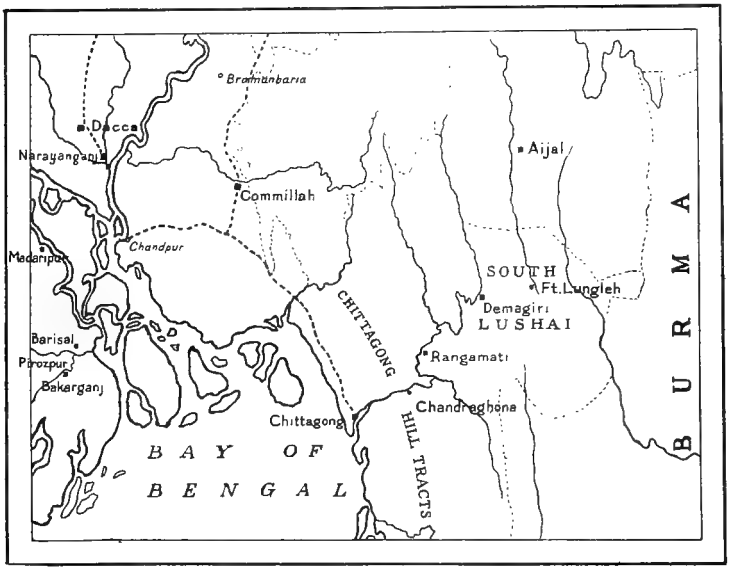
"A Land of Hills and Valleys."

The North-Eastern corner of Hindustan is occupied by Assam, the typical rural province of India, 97 per cent. of whose inhabitants live in villages. Here is the Surma Valley, comprising the Cachar Plains and Sylhet; the great Brahmaputra Valley, in which Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, and Lakhimpur districts lie; and here are also the highlands of North Cachar, the Nago, Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, and Lushai Hills, and the district of Manipur. Of these fourteen districts, Lushai is the most southerly and the most newly acquired. It is also the largest and at the same time the least populated. In area, 7,227 square miles —a little less than Wales the population in the census of 1901 was returned at 82,434, or eleven persons to a square mile. Lying south of the Assamese districts of Manipur and the Cachar Plains, Lushailand is bounded on the east by Independent Burma, on the west by Chittagong, a district of Bengal, and on the south by Burma itself. With the exception of plains on its Burmese frontier, it is composed of parallel ranges of mountains running north and south—of heights varying from two thousand feet to close upon seven thousand feet—with only narrow valleys between.

"This tract has been the scene of various migrations, new tribes at different times pushing the former inhabitants northwards and westwards. The Lushais, who are now the prevailing race, seem to have begun to move forward from the south-east about the year 1810. Between 1840 and

1850 they obtained final possession of the North Lushai Hills, having pressed the former possessors, the Thados, before them into Cachar. In 1849 they for the first time came into contact with us, and found their northern progress finally stopped."*

Did space permit, one would fain linger over descriptions of the natural scenery of these hills. "Some clothed in



every variety of green, while in others the forest was broken and relieved by the warm tints of masses of sandstone and red clay, of which these hills consist. Surklang is an immense mass of peaks tossed about in wild confusion, the rocks dropping in irregular strata, now horizontal, now following the general inclination of the spurs; and further

* Census of India Report, 1901

to the east the Lengteng range presents the appearance of a large buttressed wall. In the early morning the scenery was magnificent. On both sides the mist lay in the valleys like a sea of the softest wool, stretching away for miles, marking out each spur and ravine on the mountain



Lushai Man and Woman Smoking.

side like well defined shores. The peaks of the lower ranges stood up like little islands, while currents of air dashed the mist against the steep out-running spurs, like mimic breakers against some bold headlands. The hills extended far away to the west, rising range upon range, purple and blue, till the sun, appearing above the bluff mass of the Surklang,

lighted up the mountain sides with the most brilliant tints of orange and green, and changed the cold blue of the cloudy sea beneath into all the varied and delicate tints of mother-of-pearl, while over all hung the canopy of clear lilac and gold of the morning sky."*

We can only add one more quotation, full of local colouring, from the same pen: "During the march to Chumfai we had been disappointed at meeting so few wild flowers in these jungles. Violets with little or no scent had frequently been found. Some heliotrope, cox-comb, and a few other common flowering weeds, were the only varieties of Lushai flora we had discovered.

"On the return, however, our disappointment was turned to delight. Even their wild fruit trees were in blossom, tall trees covered with a large white flower like a geranium, others a blaze of scarlet blossoms; the crimson rhododendrons enlivened the gloom of the forest; a beautiful little green passion-flower hung in festoons from the trees, the convolvulus adorned the tangled briers, and through the long grass by the roadside sprang up golden fern and lilac flowers.

"The days were gloriously fine. Butterflies, of the most brilliant and varied hues, chased each other through the shadowy glades, and along the sunlit path; while beautiful little red and yellow birds flitted from tree to tree, flashing through the sunlight like pure gold."

As for the people, the Lushais, like other Himalayan tribes, are Mongoloids. Rather below medium height, muscular of limb, lithe and active in body, by disposition merry and good-tempered, they love fighting. To practice on their tame-spirited lowland neighbours was an irresistible

* "The Lushai Expedition, 1871-2." Lieut. R. G. Woodthorpe.

temptation. At one time "the only check on their incursions was their inability to stand the heat of the plains."

When the missionaries first settled at Aijal, it was taken for granted that the Lushais, like the Pois (inhabitants of the Chin Hills), were head-hunters.* This was a very natural conclusion, seeing that the Lushais were known to decapitate the bodies of those whom they slew in warfare, while they would always carefully remove their own fallen friends lest a similar fate should be theirs. But according to such an authority as Major Shakespeare, Superintendent of the Hills, there is no proof that their numerous raids were made simply to get heads. "Of course, a man who had killed his man was thought more highly of than one who had not, and, therefore, when a man did kill a person, he brought the head home to show that he had been speaking the truth."

But what if the meaning lay deeper! Before his friends, the missionaries, came, their faces shining with a light which never glowed on sea or shore, the Lushai had been dwelling in a land of the shadow of death, beautiful and bright as were his native hills. He, too, had had his guesses about the silent dead –who has not? –and as he laid the frame to rest at its old home door, imagination pictured the soul's flight, and coloured the scenes with the materialism of low ideals. Mi-ti-khua, the dead men's village, would probably be a place of work and worry. There must be a better abode for spirits beyond the Pial River. Surely to have been rich and feasted the village, or brave and skilful in getting trophies of war and the chase, would

* It used to be supposed by Colonel Lewin that their name indicated this, being derived from "Lu," a head, and "sha," to cut. The missionaries are of opinion that it means "long-head," from "Lu," a head, and "shei," long.

entitle a passing spirit to go there where food and drink are plentiful without fashing for them !

Natives of sixty and seventy years of age can remember the time when fighting was carried on by bows and arrows and spears ; now the people's weapons are flint-lock muskets, spears, and the *dâo*—an imitation of the Burmese *dah*. Their art of warfare was surprise. Suddenly to emerge from the jungle at dawn of day and attack an unresisting sleepy village, carrying off slaves laden with booty, was their favourite feat, until tea-gardens were discovered to be more worth while ! Cachar had been annexed by the British Government in 1832. Thereafter grants of land were made to enterprising tea-planters. In these isolated clearings, remote from the protection of Government, the only defence the planters had was in such arms as they kept in their bungalows. Alas ! danger was thereby increased, guns and gunpowder being to hill-men even more tempting loot than coolies. Frequent raids resulted, and threatening had no effect. In January, 1871, several attacks were made simultaneously, the one of greatest consequence being that at Alexandrapur tea-garden, where Mr. Winchester was shot and his little orphan girl of six years old carried off as hostage. To stop these raids and to rescue Mary Winchester the Lushai Expedition of 1871-2 was set on foot. Two columns entered the country—the left, starting from Cachar, proceeded south as far as Lungvel ; the right, embarking at Chittagong, marched north for 83 miles. Fifteen chiefs tendered submission, Mary Winchester was delivered to General Brownlow after a year's captivity, and a hundred British subjects were released. In 1889-90 another Expedition finally quieted the people, and since then we have occupied the country, and trade has been encouraged ; but it was not

until 1895 that Lushailand was formally annexed to British India, and ceased to be foreign territory. From the 5th September, 1895, the North Lushai Hills became part of Assam, and during the year the South Lushai Hills were incorporated in the province of Bengal. On the 1st April, 1898, the North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated into one District under the Assam administration, an arrangement which has worked for the peace and prosperity of the people. Almost the only revenue drawn from them is a hut tax, which has been realised without difficulty and yielded in 1899-1900 £2,700 towards the cost (£57,000) of occupation and administration. Labour in useful public works, such as roads, buildings, and waterworks, has been imposed and supervised, and it is reported that every year voluntary labour is being more freely offered. The plan of collecting fines in money and guns has enabled the Government to withdraw unlicensed arms and gain control over their possession.*

At the census of 1901, members of fifteen different clans were returned as inhabiting these hills. Ten of these are growing yearly more alike, and Lushēi with dialects is the *lingua franca* of the district. "Their name is commonly spelt Lushai, but the proper mode, which is employed when speaking of their language, is Lushēi."†

The special characteristic of these tribes is their feudal system. Each village is ruled by a chief (*Lal*), who is supported by the community and is in return a father to his people. "Every orphan, widow, or other person in a village who happens to be unable to support himself or herself, is at liberty to enter the household of the chief as a slave.

* See "Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India." (Vols. xxxii.-xxxvi.)

† Blue Book, 1901.

If able-bodied, such a slave is expected to work for his master; but, in any case, he has thenceforward no anxieties as to his future, for the chief will lodge, feed, and clothe him. As he grows older, a great deal of liberty will be allowed such a slave, and when the time comes for him to marry, the chief will provide the necessary dowry or price for the wife, and give the couple a separate house. When a person first becomes an inmate of the chief's house in this way, he is permitted to leave and go back to his old life if he wishes to do so. After a time, however, a certain ceremony is performed, by which the man publicly acknowledges himself the willing slave of the chief, and from that time forward he belongs irrevocably to the chief's household. The similarity between the above mentioned ceremony and that of baptism has struck many of the Lushais, though, of course, they understand that this is only one aspect of the solemn rite." *

The office of chief is hereditary, and all trace their pedigrees back to one called Thangura, who lived some two hundred years ago. The people are thoroughly democratic notwithstanding, and when they wish to do so they change their ruler by moving to another village. When the elder sons of a *Lal* marry, it is usual for him to help each in turn to start a fresh community, and the youngest son remaining in the old home becomes his father's successor.

Beautiful for situation are Lushai villages, never in the fever-haunted valleys, but away up on some mountain ridge or spur, or as near to the summit as possible. Theirs are villages in the structural sense of the word, and when we British first occupied the country, each had its stockade as protection against a neighbour's raids. So clever were

* Rev. J. Herbert Lorrain.





Lushai Villages.

some of these defences that Lieutenant Woodthorpe wrote of one: "Certainly the man who chose this position and planned these fortifications might under more favourable circumstances and a more civilised people have become a Todtleben or a Burgoyne."

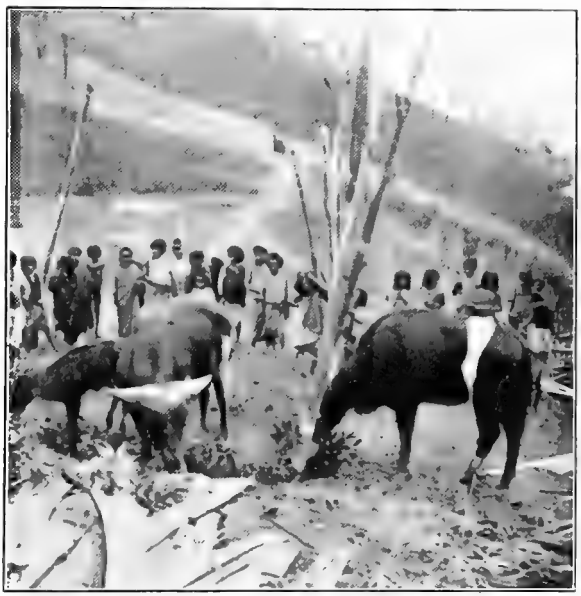
The chief's abode, being also the village poorhouse, is necessarily roomy. Near it is another public building, the



Splitting Bamboos for Buildings.

Zawlbuk, or bachelors' quarters. In front of these is an open space, generally of level ground, "from which the streets, following spurs and slopes of the mountain, radiate in all directions." Ordinarily, houses are raised a few feet from the ground, and being built on the steep hill-side, are propped on piles of different lengths to secure a level flooring. The frame-work of the buildings is of timber

the walls are made of split bamboo woven into matting, and the roofs are thatched with cane leaves or grass. Most consist of one windowless room (whose furniture is little other than two sleeping platforms, a mud hearth, and clay cooking pots), and outside is a front platform or verandah.



Gayals (*Bos Frontalis*). **Lushai Cattle.**

Underneath the house the domestic animals shelter—the gayal, the hill-goat, pig, and dog.

"There are so many noises in a Lushai village in the daytime," says Mr. Lorrain, "that it is often difficult to make oneself heard at any distance. Directly a meeting begins,

a legion of evil spirits seems to take possession of all the live stock in the place; fowls begin to cackle, cocks to fight, pigs to squeal, dogs to bark, goats to bleat, and even the poor little babies seem to be impelled to cry more loudly than usual."

The gayals (*Bos frontalis*) are described as "magnificent beasts, resembling nothing so much as the Chillingham wild cattle magnified." * They are only kept for slaughter, and with freedom and habits of life but little altered from that of their wild state, they are hardly at all changed in appearance by domestication. The Lushais never feed them with anything but salt, of which they are so fond that the custom of giving it to them of an evening will make the animals come home from the forest of their own accord. From early morning until evening they roam free in the jungles, browsing on young leaves and tender shoots of certain shrubs—preferring these to grass.

When the sites of new *jhums* (fields) are chosen, the men go *en masse* to clear with choppers all but the largest trees and then fire the fallen timber. In the rich débris they sow rice, maize, peas, and beans and millet. Sugar-cane, cotton, and tobacco are also grown. As the same piece of ground is seldom cultivated a second year, it is not more than four years before all the available land within reach of a village has been worked, and then the community seeks a fresh home.

Like other primitive peoples, the Lushais are very improvident, and use so much rice in making beer that their food supply runs out before harvest. Then the women search the jungles for edible roots and leaves. They eat flesh when they can get it, which may be two or three times

* Colonel Lewin: "The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein."

a year. Dogs are fattened for food, and deer they are still allowed to hunt; but gayals and goats, etc., being only killed in sacrifice (when, of course, a feast follows), the Lushais seldom taste any meat.

The forests have wild elephants, tigers, bears, wild boars, and deer, which formerly they were free to trap or hunt.



Lushai Women Weaving.

Indeed, hunting, fighting, building, and basket-weaving were the only kinds of work men engaged in. They are clever at the last mentioned—making about twenty different sorts and sizes, each with a separate name; but so strangely incomplete is the language that a word is wanting to include all, as "basket" does.

Women do the harder share of work, but are held in considerable esteem. A Lushai youth chooses his wife himself, and if the suit is accepted arranges with the girl's parents what presents he must pay to get her. Marriage does not wait the payment. The gifts are occasionally so costly that a man has to leave some for his children to discharge. Seeing that there women far exceed men in number (1,191 to 1,000), this high dowry means more "Clean and tidy girls are in no demand for wives here," writes Mr. Savidge. "The Lushai explains this by a selfish kind of logic. Such a wife would be more concerned with looking after her personal charms than with cooking the dinner of her spouse." Both sexes dress in a long tartan, spun and woven by the families' wives and daughters. The women also weave for themselves a pretty kilt, usually dyed blue. All wear ornaments.

The chief has advisers, called "*Upas*," and a "crier" to shout his orders after dark. Each village has a quaint forge, and a blacksmith to make and mend its tools—services tendered willingly to anyone, for the smithy is the servant of all, every villager contributing annually a certain portion of rice for his support. The community's other public character is the "*Puithiam*" (sorcerer).

CHAPTER III.

Religion and Language.

The Lushais have no caste with its exclusiveness, nor is there a priesthood to combat a new religion:—"they are unprejudiced, and having, apparently, no real religion of their own, are willing to accept whatever is first brought to them." Their crude religious notions are what are styled Animism. They believe the Creator to be a Good Spirit little concerned about men. Another less powerful spirit is evil, and has multitudes of emissaries in all natural objects, animate and inanimate, and in the heart of man himself. The inevitable tendency of dualism shows itself in concentrating fear on the power of evil. The Lushais' religious energies are all centred on propitiating the evil spirit, and the sorcerer's magic is in demand to determine what animal should be sacrificed to appease the genius which sends calamity and sickness. Strange to say, these men never opposed the missionaries ministering to the sick. Sacrifice is only made twice a year to the Good Spirit—before and at harvest. To the Lushai mind Christ's Resurrection appeals with force, for in that he grasps the truth of the Son of the Good Spirit triumphing over all the powers of evil.

For two years the missionaries devoted themselves to mastering the language, wishing to ensure accuracy before they began to teach in Lushei the words of truth and life. Bengali proved of help, as the order of words in a sentence is the same; otherwise, the languages have nothing akin,

Lushēi belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group. It is monosyllabic, words of one sound having wholly different meanings if the pitch or length of tone be varied in uttering them. Consonants also are strangely aspirated. The people call themselves *Dulien*, and their language *Dulien Tong*.

"Exercises in the Lushai Dialect" had been published in 1874 by Capt. Lewin, and this was followed in 1884 by Babu Brojo Nath Shaha's "Grammar of the Lushai Language." Capt. Lewin was not long in the district, and the system of transliteration he used is difficult even for Europeans to understand. Babu Brojo Nath Shaha's more elaborate work was only intended for Europeans. The natives of Lushai are indebted to Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge that their language was reduced to a system which they were capable of using to learn to read and write.

In the *Zawlbuk*, where all youths of fourteen years and upwards sleep, and where they congregate of an evening around a large central fire (which it is the lads' business to keep going), the missionaries first acquired, and then taught much. Here, after the day's work, stories of folk-lore or of the chase would be told, whilst the English visitors listened and learnt. In the same spot later on the lads were held spell-bound over another story—the most wonderful of all—of a Saviour's life and love—and in turn their ears caught strange accents, but these were charged with the music of heaven.

The first book printed in Lushēi was a Child's Primer. This was published by the Assam Government, and school work began in earnest. The young people, timid at starting, proved to be apt scholars and ready pupil-teachers, and the art of reading and writing spread rapidly. Government

encouraged the work, offering three months' hospitality to any man (chief or other) from a fresh village who would come to the fort to learn, and when the missionaries wished more time for translation, a Bengali was sent for them to train as schoolmaster. After a while no more verbal messages were sent to the villages, everything went in writing.* In



The Zawlbuk, or Young Men's Quarters.

the Blue Book of 1901, Mr. B. C. Allen reported: "The number of educated men censused in the Lushai Hills is very high for a newly-annexed district, but the Lushai is, I believe, easily wooed from the paths of barbarism.

* Later a manuscript newspaper, written by Lushais, began to be circulated. Now (in 1907) this is printed, and contains much besides Government orders and local news.

Of the hill tribes (of Assam) the Khasi is the most educated and, after him, comes the Lushai." Both of these are the direct results of Christian Missions.

All along children had visited the missionaries' verandah, and there by simple stages began the higher work. Every Sunday a sacred picture was shown and talked about. Hymns they had composed or translated were taught and became popular the Lushais are distinctly musical. Then a Catechism on the Bible was prepared with Scripture answers, that truths and texts might be learned together. After a time, grown-up people joined the Sunday School, and when in eagerness to get near they trod the garden down, it was time to build a little bamboo church. To speak or sing in a closed building was impossible, for in Lushai, men, women, and children are inveterate smokers. The church was made with three sides open, and the condition imposed that only those who came without pipes might sit inside ; others must be content to stand in the open. The meetings were thronged outside and in. Pictures were found helpful to preaching, and a scene of the Crucifixion never failed to rivet attention.

Often men trading in the Bengali bazaar at Sairang would hear of the wonderful pictures and climb up to Aijal to see them ; and then a little service would be held. On certain evenings in the week the missionaries took their concertinas and some pictures to other villages, that all within walking distance might be faithfully evangelized.

St. Luke's Gospel was the first book of Scripture they translated into Lushēi. Two intelligent youths—Suaka, who was afterwards employed as a Government clerk, and a young chief named Thangphunga—were chosen to help them in this work. It was no easy task, Lushēi being

deficient in its power of expressing abstract ideas. In some instances new significance had to be given words to enable them to convey spiritual meaning. Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge worked together of an afternoon from the Greek Testament, using the Hindustani, Bengali, and two English



First Chapel, Lushai Hills.

versions as guides in freedom of translation from one idiom into another. Next morning they read the portion translated to their assistants, and were interested to note their amazement at the self-forgetful beauty of our Lord's words and acts. "*Ava mak em!*" ("How very wonderful!")

often escaped involuntarily. To secure correctness of idiom, every Old Testament allusion was carefully explained, and when the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John, and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles were translated, both Suaka and Thangphunga had a good general knowledge of Old and New Testament history. The British and Foreign Bible Society printed these books, and the late Rev. Dr. Wright wrote to Mr. Lorrain :—" You and your colleague have done about as much good work on limited means as any who have come before this Society."

The missionaries also found time to prepare a Grammar and Dictionary (7,000 words). Since then others have been published. The head of the Linguistic Survey of India, G. A. Grierson, C.I.E., Ph.D., D.Litt., reports :— " Standard Lushēi is comparatively well known. Several Grammars have been written of it, the most important being that of the pioneer missionaries, Messrs. Lorrain and Savidge, which is accompanied by a very full Dictionary." *

Meanwhile, changes were pending which resulted in their leaving Aijal in December, 1897. We quote the missionaries' own account of these : –

" When we had got well started in our pioneering effort, we received a communication from the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, which had done such noble work in other parts of Assam, asking us whether we would object to their sending up men to work among the Lushais. We had already begun to feel that more workers were needed to evangelize so large a tract of mountainous country, but Mr. Arthington, who was at that time supporting us, would not send us any helpers, nor would he continue to support us in Lushai if another mission came up.* On the other hand, the possi-

* Blue Book, 1901.

bility of a large and powerful organization like the Welsh Mission occupying the field seemed to offer the prospect of a more speedy evangelization of the tribe than our little Mission could hope to effect, and our duty seemed plain. Although we had grown much attached to the Lushais and their country, we felt that we ought to sacrifice our own personal inclinations and give over our work to the Welsh Mission.

"We had been in the country four years before the first Welsh missionary arrived to carry on the work. During that time we had reduced for the natives the hitherto unwritten language to writing, and had taught numbers of Lushais to read and write, besides translating into Lushēi the Gospels of Luke, John, and the Acts of the Apostles, which were afterwards printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. We had also printed a Catechism upon the substance of the Bible, which we used in our Sunday School, and had preached the Gospel in many villages in the northern half of the Lushai Hills. Having given the new missionary a good start in the language, we left him in possession of our beloved field, and after seeing our Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushēi language through the Assam Government Press, we sailed for England."

* Mr. Arthington "was fond of telling his friends that he believed it was only necessary for the evangelist to pass through all these tracts of country (as yet untouched by the Truth) distributing Gospels, and preaching the Word, in order that Christ might come and restore all things."—Mr. Samuel Southall in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*.

CHAPTER IV.

The First-Fruits of the Gospel in Lushai.

Probably some of the most beautiful stories ever written have been those which have described the coming of the Gospel into a new country, and its first contact with the hearts of those who have hitherto lived in the darkness. What stories, indeed, should be more beautiful than those which have for their theme the first meeting of the Shepherd and the lost members of His flock, the dawn of hope upon the dense darkness of heathen existence, the first whisper of the great Secret of Life in the wondering ears of the children of the Regions Beyond? The Lushai Pioneer Mission is not without records whose every line rings with the eternal harmony of redemption, and in one of these records we find the simple story of the convert Taibunga, as told by Mr. Lorrain:—

"Taibunga was a young Lushai man who lived in the village within a stone's throw of our little mountain home. The happy day to which he had been looking forward had come and gone, and he was at last the proud husband of the girl whom he loved. But the festivities were scarcely over when he began to feel a strange pain in his hip, which compelled him to take to his bed and send his wife down to our house to ask us for medicine. Unfortunately, that very day we had started on a long tour of four thousand miles, and when we returned four months later we found Taibunga in an advanced stage of hip disease, and suffering terribly

from bed sores ; for he had not been out of his hard bamboo bed since the day he was taken ill.

" The hip disease was the result of a fall from a tree some time before. We did all we could to relieve the poor fellow, who was in a terrible plight, his newly-married wife having practically deserted him, and no one in the village, not even the exorcist, knowing how to make him comfortable. About this time the British Government in Fort Aijal opened very near to us a little bamboo hospital for the natives, in charge of a Bengali doctor, and we persuaded Taibunga to occupy one of the beds there. We also persuaded his wife to come back to her husband, and got her accommodation in the hospital as well ; and though terribly disappointed at having such a sick and helpless partner, she remained faithful to him right up to the end.

" I made a practice of going to this Lushai hospital every Sunday afternoon to talk to the patients, and I found them ever most willing to listen to the message of salvation. Taibunga especially seemed to grasp the truth, and before long he became a trusting believer in the Lord Jesus. His condition was most pitiable ; it was impossible for him to sit up or to lie on his back ; he was always obliged to lie flat on his stomach, and sometimes he suffered a good deal of pain. How eagerly he used to look for my coming on Sunday afternoon ! He could hear our Sunday School bell ring when the wind was in the right direction, and then he would calculate how long it would be before the children would be dismissed, and I should appear. His poor wasted face always lit up with pleasure as I entered, and then we would have a quiet chat together, a few others also gathering round to listen. During the week he would tell the others what he had learned on the Sunday, and the children from our

Sunday School would come in and tell him what *they* had learned ; and so it came to pass that Taibunga grew strong in his new religion.

" And he needed to be strong ; for after a time cruel and avaricious men, knowing that he would not recover, began to take his pigs and goats and other worldly possessions. It was not to be wondered at that I sometimes found him almost in tears over these losses ; for he hoped to get well, and knew that if he did so he would be destitute and ruined, perhaps, for life. These cruel thefts were at first real troubles to him, but after a time he began to understand more and more the reality of the treasures which God has prepared for those who love Him. So as his faith and love increased, all thoughts of his worldly poverty vanished ; and when he began to realise that his recovery was hopeless, his affections became fixed upon the heavenly home toward which he was hastening. Sometimes when his poor body threatened to dull his soul's vision, I have heard him say : ' Yes, I will trust in Jesus, even though I die.' His bright testimony had its influence upon the sick around him, and one poor Lushai suffering from beri-beri, who had his bed on the floor close to Taibunga, became himself a believer in the Saviour.

" So the weary months of Taibunga's sickness were made bright by the certain hope of immortality and by pleasant talks with his fellow-sufferers, and after nearly two years of suffering, his weary body fell asleep in Jesus. I was away on a tour when the end came, but I have every reason to believe, from what the man with beri-beri told me, that his faith remained steadfast unto the end. So poor had he become that in our absence he was buried in a pauper's grave, and the heathen who committed his poor body to

the dust knew not that they were laying to rest the first convert to Christianity from that wild tribe, in the sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection.

"It was thus that Taibunga, the poor bedridden invalid, became the first-fruits of the Gospel in Lushailand."



Part 2.

"And I will cause them to return to the land. . And they shall possess it."—*Jeremiah xxx.* 3.

CHAPTER I.

The Call to South Lushai.

The beginning of 1898 saw Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge back in England. They had proved the value of medical knowledge in pioneer work, giving possibilities of usefulness and witness-bearing to the time spent in mastering a new language. If deeds speak louder than words when both are in use, how eloquent must they be as the only interpreters of thought! Surely there can be no more potent key than the healing art, combined with sympathetic kindness, to open hitherto fast-barred doors for the entrance of the Gospel message.

The two friends entered Livingstone College for the session 1898-99, for a course of study of surgery and of tropical diseases and tropical hygiene. We have been indebted for information about their work in the North Lushai Hills to a pamphlet written by a fellow-student of theirs at Livingstone College, the Rev. T. J. Raybould, whose own subsequent short but devoted missionary career in Africa was suddenly terminated.*

As no prospect offered of a return to their well-loved Lushais, Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge determined to start

* The Rev. Thos. J. Raybould had a severe sunstroke at Bulawayo and had to leave the country immediately. He died at St. Neots in 1904.

a mission to the Abors, and towards the end of 1900, with support from friends in England (Mr. Arthington died in October of that year), they went to Sadiya, "the most north-easterly outpost of India, situated on the Brahmaputra." We quote a letter from Major Shakespeare, C.I.E., D.S.O., Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, written in the spring of 1899, when he was on furlough in England :—

"Hollycroft,
Wellington Road,
Bournemouth.

"MY DEAR LORRAIN,—

"Many thanks for your long letter and for the pamphlet. I enclose a promise of a subscription.

"I am writing to Mr. Cotton (Chief Commissioner of Assam) regarding you and your proposed work. I hope you will have no trouble. I have in my annual reports on the Lushai Hills recorded my opinion of the valuable work done by you both, which I consider has materially assisted in the pacification of the Lushais.

"The common-sense which was so conspicuous in all your dealings with the Lushais, and which made your influence over them so great, will, I am sure, enable you to gain an influence over the Abors and other tribes of the N.E. frontier, which will be of great assistance to Government. If a fuller expression of the value of your work in Lushailand will be of any use, I shall be most happy to write a note on the subject for publication, or you can show this letter to anyone interested in your work.

"Yours very sincerely,

"JOHN SHAKESPEARE."

"It was the testimony of the Government officials in Lushai" (wrote the pioneers) "as to the usefulness of our work in those hills, which induced those in authority to allow us to begin work for the Abors in Sadiya. After two and a half years' labour there, the attitude of the Government has completely changed towards missionary effort on that frontier. This is, in our opinion, the greatest triumph which the short-lived Assam Frontier Pioneer Mission has accomplished, and God has indeed blessed the little organization by giving it such an honour. This, however, is not all. The medical and surgical work, according to the testimony of a Government official, has been instrumental in saving thousands of lives. We have been enabled, moreover, to reduce the Abor language to a system of writing, suitable for the natives' use, and as soon as we have time to copy out our MS., the Assam Government will, probably, print the Dictionary which we have prepared. Arrangements have also been made to print and illustrate the Abor "Story of the Bible" (a book of some 400 pages), upon which we have expended much time and labour. These books will be invaluable helps to the men who shall follow up our work at Sadiya, and we thank God that He has given us the privilege of preparing the way in this manner for the advancement of His kingdom"

Meanwhile, the Welsh Mission had only been able to spare two men to Lushai, who not only carried on the work round Aijal (their centre), but even succeeded in reaching some of the villages in the southern part of the hills. Early in 1901 eleven Christian families were settled at Sethlun Kawna, a village near Fort Lungleh (the capital of the south), and six others in adjacent villages. The spiritual needs

of this little community, and the prospect offered of others being added to them, caused the Baptist Missionary Society's agent at Chittagong to write to the Home Committee, urging that South Lushai should be taken up as a fresh field by the Society. Accordingly, the Rev. George Hughes was requested to visit Fort Lungleh to inquire into and report upon the possibilities of settlement there for a European missionary.

The South Lushai Hills district (population 29,500) is "a wild mountainous tract of country lying just within the tropics. The mountains, ranging from two thousand to seven thousand feet in altitude, are covered from base to summit with dense forests, so thick with undergrowth and trailing creepers that in most parts even the hardy hill-men dare not venture off the beaten tracks without their trusty choppers. With the exception of one or two small isolated plateaux, there is not an acre of flat land in the whole country. The mountain-sides are very steep and often precipitous, and the ranges are divided from one another by deep and gloomy ravines, along which picturesque streams make their way to the sea. The British Government deserve great praise for the energy with which they have been opening up better means of communication in the hills of late years. The military outposts are already connected by properly-cut roads of easy gradient, and now the authorities are having a series of smaller paths cut through the forests in various directions, so that in a few years' time it will be possible to ride all over the country on horseback."* This, as all Government work, is done by

* 1¾ miles an hour is the utmost speed one can attain walking or riding. To show how purely relative is distance in South Lushai we quote the following:—"Only 16 miles apart as the crow flies, it was a five days' march of 41½ miles by the ordinary Kookie *i.e.* native) path, two-thirds of which lay along the beds of torrents, the rest being

impressed labour. A message is sent to the chief (of a village), saying, "We want so many men, for such a work, on such a date," and the men have to be supplied.

A Government road runs through Lushailand, connecting Forts Aijal and Lungleh, continuing to Fort Tregear (five days south of Lungleh), and on again to the Southern Von Lai Phai. The Lushai Christians welcomed Mr. Hughes, expressing "keen desire" that a missionary should settle amongst them. They volunteered to clear the jungle from the hill-top and to erect a temporary home for the evangelists. Mr. Hughes proposed to leave with them a Bengali to superintend the work, and a convert of the Chakma tribe to learn the language.

As time passed, neither of these men proved able to bear the climate of the hills, and a third was invalided home. Hearing that the Lushai Christians began to be disheartened, saying: "The missionaries will never come. They do not care for us!" Mr. Hughes wrote to one of them, an intelligent young Christian, Thankunga by name, to meet him at Demagiri. This man had been pointed out by the Welsh missionaries as eminently suited for evangelistic work. He and four other Christian Lushais went to Demagiri to meet Mr. Hughes, who entrusted to Thankunga the conduct of the work until a missionary should arrive to take over superintendence. He gave him the necessaries for starting day and Sunday schools, also a bundle of large coloured pictures of Bible subjects, and a Sunday School Union Pictorial Life of Christ.

A day was spent in marking the passages in the Lushēi Scriptures which the pictures illustrated, and in instructions

through almost impervious jungle. In every intervening valley was a stream, now rushing fiercely shallow amid its boulders, and now flowing deep and unfordable between dark silent woods."—*Indian Pioneer*, May 10, 1872.

how to undertake the work and gain a hearing in neighbouring villages. They had reading and prayer together, and then parted. Mr. Hughes wrote home: "It was indeed a great treat to meet with these little ones whose love to Christ was so transparently deep and strong, their faith in Him so beautifully simple, and their power in prayer wonderfully great. The meeting with them was of much help to me. It fell like music upon my ears, and as the healing touch of the Unseen Hand upon my spirit.

It was touching to hear them ask, 'Will the missionary come in November, in December, in January?' They had learnt the names of these few months in their anxiety to learn, 'When will our teachers come?' They know that when March and April come they must be off again to prepare the hill-sides for sowing-time, and the leisure months, when they could sit at the teacher's feet and learn of Jesus, will have passed by."

And now we turn again to Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge's account of their call to the work in South Lushai. "Our quiet but busy life at Sadiya was suddenly broken into by a communication from the Indian Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society (the Rev. Herbert Anderson), in which he informed us that the Welsh Mission had handed over the southern half of the Lushai Hills to his Society, and that he was desirous of proposing to his London Committee that they should invite us to return to this southern part of our old field as their agents. Our hearts beat with pleasure at the thought of going back to our beloved people, but we knew from experience the folly of following our own desires. So we made the matter a subject for prolonged waiting upon God, and after further correspondence with the

B.M.S. Home Committee, He led us to decide that if the B.M.S. would undertake to send men to continue our work in Sadiya, we would consent to go to Lushai ; otherwise, we could not leave the Abors."

These terms being accepted, in March, 1903, the two friends started.

CHAPTER II.

"How Beautiful Upon the Mountains are the Feet of Him that Bringeth Good Tidings."

The journey from Calcutta to Fort Lungleh takes ten days, provided one is fortunate enough just to catch the weekly steamer to Rangamati at Chittagong, and no catastrophes or hindrances of any sort interfere with the further journey (in dug-out canoes) up the Kornaphuli River. "Seven hours' rowing," wrote Mr. Lorrain, "brought us to Kassalong, where we lived eleven years ago, when we were endeavouring to enter Lushai from the south. The following day we reached the Barkal Rapids, where we were detained two and a half days before we could get fresh boats to take us on to Demagiri.

"On the higher reaches of the Kornaphuli River, above the Barkal Rapids, there are only two small boats, and these belong to the British Government. Occasionally, however, an enterprising trader will have his boats dragged up the rapids in order to get his goods through to Lushai. We were fortunate enough eventually to secure two such boats, so were able with their help, and that of the two small Government boats, to take our more personal luggage with us, leaving the bulk of our effects behind at Barkal.

"Upon arriving at Demagiri, we were heartily welcomed by nineteen Christian Lushais who had come all the way from Fort Lungleh to meet us. The Government official at Lungleh had kindly promised to supply us with coolies to carry our goods across the mountains; but, after waiting a

whole day for them, and finding that there was no certainty as to when they would arrive, we were obliged to leave most of our luggage behind us and start on the four days' tramp over the mountains to Fort Lungleh. The Christian Lushais accompanied us, each of them, men and women alike, carrying a full coolie load."



River Kornaphuli, at foot of Lushai Hills.

The Government coolies, strong, able-bodied men, are only allowed to carry forty pounds each, as the roads are so heavy and steep. Weights are usually borne in large baskets on the back, and supported in that position by a strap, which passes across the forehead of the carrier. Some of the men also wear a small wooden yoke on their shoulders,

which helps to support the load From Demagiri to Fort Lungleh the ascent of hills is sometimes three miles long without a break, and the following descents even more trying to the traveller. Mosquitoes, sandflies, and leeches all add to the discomforts of the way. Yet we read :—

"The presence of the Christians made the four days'



Christian Village Chapel near Fort Lungleh.
(Evangelist: Thankunga.)

walk a very pleasant one. As we watched them our hearts overflowed in thankfulness, for it was evident that the Gospel had wrought a real change in their lives. We were generally awakened at early dawn by the strains of some familiar hymn tune resounding through the forest, and we knew that these dear people were offering their morning praise

to the God Whom they had so lately learned to know and love. In the evening, after the hard day's march was over, they would gather round the camp fire and occupy the hours until bed-time in prayer and hymn singing. We were pleased to find these converts remarkably well instructed in Divine things. The Welsh Missionary brethren have done a really great work in the hills since we left the country five years ago. We were surprised, too, that they had been able to give so much time and attention to the South Lushai Hills, considering the great distance which separates this part of the country from their base at Aijal, in the North Lushai." The distance is one hundred and six miles—an eight days' journey.

Fort Lungleh was reached on March 13th, 1903, and a kindly welcome received from the little European community there—two police officers and a lieutenant with his family. The missionaries were glad to find that about thirty native families had given up sacrificing to demons, and were trying, to the best of their ability, to serve God. Including children and scattered individual converts, these numbered 125. One had first heard the Gospel from their lips in Aijal. Many of these converts had come into direct contact with the Welsh Missionaries when on their tours. In the south, others had been influenced by their Christian fellow-tribesmen, and several families owed their conversion to the faithful preaching of a Christian Khasi in Government employ, who had for some time lived in a village near Fort Lungleh. Already "sixteen Christian families had founded a separate village, and had built for themselves a bamboo meeting-house an excellent little chapel—the place nicely seated, each bench being made of a rough-hewn plank, the supports embedded in the ground to make them firm."

There seemed to be among the scattered converts a general tendency to gravitate towards this Christian settlement; and it was necessary to point out to them the privilege of living and witnessing for Christ amongst their unconverted friends and acquaintances.

Of first impressions Mr. Lorrain reported:—"We went to the Christian service, and it was a time of great joy. Everything was delightfully informal and natural. After the headman had read a portion of Scripture and explained it, one man after another (some quite young, others very aged) stood up and gave a short testimony as to how he had found salvation. These brief addresses were interspersed with cheerful hymns; and whenever a speaker began to repeat his story, as some of them were inclined to do, one of the listeners would suggest that it was time to have another hymn, and the speaker would instantly agree with him and sit down. Some of their testimonies interested us greatly.

"It will be our endeavour to make the native Christian Church in this land self-supporting from the first. The converts show a true willingness to give of their substance to God. We were very pleased to find that even before our arrival they had put aside a tenth of their last rice-crop, and were only waiting for us to tell them what they ought to do with it." They had stored it "in an immense bamboo bin on the platform of their little chapel." "After providing for the poor Christian widows, there will still be enough left to feed two families for a year. Our intention is to advise them to support one or two probationary preachers whom we shall select from their number. There are a few very promising young men among them, one of whom has been practically their pastor the last year or so.

With careful training they bid fair to become useful evangelists among their fellow-countrymen.

"It has been a great joy to us to hear these people singing the hymns which we composed for them when we were in the north of their country, and to hear them reading the Scriptures which we were enabled then to translate for them. It makes us feel that, although we have been away from them for five years, the seed we then sowed has been bringing forth fruit."

Their own Lushēi Primer and the Gospels were ready for use in the schools which the missionaries hastened to start. This is now more especially Mr. Savidge's department, and he has brought great skill as well as devotion to the most important work of education. In his report of 1905 we read: "The Chief Commissioner, when he visited the Lushai Hills in February last, suggested that the education of the whole of the South Lushai Hills should be put under my care, and he would gladly consider any scheme I might propose towards that end. This was an encouraging suggestion, and one that I adopted with pleasure. Now, all the schools started by Government some years ago are under the direction of the Mission. . . . The Political Officer, in sending us a copy of the Census Report, said he felt proud of the crop that had sprung up from the seed we had sown when we were in Aijal in the North Lushai. Twelve Lushais per thousand were reckoned as literate."

Of a photograph taken of a geometry class, Mr. Savidge wrote: "I mentioned the propositions that English schoolboys usually stumble over, and they at once made up their minds that they would learn those. 'We will just see if we have not as good brains as English boys,' was the remark they made. Some time after they had begun geometry

they wanted to know what advantage that would be for extending the Kingdom of Christ. The day before happened to have been a Sunday, and one of the boys had given a very impressive address at one of the meetings. I asked them to recall what was said at that address. "*Ava mak*



Euclid in a Lushai Mission School.

ém, tuna ka hria!" ('How wonderful, now I understand!'), said the one who had given the address. 'I made a statement at the beginning, and in the end I proved it to be true, just as we do a proposition of Euclid.'"

In the Training Schools for teachers, Mr. Savidge started with 24 boys, nine of whom were Christians. It was not long before 21 were believers. "They are all Christian

Endeavourers, as they all take an active part in the daily services, and on Sundays they divide themselves into bands to visit the different villages to tell others of their countrymen the good news they themselves have heard. Some visit the sick in the hospital, and try to brighten the weary hours of the patients with cheery words, and encourage them with prayer. . The Christians among them have a good influence upon their companions, and many others are, I am sure, secret believers.

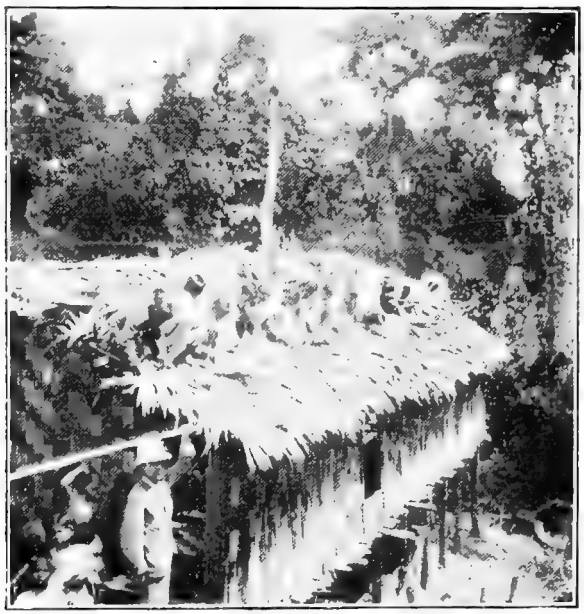
They are so unlike the majority of English boys, for they can live, and work, and play together in complete harmony without ever quarrelling for months at a time.
Before the end of the year [1904] I hope to establish at least eight of the boys as teachers in schools in different villages."

Later on Mr. Lorrain sent a snapshot, of which he wrote: "You will see how industrious Mr. Savidge's schoolboys are. They are busy thatching a new house for themselves with cane leaves, and are as merry over their task as though they were playing a game of hockey or engaging in some other well-loved sport. The boys do one hour's work in the afternoon after four o'clock. This helps to keep the compound free from jungle, gives them healthful exercise, and goes a long way towards supplying the boys and ourselves with vegetables. Quite a number of the schoolboys have become followers of Jesus, and each Christian lad takes his turn to lead the others in prayer at the daily morning service, and they all take their part in the meetings which we hold in different neighbouring villages every Sunday."

Much of Mr. Lorrain's time was given to instructing converts at the station and in the Christian village, and in

itinerating. He also had a class twice a week for those seeking baptism.

On the Mission Ground (which is situated two miles north of Fort Lungleh and one mile from the main road), a dispensary and rest-house for strangers were erected, besides the



Mission School Boys Thatching their own House at Lungleh.

bungalows. Several hundreds of patients (2,760 in 1906) visit the dispensary during the year, and the rest-house enables Lushais from distant villages to spend a night at the station occasionally in order to listen to the evening preaching.

Of itineration work, Mr. Lorrain says: "Our approach to a village is generally heralded in some mysterious manner, and a deputation meets us with refreshments when the houses are still a quarter of a mile off. We used to be met with a present of rice beer, but now that we are better known, and our mission more understood, sticks of sugar-cane or a bamboo full of water are given to us instead to quench our thirst.* As soon as we enter a village, our Lushai cook goes to the "town-crier" and asks for a lodging. The man in a few minutes comes with the news that such and such a house is at our disposal, and upon following him to the place, we find the owners cheerfully turning out of their house to accommodate us.

"Their worldly goods are few and are easily moved, or if left in the house do not get in our way. The house selected is generally small and clean, and the abode of a married couple without a family. The owners do not mind putting up at a neighbour's house for a night or two; and, when we have once stayed at a village, the same people will give up their house to us again and again on subsequent visits. We always pay the owners for every night we inconvenience them in this way; but they would be quite as hospitable without any reward. As soon as we are settled in our new quarters our men disperse to find lodgings for themselves. Any Lushai will take in a stranger for a night, and provide him with supper, and also with breakfast next morning, free of charge. In addition to this, a leaf full of cooked rice to eat on the road is given to the traveller before he resumes his journey.

"Almost before we have had five minutes' rest, the sick and suffering begin to gather around the door, and then

* The giant bamboo is used for carrying water in Lushailand. (See page 57.)

the medicine basket is brought out, and our hands are full of work until it is time to begin preaching. Those who can afford it, are encouraged to buy our remedies, but the poor are treated free of charge.* There always seems to be



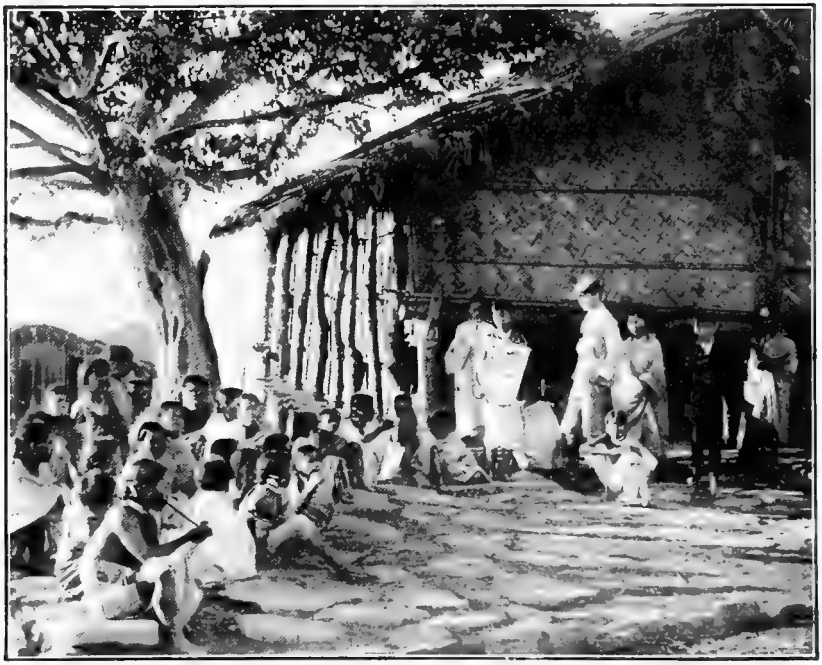
Women carrying Water in Giant Bamboo Canes.

a terrible lot of sickness about, and the suffering one is brought into contact with is enough to melt to pity a heart of stone.

"We hold one or two outdoor meetings before dark, and

* In 1906 they contributed Rs. 168 for the remedies received.

get a good hearing. As soon as the evening meal is over, however, and the village is wrapped in darkness, the people are called together again, and, while all the animals are sleeping quietly beneath the houses, we have a thoroughly



Preaching in a Lushai Village at the Young Men's Quarters—the Zawlbuk.

good meeting. Each house has a little platform outside its front door, and upon these the people sit in the shadow and listen to the message of salvation. If cold, a bonfire is lit in the middle of the street, and many of the audience gather round its warm and cheerful blaze. The singing,

too, goes well after dark, for scores of young people pluck up courage and join in heartily.* If there are converts in a village, an indoor meeting is held later in the evening for their special encouragement, and also for those who are anxious to know more of the Way of Life. If there are several workers with us, they disperse to their various lodgings and hold little meetings on their own account, or teach the young folks a new hymn or two. It is late before we are able to kneel down and thank our Master for the privilege of doing another day's work for Him; and when we creep beneath our mosquito net, in spite of the grunts of a restless pig below the house, we are soon sleeping the sweet sleep of the weary."

The missionaries published at the beginning of 1904 a collection of twenty-nine hymns, which was much appreciated; and during the rainy months, when itinerating is impossible (the rainfall sometimes amounting to seventeen inches in a day), they prepared a "Story of Jesus" in Lushēi, a little book of about 180 pages.

* "Lushai boys and girls do not sing in their natural state. It is the middle-aged and the aged only who attempt to 'fill the air with music,' and they only when they are drinking beer."—Rev. F. W. Savidge.

CHAPTER III.

The First "Great Gathering."

The first annual gathering of Lushai converts took place in January, 1904. "Messengers were sent round to all the villages some time in advance so that every Christian in South Lushai might know when the "Great Gathering" was to take place. There are solitary converts scattered far and wide over the hills, and many of them had been looking forward to the fellowship with other Christians which this gathering would afford. It was our intention to call the people together at the New Year, but, as the harvest had not been quite gathered in, the event was postponed until the first new moon of January.

"The inhabitants of the Christian village some five miles from here undertook to entertain converts coming from a distance. On the Friday and Saturday preceding the eventful Sunday the visitors arrived in ones and twos, and presently every house in the village sheltered some guests. The Sunday meetings were full of life and enthusiasm. There was a prayer meeting in the early morning, followed by the usual service. In the afternoon the children had a special service, and this was not long over when the people gathered together for their evening worship. On each occasion the little bamboo church was filled. Including children, there were over 140 converts present.

"On Monday, after the morning prayer meeting, men and women met in the church to discuss several questions of importance to the infant Church in South Lushai, prominent among them being subjects such as "Observance of the Day of Rest," "Eating of things sacrificed to demons," "Christian giving," "The Christian's attitude towards the drink curse," etc., etc. In all these matters it was found that the Bible had words of advice and help, and many who had been troubled in their minds about these questions were comforted and strengthened. Several promised to make a point of bringing at least one person to Christ during the ensuing year, and not to rest until prayer and effort had been crowned with success. It was also decided to start a Sunday School in every village where there were converts. For the furtherance of the Gospel among the heathen Lushais, and for the help of the poor, the Christians joyfully agreed to give a tenth or more of all their crops to God year by year.

"The afternoon of Monday was a memorable one for the young folks. It was spent in reviving many a half-forgotten game. During the years of war and unrest which ended in the occupation of Lushai by the British, many of the national games and customs were discontinued, and the rising generation knows next to nothing about them. It seems a great pity that these most interesting links with the past should be lost, and, as we hold that the Christians should be the Lushais of the Lushais, we are trying to get them to be foremost in reviving these innocent and picturesque customs. We are anxious that the heathen should know that in seeking to Christianize them, we are not denationalizing them."

On Monday evening another good meeting was held,



Mission School, Fort Lungleh, South Lushai.

and when the missionaries arrived at the village on Tuesday morning "a row of boiling pots obstructed the main street and proclaimed the fact that a feast was in store. The prayer-meeting was already over, so, leaving a few men to look after the boiling pots, we gathered to finish the discussion of the previous day. The meal took place at noon. A little house had been put at our disposal, as we were to spend this night in the village, and a strange stillness reigned while the inhabitants in their several houses, and we in ours, enjoyed the good things provided.

"Before sunset everyone present received a little gift in memory of the happy gathering. Cakes of soap, combs, and tiny mirrors were to be seen on every hand. Up to the present it has been easier to teach these dear people the way of godliness than to inculcate habits of cleanliness.

"The day was wound up with a magic lantern entertainment in the church; but, after all had separated for the night, there seemed to be hymn-singing in almost every house until the early hours of the morning. It was long before we could get any sleep, tired as we were, but it came at last, in spite of the hard floor upon which we were lying and the many and various noises which the animal population of a Lushai village always keeps up during the hours of darkness.

"Wednesday, January 20th, 1904, was the last and the most memorable day of the first "Great Gathering" of converts in South Lushai. We, in our tiny native hut, were awakened at early dawn by the rhythmic thud of many pestles as the industrious housewives of the village pounded the husks from the rice which was to feed their respective households and visitors during the day. A few minutes

later the voice of one of the oldest men in the community was heard summoning the people to awake and follow him to early morning prayer in the bamboo church. As he passed we heard him crying, "Come! To-day is the day on which we are to receive baptism! None but God can change the hearts of men," and then, as he climbed the hill to the "House of Prayer," his voice grew fainter and fainter and was soon lost in the distance.

"This old man was one of the first in these parts to embrace the Christian faith, and God has in a most marked manner changed his heart. He is never weary of telling what Jesus has done for him. It was formerly his custom to wake the village every morning long before dawn with such cries as we heard that morning; but the young men and women, tired with a long day's work in the fields, objected to be roused at such unearthly hours, and complained to us about it. We reminded the dear, earnest old fellow that young people require more sleep than old ones, and that if he were still young and hard-working, he would probably be vexed if someone disturbed his slumbers so unreasonably early. He admitted that we were right, and said that in future he would remember to do to others as he would that others should do to him.

"His old heart was so full of joy on that great morning, the morning of the day on which he was to be baptized, that he could not keep the words back as he went up to God's house to his usual early devotions, and his cry sounded as music in our ears as he summoned us to prayer. Very soon a little company was gathered together before the Throne of Grace, and hearts were full at the thought of what the day had in store. Twenty-three Lushais were to follow their Master through the waters of baptism, and, with the

exception of those whom the Welsh missionaries baptized at Aijal, these would be the first converts from Lushai to confess Christ in this manner.

"Ten years before, on that very day, we were living in a tent in the North of Lushai. We had only just succeeded in penetrating into the country after more than two years of patient effort. The Lushais were at that time described in the Press as a tribe of irreclaimable savages. This was no doubt a very erroneous description of them, but they were justly regarded as dangerous neighbours. Then the name of Jesus was utterly unknown to the people. To us, who knew the country before the dawn of Christianity broke over its wild mountains and valleys, the baptism of these twenty-three Lushais was an occasion of the greatest joy.

"The prayer-meeting over," continues Mr. Lorrain, "we had our breakfast, and then the Church was crowded for the service. The meaning of Christian baptism was carefully explained, and the candidates each spoke a few words.

"As soon as the preparatory meeting was over, almost the whole Christian community set out for the stream where the baptism was to take place. It lay in a deep valley about an hour's walk from the village, and the path led through the newly-reaped rice fields of the people. The little granaries dotting the hill-sides were full of golden grain, and outside of most of them could be seen a kind of bamboo bin containing one-tenth of the crop, set apart as a thankoffering to God. As we got lower in the valley, the heat became greater, and the people refreshed themselves with sticks of sugar-cane, which were growing profusely here and there.

"When at last we reached the stream we found everything ready. We had previously selected a clear pool across which a large tree had fallen. The Christians had fixed a young sapling from this fallen tree to a convenient sand-bank to serve as a handrail when entering the water. At the bottom of the pool they had also placed some heavy logs, so that the candidates should not sink in the mud. The jungle all around had been cleared, so that any number might stand and witness the ceremony.

"As soon as we arrived, the names of the candidates were called, and they were arranged in order upon the sand. The people crowded the banks and joined heartily in the opening hymn. After a brief prayer I entered the water, and then our Lushai evangelist called out the first name on the list. A great silence fell upon all as an old man of nearly seventy stepped forward and came to me in the water. Holding his wrinkled, toil-worn hands in mine, the sacred and momentous formula of Christian baptism was pronounced for the first time in the South Lushai Hills. The head of the aged convert bowed, and the water closed over his grey hairs. The next moment he rose from the symbolic burial with beaming face, and as he walked up out of the stream he declared in the hearing of all that he meant to follow Jesus faithfully as long as life should last. Then the stillness was broken, and the forests echoed with the strains of the familiar chorus song in Lushei by all assembled :—

"Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Anywhere, everywhere, I would follow on.
Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Everywhere He leads me I would follow on."

"The echoes had scarce died away when the next name was called. . As each candidate left the water, the above-mentioned chorus was sung by all present, and, as many of them came down to be baptized or went towards the shore, after being immersed, they spoke boldly to those assembled. Several gave expression to a feeling of great unworthiness, but all declared their determination to follow Christ, and, in His power, to fight against sin.

"When I had baptized twelve, my friend, Mr. Savidge, came and took my place, and the memorable service went on to the end without a hitch. Everyone present must have been impressed. When the final prayer had been uttered, we quietly wended our way up the steep mountain path towards the village, with hearts too full for words.

"As soon as the mid-day meal was over we gathered in the little church for the final meeting of our first "Great Gathering," at which we were to call to remembrance our Lord's Death in His Own appointed way. It was a most blessed service to those who gathered round the Table and to those who looked on. It formed a fitting close to our happy gathering, the memory of which will doubtless cheer many of the new converts, now that they are back in their own villages away from Christian companionship. These solitary ones need our prayers that they may be kept faithful in the midst of heathen influence and unsympathetic fellow-tribesmen."

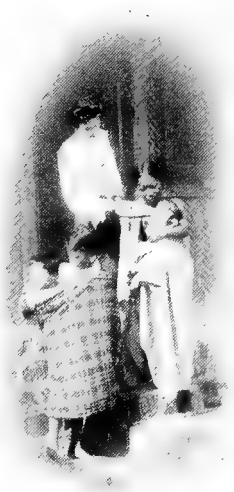
Whilst a few of the national customs are worth saving for their innocence and picturesqueness, the majority require the patient energy of the missionary to uproot and destroy. Divorce is common, and, there as here, want of sufficient house-accommodation has its evil effect on

the morals of the people. The prejudice in favour of old ways felt by heathen parents, or some converted late in life, is often a hindrance to young people in their right efforts, so that ever and anon come conflicting claims and Christ's crucial test: "He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Some hopeful enquirers have failed before it, and some "who ran well for a time* have found sin too strong for them, and, ceasing to struggle against it, have gone back to their old, unsatisfying heathen customs. . . . We rejoice, however, that none of the sixty-eight baptized Christians have fallen away altogether, though the conduct of a few has given us much pain and anxiety. The Lushais say, in their picturesque way, that the baptized converts are like the heart of a tree—firm and immovable; while the mere adherents are more like the bark which is easily peeled off." At the close of 1905, four evangelists were being supported by the native Church.

Of one heathen usage Mr. Lorrain wrote:—"It was customary here until recently that when a woman died leaving a young baby, the little one was placed beneath the corpse and smothered and then buried along with its mother. This practice is now forbidden by the British Government, but the babies generally die a lingering death from starvation, as the Lushais have no idea of feeding a child by hand with anything but rice. One little mite, whose father died before its birth, and whose mother only survived that event by a day or two, was brought to me when I was still a bachelor, while Mr. Savidge was down in Calcutta for his marriage (1904). As it had no relatives, I tried to get a woman to care

1906. Annual Report of the Baptist Missionary Society.

for it, but it was soon reduced to a tiny bundle of skin and bones. Mrs. Savidge, soon after her arrival, took pity on it, and with great difficulty nursed it back to health, and now the name of Khawngaibula is known all over the district.



Mrs. Lorrain Feeding a Lushai Orphan.
Khawngaibula and his little nurse in front.

They wanted Mrs. Lorrain to take over entire charge of one baby before she had been in the country a month, and she would have had a score of them by this time had we not limited our charity to supplying milk, and stipulated that the children's relatives should do the nursing in their own homes. It is well worth all the trouble and expense, for it is such a grand object-lesson to the people in practical Christianity.'

In 1905 our missionaries went to Aijal to confer with their Welsh brethren regarding matters affecting the Mission, and to draw up a programme for future translation work. One practical outcome of this mutually helpful Conference is that now (1907) the Lushais have the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark translated by the Welsh missionaries, and a new and revised edition of St. Luke and St. John, the work of Mr. Lorrain and Mr. Savidge. The first edition of the Acts of the Apostles rendered into Lushēi being

nearly exhausted, our missionaries have this in revision. The books of Genesis and the Revelation have been translated, but are not yet printed. Of hymns in Lushēi, the collections in use contain 200.

Mr. Lorrain has also found time in the rainy season to complete his Abor books. The Dictionary is being printed by the Assam Government, and "The Story of the True God" at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta.



Khawngaibula and his Nurse.

CHAPTER IV.

"To Them Which Sat in the Region and Shadow of Death Light is Sprung Up."

In order to encourage and to strengthen the converts scattered over the Southern Lushai Hills, the missionaries arrange an annual Convention. We subjoin extracts from the latest report, that of 1906 :—

"Our last "Great Gathering" will long be remembered by all, for God taught us lessons there which will never be effaced from our memories. The meetings began on January 11th, which was the twelfth anniversary of our first reaching the Lushai Hills as pioneers of the Gospel, and as we welcomed the converts, who had assembled from far and near, our thoughts wandered back to that eventful day. At that time, when we stepped from our boats at Sairang, nine days' journey to the north of our present station, not a ray of Gospel light had ever penetrated to these dark forests. To-day, however, there are even here, in this southern division of these hills, numbers of Lushais who are seeking to follow Jesus, while in the northern division our friends the Welsh missionaries are sowing, and reaping an abundant harvest from the field which we helped to plough years ago.

"The Gathering opened happily enough with (including children) 245 Christians present—an increase of fifty on the year before, and of one hundred on the year before that. The weather was fine, but cold at night, and many would

gather, after the meetings, around a blazing bonfire in the village street, and chat away to one another until long after bedtime. We found that this apparently innocent pastime was giving some of them very bad colds, and we were obliged to have it discontinued. But the harm was already done, and in one of our oldest Church members, a young man named Buka, the cold developed into an attack of pneumonia. We nursed him carefully and hoped he would soon be well again, but, nevertheless, his sickness cast a gloom over the gathering.

"The meetings were to end on Sunday night with the Lord's Supper, at which we hoped to welcome twenty new Church members who were to confess their Master by baptism that same morning. We went to sleep in a Lushai house on Saturday night, thinking of all that was to take place on the morrow, but how little did we know what that morrow would bring forth! We were roused at early dawn by someone coming in to say that the wife of the headman had been taken ill. We hurried over to the house, and before many minutes her spirit had gone to be with Jesus. She had not been well for some days, but did not seem seriously ill. She had got up early, suddenly collapsed, and died before anything could be done to revive her. It was a most mysterious visitation, and came upon us all like a crushing blow, but we felt that it was in some unknown manner going to bring God glory. The converts saw how wonderfully the consolations of the Gospel upheld the bereaved family, and while the young men dug the grave on a hill-top, hard by, many sat around the beloved dead, speaking of the land beyond the tomb to which her spirit had gone. When the evening shadows began to lengthen she was laid to rest, and as we stood around the grave in

the midst of that grove of waving banana trees, many of the converts witnessed for the first time a Christian funeral, and realised, as never before, that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

"How different the day had been from what we had expected! We had held the meetings, but all the young men were away digging the grave, and the bereaved relatives and friends were watching by their dead. The baptismal service and Lord's Supper had been postponed until the following day, and it was arranged that the assembly should break up immediately afterwards. But again God had other plans which we knew not of, for when we awoke on Monday morning we heard someone crying in the house opposite, and presently the sad news was brought to us that Buka, who had been suffering with pneumonia, had passed away. His wife and brother were among the candidates for baptism. They had come in from their village full of joy and hope. Now they would have to return to the aged mother without her boy. No, they could never do that! It would break her heart if she were not permitted to have one more glimpse of his face. So it was arranged that Buka's dead body should be carried home, a distance of three ordinary days' journey over the mountains. After committing the bereaved ones in prayer to the Heavenly Father, the corpse was wrapped in a sheet and then lashed to a pole, and several of the young men started with their sad burden as soon as they had eaten a hasty breakfast. It is the custom in Lushai, when a body is being carried home in this way, for the youths of every place through which it passes to turn out and carry it on to the next village. In this manner enormous distances

are covered in a single day. So Buka returned home to his poor old mother, and the sorrowing wife, children, and brother followed more leisurely. In the midst of their great trial they behaved as true believers in the Saviour, and never for a moment doubted that their dear one was with the Lord.

"These sad events made it seem advisable to postpone the baptismal service until later in the year, and by noon the "Great Gathering" of 1906 had broken up.

"The heathen knew that the Christians had gathered together to worship their God, and they soon heard that during those four days two baptized believers had died. More or less exaggerated reports of what had occurred had in a very short time found their way into the most remote villages. What more natural than that the people should conclude that the Prince of Darkness had brought about the deaths to demonstrate that the God of the Christian was not able to deliver from his power? The converts, when they reached their scattered homes, found themselves objects of ridicule. In this way, we record with sorrow, the non-baptized Christian community (counting children) has, during the year, been decreased by 43 souls, and one church member has also been removed from the register.

"The virtue which seems to be most lacking in the Lushai character is that of patient continuance. Their nomadic mode of life has begotten in them a love of change, and made it very difficult for them to persevere in any course of action. . . .

"But the sifting process following the events at the "Great Gathering," although *apparently* giving a decided check to the advancement of the Master's Kingdom in these hills,

has in reality been most beneficial. It has removed from the Christian community many who were not whole-hearted in the cause of righteousness, and it has acted



Boys of the 1st Class, Lushai Mission School.

as a deterrent to others who were about to throw in their lot with God's people from unworthy motives.

"Since the last report was sent in, our register shows 29 new names of those who, in spite of all opposition, have

been drawn into the Gospel net, and, beside those, 12 new lives have been entrusted to our Christian parents to train up in God's service.

"The most hopeful of these new converts are lads in Mr. Savidge's School. Four of them had for a long time been considering the matter, and now have given themselves in whole-hearted surrender to Jesus. Each of these boys represents a distinct tribe. One is a Lushai, one a Chin, one a Fanai, and one a Lakher. Although of different tribes, and speaking three different dialects in their own villages, they are all being educated here, through the medium of the Lushai language.

"On the 24th of April, the postponed baptismal service was held, at which 23 converts, who, through a period of probation, had proved themselves sincere followers of Jesus, joyfully confessed their faith publicly, and were added to the inner circle of the Church. During the year three Church members have died, one has removed to another district, and one has fallen away. The Lushai Church membership is now 86.

"During the dry season we were able to make several tours in different parts of the district, and the four evangelists were out most of the time, proclaiming the message of salvation to their fellow-tribesmen."

CHAPTER V.

"IT IS A GREAT THING TO REFORM, BUT A GREATER TO FORM."—*Gladstone.*

OUR last chapter shall be devoted to work amongst the children.

"This year," writes Mr. Lorrain, "we have nine Sunday Schools scattered over the hills, with 187 names on the books and an average attendance of 127. Every three months each teacher sends us a copy of his register.

"In July, 1906, nineteen scholars sat for the All-India Sunday School Examination. Eleven passed and earned certificates in the Middle Division, and four in the Junior. This is the first time that Lushai boys have gone in for such an examination." Sixteen thousand candidates competed and Lushai boys gained two out of the fifty silver medals awarded.

Mr. Savidge tells us that the "new school building is completed, and that it is a commodious, convenient, and substantial structure, suitable both for school-work and public worship. Nine of the boys have passed the Lower Primary Examinations, eight of whom now hold government scholarships, value three rupees a month, tenable for two years. Seven boys have also passed the Upper Primary Examination. Under the present condition this is the highest degree a Lushai lad can obtain. We have no books yet in the Lushai language to carry on education to a higher standard. Probably, the next stage will have to be conducted in English. The Government has offered to bear

the expense of sending one of our best lads to Shillong High School, specially to learn English, for four or five years. This may or may not be an advantage. Three of the boys who have recently passed the Upper Primary Examination are willing to become village teachers. The number of boys who receive support in the boarding school is about twenty-five. We have many more applications for boarders than we can entertain, and we often wish the



New School-House at Fort Lungleh.

numbers we could support might be doubled or trebled. The three rupees per month each scholarship-holder gets helps to pay for his food, and some of the sons of chiefs and a few others are supported by Government funds. The boys of our boarding school form a real nucleus from which much Christian influence is continually emanating. Among them are a few spiritual magnets who, by their conduct and life, are potent factors in drawing others to the Cross of Christ. . . Lushai lads are for the most part of

an independent disposition and can look after themselves; but they are not above asking advice when they need it; and, what is better, they will act upon it if they see it



Sons of Lushai Hill Chiefs at our Baptist Mission School.

will be advantageous to do so. We regard our boarding school as a spiritual workshop where men can be turned out suitable for any branch of Christian work. . .

"The schools of the villages have been fairly well attended. Four of the pupils, having received all the instruction their teacher could give them, have been removed to Lungleh to proceed to a higher stage."

* * * *

This little book goes forth with the prayer that it may arouse the interest and the *conscience* of the Lord's people. "Some can go—most can give—all can pray."

There is much land yet to be possessed, and in our churches are young men with a love of adventure and self-sacrifice worthy of dedication to this highest cause, THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD FOR CHRIST.

The opportunity is to be had at a gift now, but the day is coming when it will be above price and unattainable.

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for US?

"Then said I, Here am I; send me."

W. J. Hutchings, The Hillingdon Press, Uxbridge.