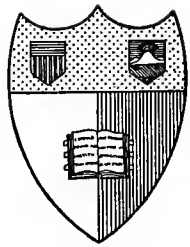
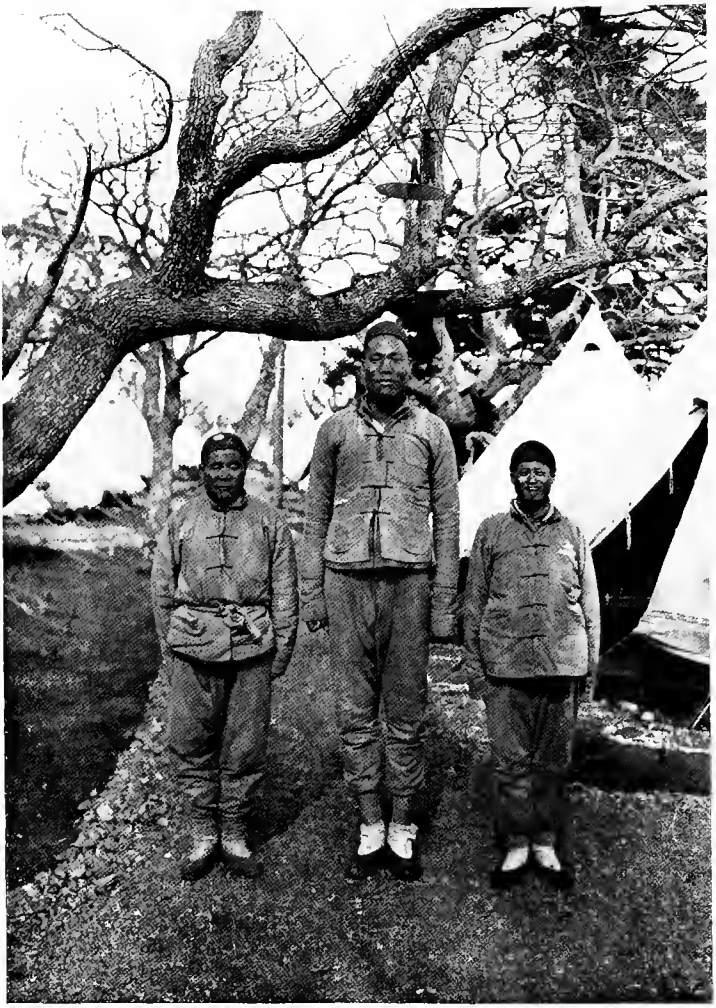
WITH THE CHINKS

DARYL KLEIN





THREE MEN OF CHINA

On Active Service Series

WITH THE CHINKS

WITH THE CHINKS

BY DARYL KLEIN, 2ND LIEUTENANT
IN THE CHINESE LABOUR CORPS
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

ALL IMPERIAL OFFICERS

WHO RECRUITED THE CHINESE

WHO HELPED TO BRING THEM OVER

AND

WHO WORKED WITH THEM IN FRANCE

FOREWORD

I FEEL that a word of apology is due to the reader for the disjointed character of this little book. When in China I joined the Chinese Labour Corps I kept a diary at first, recording fairly fully my impressions of the work from day to day. These impressions covered what progress we made in training the coolies; also I endeavoured to record the coolies' point of view, what they thought of us, their new masters, and of this their new life in the C.L.C. To begin with I had no story to tell, but once away from camp in China, embarked on what I am calling the Interminable Journey, the germ of narrative crept into my diary and I found myself spinning something of a yarn—the yarn, in fact, of our voyage from China to France.

The diary, which is printed practically as I wrote it, covers the training period in China (two months) and crossing the Pacific. The narrative begins with our long stay in

Canada (ten weeks), and grows with the unexpected passage of the Panama Canal, a few delightful days in Kingston, Jamaica, a few delightful hours in New York, and so onward across the now haunted Atlantic to France. This long journey gave me many an opportunity to observe the mental shock and change which a coolie suffers as he leaves the placid East and is shown the brilliant wonders of the West. He does not appear to be greatly interested in anything; he seldom gives way to an expression of surprise, but, like a child, he is taking it in all the time, he is changing under the influence of a new vision, and there is not a coolie in France to-day who, when the war is over, will not go back to his country a better man for his exploits abroad, a progressive spirit, and the possessor of clean habits.

That is not to say that he left China a barbarian. If this little work in the least modifies the popular conception of the "Chinese coolie" it will have done much. As children we were taught to believe that both Cain and coolies were murderers from the beginning; no coolie was to be trusted; he was a yellow dog; he would stick a knife

into you in a dark alley on a dark night. He was treacherous. To-day we have outgrown this puerility, but still retain a deep distrust of the coolie and his ways. Nothing could be more unfair. The coolie whom we trained and brought to France is a simple, jolly fellow. He is content with the very simplicities of life; he steals, but not overmuch; he is to be trusted. He is extraordinarily happy; he grins and grins; he is good to his fellow-creature. In the following pages I have often compared him to a child because of his simplicity, his playfulness, his frank delight with life, his quaintness and his affectionate character.

B.E.F., FRANCE,
July, 1918.

ILLUSTRATIONS

PART I

WITH THE CHINKS

JANUARY

I

ONE day in late December I arrived at Tsingtau just after noon. Three hours we took to get alongside, the steamer crunching her way through floes of ice. The thermometer down to zero. A coastline jagged and brilliant as a bit of crystal. A perishingly cold drive to the Grand Hotel, where I fell in with our commandant, Vessy, a little man of decisive speech, who, having introduced me to his family, asked me if I would like to go out to the Coolie Camp at Tsangkou (about ten miles from Tsingtau) that afternoon, or spend a day in town and start work on Monday. Wishing to get into harness as soon as might be, I said I would go out with him. He gave me a lift in one of the camp cars, which after speeding through

hilly country for about twenty minutes, brought us in sight of a tall yellow chimney.

"Down that chimney," said Vessy, "is the camp."

"A peculiar place for a camp," I reflected, "but if it means our quarters are in a furnace and the furnace is alight it will be very welcome." For I was thinking of the intense cold and of the wind that never relaxed its pressure.

A few minutes later I understood what he meant. The silk-filature factory which is now transformed into the Coolie Labour Corps' Training Station is built in a little valley, not much of a valley to be sure, and affording scant protection from the insistent merciless breeze. However, *down* it was in a sense. A Chinese sentry saluted, smartly enough, as we passed into an enclosure of considerable size.

On one side a row of low white stone houses, partly given over to the coolies' quarters, partly to the Sausage Machine of which I shall have more to say later on. A guard-room at one end of this row of houses and at the other G.H.Q. Immediately before one a gravelled space now known as the

Parade Ground, enclosed with barbed wire. "For all the world like a prison camp," I thought. And within were the "prisoners," marching in columns, at least five hundred of them, uniformly clothed in tanned leather-coloured coats, with dark brown caps on their heads. At second glance I thought of them as so many convicts. Some walked with a convict's slouch, others carried themselves like men on H.M. service; all kept tolerably together, changing direction now and again, and going through the elementary movements associated with company drill without arms.

And in a little while the wind carried to me the sounds of certain words of command, given with great precision, and I made out a European standing in their midst, waving his arms about and brandishing a cane.

"One of my colleagues," I ventured to Vessy.

"A Russian officer," he answered, "who has given up his title in the Russian Army to go home with the coolies. Because he can't rejoin his regiment on the eastern front he has elected to go to the western front in charge of a company of Chinese."

I admired the way his company drilled.

Here it may be said that the present strength of a Company is 490—490 coolies of varying physique who, having been medically examined and washed and clothed, are handed over to "one of us" *in the raw* to be hammered and coaxed and cursed into a disciplined body of men. That is all I know about it so far. And I have seen little more than this in the making. I don't doubt I shall see a great deal more and have much to say. But all in good time.

To complete the description of the enclosure: to the left, as one comes in the gates, is a barn-like house, about 100 yards from the parade ground, formerly the residence of the silk-filature factory manager, and now the Officers' Mess. Our mess. Its outstanding virtue is that it has a warm room, one cosy warm room, where we all sit in off-duty hours and discuss the merits and demerits of the Chinese coolie—not to mention the War and the days to come when we shall be tossing across the Northern Pacific or landing our companies somewhere in France.

There are joys in store.

"In the shape," says our pessimist, Medcork, "of waves forty feet high, sea-sickness upon our Oriental multitude, and a transfer as a Tommy into some line regiment as soon as you set foot in the war zone."

We are fourteen, I think, in the mess. Of all parts and professions; successful young merchants who have thrown up good jobs to go home with the coolies, missionaries, planters, authors and nondescripts, not forgetting our Russian officer. To-night, my first night in camp, I have an impression that I have fallen among comrades, men of the right spirit, British in their passion for grousing, Far Eastern in their passionate endeavour to procure little luxuries of life, Spartan in their heroic attempt to stand the astonishing cold. Our optimist, Harris, a journalist, warbles of the warmer days in France, halcyon days, when we shall be living in tents with every comfort in the vicinity, under a balmy French sky.

"Full of Hun aeroplanes and stray shrapnel," adds Medcork.

However that may be, we worked up a great "fug" in the cosy room to-night. After dinner, which was managed and dis-

patched in real barracks' style, we gathered round a noble old stove and toasted ourselves and talked and smoked till the room was wrapt in a cloud.

While some played poker, with matches for counters, others looking on, I debated the Russian question with the Russian officer, and was beginning to feel that the new life was very tolerable indeed, the hours easy, the work healthy, my colleagues most genial souls, when in came Vessy, the commandant, upon which a silence fell, and I learnt to my surprise that we were leading a military life in a military camp, which camp had to be guarded night and day. Sentries must be posted at intervals both inside and outside the camp in order to prevent the escape of homesick, lovelorn or otherwise fed-up coolies, and an official inspection of these sentries was necessary. In other words, a four-hour watch, being the privilege of all officers, and in particular the privilege of the newly arrived officer. "My first job," I reflected; and to be sure I was forthwith allowed to sit in the guard-room, and go the rounds of the camp from midnight of my first night to four o'clock of my first day.

II

I SURVIVED the watch, getting back to bed at 4.30, and down to breakfast at 8. I feel as though I have begun to do my bit. I do not mean this cynically. The hours are easy: 8.30 to 12, and 2 to 4, but there is a lot to do while one is at it. Spent the morning overseeing certain functions of the Sausage Machine:

1. The hair-cutting function.
2. The cleansing function.

These are midway functions of a process which turns an ordinary uninviting workaday coolie into a clean, well-clothed and smartly active human being. An astonishing process which is doing a great good for a corner of China. If the whole nation, male and female, could pass through the Sausage Machine it would make the people anew, as it is making them, two to three hundred a day, in this camp.

The coolies are recruited chiefly from the

province of Shantung. They are tempted to depart from the way of their lives as farmers and labourers of one kind and another by offers of splendid pay, sight of a new world, and other equally uncommon recruiting phrases. And they come to camp quite ignorant, I am told, of the pleasures immediately in store for them. A medical examination, a hair-cut, a hot bath, a suit of clothes and sundry other garments, not to speak of vaccination and a brass bracelet which bears an identification number, are not accorded freely and for the asking, if not upon invitation, in many places in the world. The coolies are lucky—lucky from the moment they enter the Sausage Machine to the moment they embark at Tsingtau, careless of their destination; only hoping that they will go on living the same life on board ship as they led in barracks, where they lacked neither clothes nor food.

Of the two functions above mentioned, I was most interested in the barber's. Being northerners, these coolies wear a queue which, rather strangely I thought, they did not in the least object to losing. Queue after queue fell without a murmur from the victims. A

"QUEUE AFTER QUEUE FELL WITHOUT A MURMUR FROM THE VICTIMS"

"THEY GATHERED IN KNOTS AND GUESSED AT THE LIFE TO COME"

few appeared regretful to lose so intimate a thing, picking it up after it had been sheared, handling it fondly and examining the careful plaits. Naked they sat during this process, which being ended, they would get up and scratch their bald pates and then make for the great vat of hot water in the next room. On the edge of the vat stood a Chinese official who relentlessly pushed his victims into the water, first daubing their heads with liquid soap. The vat itself was a welter of human bodies, getting clean each after his manner. Then a brisk rub with a towel after which the skin would show a glistening polish, like the surface of a stone washed by the sea for many years. It was a study for Michael Angelo.

Later in the day these same bathers join the ranks. At present there are four companies, A to D, in formation. D is incomplete. The others have their full complement of 480 men. This afternoon I assisted in the drilling of C Company, which will be commanded by our Russian officer. The company is not very far advanced. It has but a hazy idea of the movement—form fours. But it is wonderful how quickly these

men get hold of the thing. After two hours of shouting I succeeded in making the whole company do the movement without a mistake and with a certain smartness.

The simple movements are of course done by numbers. Every coolie counts aloud—*i, errh, san* (one, two, three), for instance, when forming fours or two deep—the majority is given to shouting—so that when the movement is performed by 500 the din is terrific. Against the thunder of this counting one's voice of command sounds piping.

I see one has to be stern with the coolies; but to lose patience is as unwise as to indulge in laughter. Impatience and laughter must possess a man who is suddenly put in command of 500 men. The mere idea is laughable, though, I dare say, one gets used to it soon enough. And the unwieldy mass of them makes for impatience when explaining a movement in lame Chinese or demonstrating it in action. But for all their childishness and forgetfulness they are quick to learn and of a willing temperament. So often they do not understand, not because they cannot, but because the instructions are not conveyed clearly to them. They delight

in their new billets. It must be play to them, and a "soft" thing, after the crudeness of life in the village and field and on the maiden path, with a freighted wheelbarrow squeaking before them. That is why they are apt to laugh more than it is good to laugh in the ranks. They have already caught, or I would say were naturally endowed with, the traditional spirit of the British Army—cheeriness; but they are perhaps too saturated with that spirit just at the moment, being particularly inclined to make a roaring joke out of a brother's mistake.

If the company commander holds a coolie up to ridicule, the victim becomes a laughing-stock in the eyes of his fellows. This is of course most upsetting to the C.C. Only by darting fire from his eyes and brandishing a stick and roaring "shun!" can he restore the company to a normal state of seriousness. It is very necessary to keep serious. A sense of humour should be discouraged in a C.C. of the C.L.C. He should be coaxed to view his task in the light that any C.C. at home looks upon the training of a unit for the New Armies. Discipline must be top dog.

And yet we are cautioned that it is not desirable to put too military a construction upon our duties. In other words, do not spread the notion amongst your men that they are going into the front-line trenches. Do not lead them to suppose that they are China's first hundred thousand. And do not think of yourself as a C.C., but as a supervisor of labour, a ganger *par excellence*, a glorified stevedore.

Fire-arms are unknown in the camp. They would be very useful in emphasizing one's commands. And then again they would be a splendid substitute for one's vocal chords, which are worked at high pressure from the moment of appearing on the parade ground to the moment of leaving. There is always something to shout at.

III

THE recruit has an annoying habit of leaving his place in the ranks, not from funk or out of spite, but in order to say a few words to his brother further down the line. And his brother welcomes the defaulter as a rule, sometimes leaving *his* position to meet the latter half-way. Often, when one's eye is turned, social knots are formed in the ranks, cigarettes appear and get lighted with extraordinary rapidity, discussions are indulged in and other liberties of the barrack-room. A thundering "*Li shung*" (attention) restores order, but it is usually some time before the drill can proceed, for in the panic men lose their places, and forget their numbers, not attempting to sort themselves out, with the result that when an order like form-fours is given chaos is the outcome. It would break the heart of the most hardened training officer at home; it would drive him to the mad-house. Such insubordination from the word, "go"; such a light conception of duties;

so prevalent a comic spirit. We, who are indeed training officers, are differently constituted. Not that we are softer than our kind at home, but that we understand the thing we are shaping. It cannot be shaped like anything Western; it cannot in fact be shaped at all. It has to be hammered; not crudely as one would hammer molten iron into a horse-shoe, but as one hammers a metal sheet into a kerosene tin.

And the result is invariably good. A fortnight's hammering and the men smarten their movements astonishingly; they step with precision; they even keep step without the aid of fife and drum.

The training is done collectively. Unlike our own recruit, the coolie is seldom singled out for individual shaming.

The ideal C.L.C. training officer is endowed with profound tact. If he does not understand Chinese (and perhaps the ideal officer does not) he must be endowed with a sense deeper than tact—ability to fathom what is in the mind of his men. It is best to speak of them collectively, for a company thinks along one line; if anything goes right or wrong it does so *en masse;* that is why the

results of our work are so encouraging ; the smartness, the advent of shape, comes all at once ; seldom are there stragglers in the way of efficiency. Although—to end a long parenthesis—we don't, to be sure, go very far along the way of efficiency.

The ideal officer is also slow to anger, though not necessarily of a meek countenance. Temper, which finds voice in cursing, is absurdly unavailing. A little anger is a good thing ; much of it provokes enjoyment in the ranks. To swear is no good unless it relieves the feelings. The most hideous blasphemy passes blissfully over the heads of the coolies. The ideal officer does not laugh or even smile, for any such indulgence is immediately imitated in the ranks. A company of coolies would make the finest audience in the world. It would pay an enterprising theatrical manager over and over again to " paper the house " liberally on an opening night with Chinese coolies.

IV

ONE night in early January a coolie tried to escape. Not that the coolies are forcibly detained—if a man vouchsafes a valid reason for deserting the service he can go—but, you see, they are under contract. They undertake to do this and that before embarking for France; they undertake not to go outside the camp at night, without getting permission.

The coolie in question was caught in the act of dropping from the roof of one of the barracks whose back is to the road which leads to Tsingtau in one direction, and to a dead end in the other. The sentries outside the camp were awake. Questioned why, at a court of inquiry held this morning, he was desirous of so impolitely leaving his comrades, a dry warm wooden bed, no end of rice, and the interesting prospect of seeing France at war, he said, that he wanted to give up all for his wife and follow her, averring that, although he greatly respected

his O.C., and was sorry to desert him (I can hear the O.C. crying—"I don't fink"), he revered his wife, and reverence for her strengthened him in his endeavour to escape from a house of mild bondage. He did not dream he would drop into the arms of a sentry; which was about the truest remark the O.C. conducting the court of inquiry had ever heard.

V

EMBARKATION DAY is said to be a great day in Tsingtau; like Graduation Day in an American University, the graduates going out on the Sea of Life—the Yellow Sea, to be quite accurate. It was told to-night in mess that the coolies do not know and do not question where they are going. Having been assured that they are not going into action on the western front, they set out light-heartedly, as men on some fine adventure, not caring about their destination so long as they are decently fed and clothed.

The first contingent, which sailed in April, 1917, was much exercised over this point, in so much that a mutiny took place on board the ship before she was far on her way, an absurd rumour upsetting them to the effect that they were walking into a death-trap.

The conversation in mess is none too fluent, possibly owing to the fact that we are all hoarse from shouting at our coolies. But

one night, after dinner, in that warm cosy room of ours, there were many words in regard to the transportation of the coolies via the Pacific and Canada. Redbrick, a ginger-haired, ginger-tongued, toughish little American, took the bull by the horns and told us much concerning something he knew little about. Imagination came astonishingly to his aid; and, to imagine is infectious, just as it is infectious to exaggerate, the tendency of one man being to outdo the other.

However, imagination after dinner goes well with coffee; and it was stimulating to listen to Redbrick prophesying what sort of a reception the people of New York would give him were he to march his coolies down Broadway. Some one imitated the way the coolies have of shouting, *i, errh, i, errh* (one, two; one, two), as they march along, the effect of the sound being similar to the braying of a donkey; and the idea of the coolies doing this on Broadway met with great enthusiasm in the mess.

"Why, you can just see me, boys," cried Redbrick, "I'd be a little tin hero."

A Briton, a dear out-and-out Briton, slow of speech and of movement, Clarison by name,

was not to be outdone by his Yankee colleague.

"I'd rather march the blighters down Piccadilly," he said.

"They'd laugh at me in Aberdeen," put in our only Scot.

And the fact of coolies passing through England revived the much-debated question of whether or not Russian troops did pass through England from Aberdeen at the commencement of the War.

Sympathizing with the late Press reaction against the rumour, there was a chorus of denial. Upon a couple of dissenters keeping the subject alive, our Russian friend was looked to, but he would throw no light on the point.

"It is possible," he said, "for many Russians have fought on the western front, and they might have come through your country."

Our Russian says few words. He keeps to himself more than any other man in the mess. His heart is in this business. It is a joy to watch him with his company. He demonstrates the drill with professional swagger. His voice carries to the uttermost man. After observing him and his way with

men it is apparent we straight-from-the-office instructors have a long way to go. Perhaps, however, his mien and carriage are too military. If I were a coolie under him I should suspect that I was destined for one of the vital sectors on the western front.

VI

I BEGAN the New Year by drilling the *p'aitous*[1] of C Company. This at 6.30 a.m.; the duty of the O.C. But O.C. of C Company had a bad head, not as the result of celebrating New Year's Eve, which would be quite in order, but owing to doing a guard and a half, i.e., six hours on the previous night.

In the phraseology of General Orders: "In order that they may gain confidence and authority, *p'aitous* . . . should be given frequent opportunities of drilling the men. It is necessary, therefore, that they should themselves be drilled apart until they are proficient."

It is unfortunate that the Christian and Chinese New Years do not synchronize. Possibly I should have been spared leaving a warm bed before dawn, getting hoarse before breakfast, and seeing the *p'aitous* in a new and alarming light. In the "dusk" of dawn,

[1] *p'ai*=section; *tou*=head. Head of section; in other words, lance-corporal.

marching two-deep slowly and solemnly on to the parade ground, I saw them for a moment and quite unforgettably as a procession of priests, their long maroon waterproofs looking like pontifical robes and their number sticks, which they hold in the hand or stick in the front of the coat, for all the world like crucifixes.

The tall chimney of the silk-filature factory, rising into gloom out of a whitish block of buildings, could have been mistaken for the spire of a church. It was a windless silent dawn. Appallingly ecclesiastical. I stood enrapt; and was only awakened to the fact that I was in command of a squad of *p'aitous* by the squad coming hard up against a stone wall—the wall of the factory.

The *p'aitous* are picked men and are put in charge of fourteen coolies. They are chosen by the company commander after much head-scratching. It is not easy to determine which is the most intelligent of fifteen coolies. Their brains are apparently created to pattern. As a rule, he who moves faster than his fellow, he who watches his C.C., he who has a sense of direction, becomes a *p'aitou*. But *p'aitous*, being men, are

subject to strange lapses. They are apt to forget, as they did this morning, that they have a left arm and a right. When the command left turn is given, and the entire squad turns to the right, it gives the C.C. furiously to think.

If there were some consistency about reversing an order, the drill could perfectly well be done backwards; and it would be quite in harmony with the notion that a Chinese does a thing precisely as a European does not. That is, on the command form-fours, the squad would form two-deep; on the command stand at ease, the squad would come to attention; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Unfortunately, there is no consistency in this matter, and the above said notion is ridiculous. In the case cited, for which no reasonable explanation can be given, the only thing for the exasperated C.C. to do is to give the command in Chinese. "*Hsiang tso chuan*" (left turn) restores order and brings the light of understanding to care-worn *p'aitous*.

To-day the number of potential company commanders in camp was increased by two; one, a customs' man, as the phrase goes, a

thick-set, so far silent and somewhat elderly little man who has lived eighteen years in Shanghai and doesn't look any the worse for it ; and the other, a Captain Linen, who was with the C.L.C. in France, and who now appears amongst us in uniform, making us in mufti feel quite out of place. There is comfort, however, in the thought that before the New Year is many weeks old we also shall be able to swank without swanking—which is the great gift of a uniform ; that we also shall be able to plunge our hands into spacious tunic side-pockets and stand with legs apart in front of the fire.

Talking about uniform, the diversity of our present costumes is worth noting. Stiff collars which were prevalent the day I arrived have given place to soft collars, multi-coloured neckerchiefs, mufflers and sweaters. Redbrick persists in wearing a stiff turnover with which he combines a black felt hat and a pair of spats. He could well walk down his Broadway without a change. It is mooted that his coolies make him out the best dressed of all the C.C.'s.

The Russian lost his luggage somewhere in the Carpathians, reducing his wear to a

cutaway, which, for fear his men should mistake him for a missionary or a politician, he covers with a mackintosh. Our missionary, Mr. Goodyear, of Japan, drills in a black suit of clerical cut ; he arms himself with a silver-knobbed ebony cane, lest his incurable good-will towards men rob him of the authority wherewith it is necessary to shape a battalion of coolies. Our merchant of Manila, being used to the heat of the tropics, swathes himself in two overcoats, as many mufflers and a tam-o'-shanter. It is said that on particularly cold days he is a pleasant sight in the eyes of the coolies, suggesting to them as he must the very embodiment of warmth.

VII

FINDING nothing in general orders in regard to the duties of officers on guard from 4 to 8 a.m., I mapped out a programme of my own, which I divided fairly between comforts and discomforts. Latter consisted, first, of keeping awake, and secondly, of making the rounds; the former consisted, first, of keeping warm in the guard-house and, secondly, of making a cup of chocolate. And, as many treasonable orderly officers will tell you, it is quite astonishing how many letters you can write in four hours, with the aid of a stove, a pipe and a cup of chocolate. The guard could easily be a more distasteful business. One is not without company. A Chinese corporal and lance-corporal sit at attention in the guard-house all the night long. They sit in a brown study, meditating, it may be, the fate in France of the first hundred thousand of their fellow-countrymen. They rise and salute when you come on guard, and then sink back into meditation. I roused

the corporal sufficiently to boil the water for my chocolate.

The less said about going the rounds the better. I can't conceive that the wind that whistles around Mount Erebus is keener or more unkind than the wind that makes Tsangkou Camp an abomination between sundown and dawn. And it is a long darkness. I pity the sentries ; on my first round, which I made laboriously, doubly muffled and over-coated, I fully expected to find the sentries on the more exposed posts hard and lifeless as a pillar of salt. Sentries *have* been found asleep, but not by me. Always came the challenge, "Hoo Gos Air" ("Who Goes There"), quaintly pronounced with a Northerner's accent.

Captain Linen, at dinner, alternately cheered and damped us with tales of how the coolies behave on the voyage home.

"The first few days on the ship," he said, "are perfect hell. Most of the coolies have never seen a ship before ; some have never seen the sea, for they come from far inland and their lives seldom out-circle the village of their birth. Once on board, they wander all over the ship, some penetrating into the

first saloon to the disgust of passengers who do not understand that the coolies are as little children innocent of the division existing, as it exists in society, between different classes of passengers."

Captain Linen is a good talker, and went on to say that after a while the coolies settle down, but the trouble begins again when the boat runs into weather; violent sea-sickness had led to mild mutinies. He told amusing tales about the rail journey from Vancouver to Halifax, how the coolies had exchanged salutes with the police on the train, to the immense surprise of the latter, and how when arriving at a station they had stuck their heads out of the window and issued ambiguous orders to the soldiers patrolling the platform, crying out shrilly and with a gleam of teeth, "Bout-Turn" and "Dees-Miss" and "Standat-ees."

The Captain's genial summary was: "All things considered their behaviour is wonderfully good." It is said they astound *poilus* and Tommies in France by disembarking in perfect order, marching off two-deep and forming smartly into *p'ais* (sections), platoons, companies and battalions. We have much to look forward to.

VIII

THERE came a day of sundry misfortunes. To begin with, Redbrick was troubled with corns. I was eye-witness to his loss of temper. His company (A) were very patient with him, thoroughly enjoying his flow of well-spiced Yankee language. I thought and hoped they would get through the day without one of their *p'aitous* being reduced to the ranks, or one of the ranks being sent to jail (we have a jail, by the way ; not patronized largely), but, being a soft-hearted chap, I hoped for too much.

The company were standing at ease in front of their Bunk-house. Redbrick was soothing his nerves with a cigarette. A coolie (reckless man!) becoming irresistibly possessed with a desire to smoke, steps out of the ranks and with enviable sang-froid sidles up to his commander and takes the fag out of the latter's mouth, claiming it for his own. Amazement—a terrible silence—an explosion, followed by swift confused

movements. To-morrow the culprit will complain of corns elsewhere than on the little toe. This is the worst of having a super-sense of humour. In Tsangkou the deed is funny, and is related with relish at mess ; in Europe it would have meant P.D., F.P., or both.

Our children (a paternal attitude towards the coolies is recommended) are passionately fond of playing the fool. They are a race of Peter Pans, never having grown up. Nightly I thank God they are not going to be soldiers. Never a man would reach the trenches alive. I see their fate at the hands of a colonel ignorant of their psychology. They would be shot at dawn by battalions.

Yet, if Wells is right in saying that laughter will end this war, the C.L.C. *may* do it.

It must not be imagined, however, that there is weakness in our paternal treatment of the coolies. There is rivalry among the officers in regard to the number of canes broken on the backs, legs and shins, not to speak of the heads of defaulters. The supply of canes ran short in Tsingtau some time ago. Redbrick has the greatest number to his credit, or should I say discredit ? Not-

withstanding, it must be said in justice to him that his company is the most efficient in camp.

The second misfortune is no more serious than the first, but perhaps it is worth telling. I assisted to-day in the "hammering" of C Company, which is commanded by our Russian. That over-six-foot deep-chested blue-eyed proudish O.C. quite failed in spirit during the afternoon. The cavalry ring went out of his voice; the flash faded from his directing arm; the temperature of his company went down in sympathy. He hung his "needless head 'mong men," and dismissed the parade about half an hour before regulation time. Walking wearily back to mess I questioned him about his despondency, but not openly, thinking that he might be in love and that the thought of his girl was making him sad. But it was not that. It was simply that he was fed up.

"I am not proud," he said in his Scandinavian-flavoured English, "but I *do* like people to talk to; I like to exchange ideas. It is dull for me after being in Washington and London. In those cities I was attached to our Embassy. I moved among so many interesting people."

Then after a pause in which I turned over a phrase of sympathy:

"These coolies are so stupid. It is my fault too. I cannot speak to them. My English is so poor. The interpreter understands me with difficulty. I wish the boat would come. I want to get away."

"It is due on the sixth," I said, "you will have a livelier time on board."

"Perhaps," he replied, and relapsed into thought.

Poor chap! He was a Major of cavalry in the Russian Army, in a crack regiment. A C.O. in the C.L.C. is scarcely so *distingué*.

The third misfortune was due to the objectionable practice of inoculation. Two of my colleagues lie in bed to-day, having been grievously wounded in the chest last night by a syringe needle. One was Harris, the journalist, my room-mate. He had a touch of fever this morning, and talked in his sleep, imagining, I gathered from a fragmentary monologue, that he was a correspondent at the front in full view of the enemy, which were battalions of coolies who, against orders, had learnt the use of fire-

arms. The other, Clarison, is feeling very sorry for himself.

Medcork is certain the weather will get colder. Captain Linen says the coldest snap in France will be warm after a winter in this part of North China. Our Russian scorns the weather, telling us that if we want to feel what real cold is like we should go with him to the Carpathians. We politely refuse his invitation, being quite content with the knowledge of cold obtainable in Tsangkou.

IX

ALL the coolies were inoculated, some for the first time, and some for the second, so that to the equal joy of coolies and officers, sons and fathers, I should say, a holiday was declared in the afternoon. Fathers should not see too much of their sons; not that familiarity has a great chance of breeding contempt when a father is the possessor of five hundred children, but that it does both good to be apart now and again, for separation between affectionate souls makes them doubly affectionate when they are reunited.

There will be a touching meeting on the parade ground to-morrow morning. There are no bounds to love once it is alight. Possibly officers will turn out half an hour earlier in order to visit their men as they lie in bed, or, to be more accurate, on the wooden shelves provided for them in the so-called Bunk-houses. About 250 coolies live in a house; which suggests congestion. A more tolerant description would run—economical

packing; coolies being packed at night shoulder to shoulder on three tiers of shelves running the length of the Bunk-house. I do not doubt that a medical commission would condemn the method as being perilously insanitary. For Europeans it would be; for Chinese it is passably snug—and snugness is all that is looked to.

General Orders say: "Company Officers should, during their spare time, visit their men's quarters and endeavour to let the men see that they take an interest in their welfare."

On the surface of it this looks simple, but let us examine it. In the first place officers do not have spare time; they have to make it. Postulate the time as made, the next step in the execution of the order requires moral courage and a dead or deadened sense of smell. Both uncommon qualities in man. Two hundred and fifty coolies hibernating in the same room create quite an atmosphere of their own. It takes moral courage to go out of the fresh Manchurian breezes into that which is best left undescribed.

Once within, an officer proceeds to carry out orders by holding his nose, and he cannot

do this and effectually inquire into the welfare of his men at the same time. Through the medium of his interpreter (always bearing in mind that he is a father come to visit and to comfort his children), he interrogates this son and that, asking them with exemplary forethought if they are perfectly satisfied with their quarters; if they are warm at night and so forth; wondering the while in his heart how he will ever get the air he is breathing out of his lungs, and how it is possible for so divine a creation as man to be content to sleep on a wooden shelf—like a book in a public library.

Does a son lodge a complaint, the officer eloquently extols the condition of the men's quarters, comparing them to the dirt and darkness of the mud huts and stone hovels in which they used to live. Petty plaints are set aside with the vast and vain generalization that if better times are not to come, certainly not worse are to be expected. Subtle allusions are made to the genial climate of France; reminders are made of the splendid pay. These unavailing, letters are shown from yellow brothers in the war zone, testifying to the plenitude of rice and rabbits and

leeks and black eggs and other luxuries behind the lines.

An officer, in fulfilling the above-quoted order, takes a hint from Napoleon that an army marches on its stomach. Pinching his nostrils, he guides the complainant to the kitchen—an attachment to each Bunk-house—and whets the appetite of the ingrate with fumes of boiling rice, informing him that at certain hours of the day he can eat as much as his belly will hold. If this is insufficient inducement to remain a unit of the C.L.C., interest in the man's welfare ceases, and he is clapped into jail or sent home.

X

ONE day the spirit of officers was markedly lowered by receipt of news from Hong-Kong that the next ship was not due until the middle of the month.

It was suggested that fathers negotiate with their sons to leave them to their own devices for a week, and pack off to some lively spot to pass the interim in feast and song. Mr. Goodyear, who is the sphinx of the mess, suddenly broke into speech anent this, submitting that the act would be grossly unfilial.

" It would be a breach of good faith which our sons would always hold against us," he cried.

And after much debating we came to see the error of our suggestion.

" Hang our sons," shouted Clarison, " it's time we had some daughters."

At which a shameful silence fell at the table; but in our hearts we were with Clarison, knowing him to be fond of women, and never

a woman had been seen in camp. Harris declared he would write to the *Times* regarding the tardiness of the ship's arrival at Tsingtau. The Russian fell into a slough of despond, straining his ankle, so that for the nonce he is incapacitated and I am acting O.C. Captain Linen, who confided to me last night that he was fed up with "hanging about China," took the matter to heart, his temperature rising to 101 this afternoon. He is abed and lies there possibly in order to avoid the all-day duties of an orderly officer, which had fallen upon him for fulfilment to-morrow.

Medcork, after his manner, was willing to bet anyone a month's pay that the ship would strike a typhoon between Hong-Kong and Tsingtau and not make port at all.

We are a jolly crowd to-night. Some are consoling themselves with poker, others have gone to Tsingtau to ascertain what is the day of the week, and still others, like myself, believe in bed as a cure for all ephemeral troubles. Certainly our sons do, having been "shelved" since sundown.

XI

On Sunday, confessions were usually indulged in. Harris, who has an excellent digestion and the temperament of a lamb, admitted that he was growing astonishingly callous in his treatment of the coolies. Harris has charge of the Reserve company which, absorbing as it does all the new recruits, grows to portentous size, preceding the departure of a battalion. When a shipload of coolies is gone, the Reserve company is split up into companies of 500 (roughly). In its present inflated state it is exceedingly difficult to manage, requiring from the C.O. a nice fusion of discipline and tenderness. He who was inclined to coddle and gently persuade his coolies into order is to-day a cast-iron disciplinarian. So he confessed to-day.

"The smallest breach of discipline drives me into a fury," he said. "I don't know what has come over me. Time was when I was sweetly persuasive. I could initiate a coolie into the knowledge of left and right without

loss of temper. To-day I cane him into this knowledge; and if a man leaves the ranks without permission or echoes and imitates my word of command or lights a cigarette on parade, or does anything which is against my will, I see red."

In Harris' heart is a great fear of becoming like a Prussian officer. "What if I should become like that which we are seeking to destroy?" This is indeed a calamity for the Reserves, for Harris is a great exponent of jiu-jitsu, having won the black belt, a decoration of no mean order given in Japan. Complete loss of temper (which must come as a matter of course to the cast-iron disciplinarian) will mean resort to the quickest method of flooring the offenders. Harris in combat with two thousand coolies will be a great diversion from the somewhat monotonous life of camp. A sight for ancient Rome.

Before tiffin we would sometimes have a game of baseball, which was always enthusiastically followed by thousands of coolies. It is rumoured that the skill of the fathers in pitching, catching, fanning, cussing, stealing and sliding bases, making runs and home-runs, has done more to raise them in

the estimation of their sons than all they have taught them on the parade ground and all the interest they have taken in their welfare.

Several coolies were taken aback at seeing Mr. Goodyear, the missionary, a participant in the game. They put their heads together murmuring that it was not possible for a truly God-fearing man to play ball on the Sabbath, but on seeing Mr. Goodyear make a one-handed catch in outfield, they fell to marvelling, and repented of their impulse to cast him out as commanding officer. Particularly were the spectators delighted when Redbrick knocked up a "fly" which fell among the police guard (which was being changed at midday), causing the same to scatter as if a shell had fallen in their midst.

The coolies, who for a reason unknown to me, have a hearty and open contempt for the native officials in camp, jeered and threw up their hands in laughter.

And this dislike of native officialdom reminds me that Medcork told a story at tiffin. One of his sergeants had come to him averring that he had been empowered by a majority of the company's N.C.O.'s to say

that no orders would in future be recognized and obeyed which did not come direct from the lips of their father. They objected to the interpreter who was a scurvy-looking half-breed. Medcork was much exercised over this, for his knowledge of Chinese is nil. All "messages" to all ranks are communicated through the medium of the interpreter.

"Block the channel," he cried, "and you block the way to improvement and efficiency."

Medcork is a keen man. He spent most of the afternoon trying to explain to the emissary of the N.C.O.'s that he and his interpreter were one; that the interpreter was his mouthpiece—nothing in himself and having no power of his own.

Medcork, who is something of a theologist, found a perfect parallel, but not being certain of his sergeant's persuasion did not dare to make use of his parallel. Medcork was getting the best of the wrangle when the sergeant suddenly crushed him with the retort that as his C.O. did not know Chinese he could not check the words of his interpreter, who might say anything he chose.

Wherefore Medcork now feverishly studies

Whitewright's "Introduction to Mandarin." The future for him is dark. It is as if he were struck dumb. Being a pessimist he anticipates a discharge from the C.L.C.

"I'll join the R.A.F.," he says, "a swift easy death."

XII

THERE lies in the guard-room a so-called Report Book in which the orderly officer notes what he has done during the hours of his watch, any extraordinary occurrences in camp, the state of the weather, and other items of interest to the commandant. Although the scope of this volume is strictly limited by order, and although brevity in the entries is heartily recommended by the commandant, it is lately noticeable that certain officers are given to spreading themselves, as the phrase goes, unduly, recording with prolix minuteness what matters have improved each shuddering hour, whilst indulging a spirit of criticism which is scarcely consonant with their subordinate position. The duties of an orderly officer are discharged with such secrecy that he cannot be blamed for seizing an opportunity to lay written proof of his devotion to them.

But he can overstep the mark. And it is agreed among us that Harvie, a missionary

and mountaineer of Japan, overstepped the mark when he discoursed with fatal facility in the Report Book upon the accumulation of dirt in the coolie kitchens, pointing out that such an insanitary state of affairs was intolerable to *refined* coolies.

The adjective "refined" has given rise to much discussion. Some argue: once a coolie always a coolie. Others aver that a coolie who has passed through the Sausage Machine is refined.

"Refined physically," added Clarison, "with physical habits unchanged."

And Clarison gave an illustration of the manner in which army-coated and clean recruits crowd together in their Bunk-houses, and in foul air and dinginess lie on their stomachs or sit cross-legged and listen to a musical member of their company shrilly "melodize" on a native violin; this on the bottom shelf, whilst on the upper shelves their brothers consume bowls of rice or sip tea or smoke cigarettes and pipes, both food and liquid and ashes falling indiscriminately and unnoticed on the rapt audience below.

"Amazing chaps," cried Clarison.

And a picture came into my mind of the

queue of coolies daily visible at the entrance to the Sausage Machine ; a straggling unkempt beaten-doggish lot of men, faded and ragged blue smocks clinging limply to their bodies, their hands tucked in their sleeves, their shoulders hunched in the cold morning air ; a few apparently aware that they are standing on the threshold of a new life, manifesting a lively interest in the door behind which a handful of their fellows disappear from time to time ; most of them with a happy stoical expression on their faces, as though life wherever lived were an indifferent and unalterable thing.

The Report Book having become a Suggestion Book, it now remains for some courageous member of the mess to submit that four-hour watches in Northern Chinese winters menace the health of officers and should be forthwith abolished. It is strange how courage among us is lacking.

XIII

THERE came a day of disaster. B Company mutinied. The mutiny broke out at 4 p.m., dismissal time ; it was countered by the O.C. and Commandant, who acted bravely ; and was quelled in half an hour.

It happened in this way : yesterday at the morning dismissal several coolies belonging to the company in question dropped out of the ranks and slipped into their Bunkhouses before the equivalent of "break-off" —a wave of a cane—had been given by the O.C. They were peevishly cold—there was a bitter wind blowing—and as hungry as lion cubs. They were in the rear ranks ; there are fifteen ranks in a C.L.C. Company, so they thought they could get away unseen. Not so ; the O.C. had quick eyes, sharpened in the American Rockies. He caught them. It was not the first time he had caught them. He took drastic measures to prevent the thing. He fined the whole company, excluding N.C.O.'s, a day's pay, which is five

coppers a coolie and ten coppers a *p'aitou*. He would not "cut them" to-day; he would do so to-morrow. His intention was explained to them by an interpreter. At which there was much murmuring.

That night the Orderly Officer notes in the Report Book: "11.30 p.m. Visited rounds and coolie quarters; lights burning in Bunkhouse No. 2, and the sound of voices. Thought disturbance excessive. Entered house and found many coolies apparently in conference. Otherwise nothing amiss." So the mutiny was hatched. To-morrow dawned, 10° colder than the day before, with a wind lifting dust from the surrounding barren flats and lashing it in the face. Nothing went wrong in the morning. In the afternoon B Company were down on orders for a route march of four miles, outside camp, dusty, discomfiting.

About 2 p.m. B Company got away, marching in fours. As they go out the camp gate, a *p'aitou*, unobserved by the sentry, leaves the ranks and whispers a moment with a Chinese who stands just outside, seemingly interested in the passing column. Two hours elapse. The column is now entering camp. The interested spectator stands in the same

position. As the *p'aitou* passes he "slips him" four bottles, which at the inquiry after the mutiny were found to contain whisky. The O.C. dismisses his men. They crowd round him as the conspirators crowded round Cæsar. They murmur words about pay. He smiles and shakes his head. They dissent and persist, but he disperses the mob with his cane. The mutineers go off in a huff to their Bunk-house and inflame themselves with alcohol. They scheme to fall upon their O.C. when he comes, a couple of hours later, looking after their welfare. Goodness knows what they intended to do with him; tear him limb from limb, or do unto him as he had done unto them with cane and boot and palm of hand.

Unfortunately for them, he is accompanied on his merciful errand by the Commandant, who was created by the Lord to lick coolies into lambs—without destroying their self-pride; a master of their language and their ways; just the wrong man to run up against at the inception of mutiny. Much shouting and confusion upon the entry of the O.C., towards whom an unusual and menacing movement of red-cheeked and foul-breathed

coolies. In an instant the Commandant is on top of the position, as well as on top of several of the more aggressive of the mutineers. Fists flash; arms circle and clinch; and unclinch and circle again. Far more fall by word of mouth than by swiftness of arm. Cowardice and fear set in. Some go down on their knees and "chin-chin." It sweeps over them that the thing they designed for their O.C. may be turned against them. The mutiny is over.

The Orderly Officer notes in the Report Book that evening: "6.30 p.m. Snow on the ground. B Company did extra drill outside Bunk-house. All well."

XIV

At noon the thermometer stood at 55°. This sudden and satisfying warmth was a signal for a truce between officers and men, a better understanding between fathers and sons. Fraternization occurred on all parade grounds. Officers looked happy, their faces losing that set and serious expression which they can't help wearing in the teeth of an unspeakable wind; they grinned and rubbed their moustaches and twirled their canes, proudly observing their men at play. Life was indeed a jolly thing at noon. The coolies poured into the open, emptying the Bunk-houses. They gathered in knots, and guessed at the life to come. They went arm in arm, and hand in hand, praising the C.L.C. Many engaged the services of scribes and wrote to their relations, saying that they had become soldiers and went about in waterproofs and wore fur-lined helmets and were held in great esteem by the Foreign Devil.

The *p'aitous* dwelt on the authority given

to them ; the corporals and sergeants spoke of the power into which they had come. Never a man but exhorted his male relations to volunteer. On the parade ground an official of the camp preached to the multitude, who elbowed one another the better to hear the words spoken which were of their native tongue. The drift of his speech was hardly followed, but it was made plain to them that their destiny was fortunate, in so far that they were going to see much of the world and to be given a chance to get rich quick, their rate of pay in France being a franc a day, which, at present exchange, was equivalent to about thirty coppers ; this in addition to a separation allowance for their families. It was difficult to understand, said the preacher, why some among them desired to return to the old life, the narrow village life, to the burden and squeak of the wheelbarrow, unless it was because of their womenfolk, who were unreasonable and stiff-necked and against whom he warned them.

Following parade in the afternoon there were inter-company tugs-o'-war, which further cemented the good feeling now existing between officers and men, the latter

receiving personal encouragements from the former in the many fierce battles that were fought between four o'clock and sundown.

Even at sundown it was so mild that the coolies sat in groups here and there in the camp, smoking and gossiping.

The now familiar chimney stood stark and black against the clear winter sky; in the background the zigzag roofs of the disused machine shops; in the foreground a bluish floor of concrete on which the groups of maroon-coated figures appeared like islands on a sea. If an airman from anywhere had suddenly come on the scene he would probably have taken it for a prison camp; the barbed-wire enclosures, the sentries, the kitless unarmed inmates; a prison camp most mercifully run, the habitat of happy full-bellied prisoners.

XV

THE police, Chinese ex-soldiers, are equipped with stentorian voices. Their voices quiver through the coolies and make the parade ground tremble.

It is most distressing to wake up in the morning in a bed which it has taken all night to get warm and to hear these voices ringing as it were against the dawn. It means one has to turn out.

Many of us are laid up with sore throats, due not only to shouting, but to the dust storms which sweep over the camp at all hours of the day. Huskiness is a chronic state with us. Conversation in the mess, never fluent at the best of times, is not aided thereby. Nor is the temper. Disagreements are now common. To-day the Report Book was much abused. In a moment of confidence Captain Linen assured me he was "fed up to the teeth." And he proceeded to shell the camp with criticisms. No one concerned was left with a leg to stand

on. The mess came in for drum-fire. He distinguished between the men and gentlemen among us ; he divided us into eggs and bad eggs ; "a mess of lance-corporals," he said. But that surely is our whole charm. We are from all parts of the Far East and of all classes. We grade from a pinkish weak-jawed voluble Irishman who chatters about "*gurgling* his throat after shiftin' round with them dirty coolies" to Captain Linen himself, who parades in spurs, smokes Egyptian fags, speaks nothing but persuasive Mandarin to the natives and nothing but King's English in the mess. A seasoning of blasphemy is but a sign of good breeding. Also, Captain Linen has been in the army *ump*teen years. On all matters military he is looked to as one having indisputable knowledge. Of an evening he will sit on the edge of a desk in the cosy room and reply, cigarette in hand, to a bombardment of questions. Some of us are exercised as to our proper behaviour in Blighty; which officers we should salute in the street, and which disregard; whether, being in a sense non-combatants, we are to equip ourselves with revolvers ; if we should buy our tunics, slacks, etc., in Ordnance, or

have them made at our private tailors'; with what degree of hauteur we should treat N.C.O.'s and privates; and other points of military etiquette. Three months hence we shall have forgotten that we ever asked such questions, and do we remember, it will be with a sentiment of shame—shame at our simplicity and ignorance; but it is always the way with these things.

If a man has the opportunity to inquire into a new departure in life, he is a fool not to do so—and to interrogate as simply as possible. Of course, we know that a captain carries three stars on his sleeve and a strafe or two up it; but we were ignorant, until Captain Linen told us, that a major is designated by a crown. We have learnt a good deal, but not enough, I fear, to prevent some astonishing "breaks" in Blighty.

I hear that C.L.C. officers, owing to their lack of training, are apt to flatter the ranks on occasion and offend the powers that be. So that we may not be classed with stinking fish, the Assistant-Adjutant of camp—a man who knows, having become an officer at home in the normal way, escaping the in-

cubator process associated with the C.L.C.—has drawn up for us a list of Do-Nots, which list we zealously peruse nightly before retirement.

XVI

As I write in our dormitory, where Harris lies on his bed close by, muttering Russian verbs to himself—if Harris survives the C.L.C. he plans to make his fortune somewhere in Siberia—the sound of a cataract of voices reaches my ears ; it is something like the rushing of waters. The coolies are expressing hunger ; the coolies, crowding round the camp cooks who are carrying wooden boxes of steaming rice from the kitchens to the Bunk-houses. Their hunger and capacity are on a par. All day donkeys drag cartloads of coolie provisions into camp.

Only fathers of large families know what a joy it is to have healthy happy children. One child was foolish last night. It happened in Bunk-house 11. The story is inconsecutive. A coolie, asleep on the top shelf, unwittingly fell therefrom and considerably altered the shape of his head. This is possible. Probable it is that a shindy occurred and one

or more of the combatants shoved a common enemy over the brink.

At times the Chinese are extraordinarily careless of a fellow-creature's suffering. They left him lying on the floor bleeding through the ears, and altogether an indelicate sight. In which condition he was found by the Orderly Officer, and duly conveyed to the hospital; where I saw him this morning, just the two eyes peeking from a white ball of bandages; as though he had been in battle.

Our little hospital is the busiest little place of its kind in North China; and over it presides a model little doctor, neat and untiring, and a very nest of sweet persuasions. Most of the patients are throat or eye or stomach or circumcision cases. They sit or lie on camp beds in what would be to us uncomfortable positions; never a man lies with legs outstretched on the flat of his back; evidently such a natural "Western" position would not induce quietude and reverie; the legs are always screwed up or tucked away, and the back bent. They look at you with just a little less animation than a coolie looks at his officer on parade. They look

at you with quiet unquestioning eyes—the eyes of a sleepy trustful dog.

To-day four companies, i.e. close on 2000 men, passed through the doctor's hands. It was final examination day. Every coolie is medically re-examined a few days before departure. About 6 per cent were rejected entirely owing to eye troubles. At sunset this 6 per cent stood a little apart from their successful mates; in the shadow of the familiar chimney they stood disconsolately expectant, keenly enough aware of their fate, asking one another helplessly why the light of the new life was suddenly extinguished, why they had to return to the old meagre struggle for existence, why they should be made to lose face with their kinsmen and fellow-villagers, just because the lids of their eyes were inflamed. They were to be sent home by to-night's train; and the happy others, knowing this, went up to them, when their officer's eye was turned the other way, and gave them each a few coppers, at the same time bidding them farewell.

I happened to be the officer in charge, but I affected not to see these secret gifts and sad good-byes.

XVII

"ALL Companies and the Reserves will parade at 2 p.m. to be inspected by the Superintendent and to be photographed." So ran to-day's orders. It is the penultimate stage in the long and complex process of refinement which fits a coolie to go and do his bit in France. During this process the native comes in touch (sometimes in violent touch) at many points with Western ingenuity; he is submitted to much that is galling to his passive equable spirit.

At the very outset the clothes are stripped off him and he is made to stand naked before a knowledgeable little Canadian doctor (always in khaki) who handles him as though he were a bit of dough, slapping him here and there, and turning him over and doubling him up and otherwise maltreating him; all to ascertain if he has a sound enough body to work in the fields and by the canals of France. As if he hadn't garnered the harvests of twenty years in China! As if he hadn't

pushed and sailed a wheelbarrow with half a ton on it all the days of his manhood !

The spoliation of his clothes he does not mind, for he knows he is to get better. He has no false notions about nudity ; besides, he is not alone in his nakedness ; he is one of a single file of perhaps a score of men. To be robbed of his lifelong cultivated queue is distressing, but he has been warned and knows within him that it is for the best ; had he a plait of hair dangling down his back or screwed up in a bun under his cap, he would be laughed at in the white man's world, and to lose the personal product of a lifetime is better than to be mocked.

There are abrupter stages in the process which cause him anxiety. His breast is pierced by a needle and liquid pumped into him for no apparent reason ; equally unavailing seems the act of scratching his arm with the blade of a knife and spreading more liquid over the bloody spots. Though high-sounding explanations are vouchsafed he cannot appreciate the virtues of moving his arms and legs with mechanical precision or of limiting his outlook by making him look for ever to his front, or of doing exactly the

same as 499 others at exactly the same moment. It makes a machine of him; it trespasses upon his individuality. He sees his whole life being conformed to a programme, details of which are to be found in the guard-room. His wakeful hours are taken from him, and whittled down from knobby independence to polished bounden duties. He is one of an obedient host instead of a village free-thinker and liver.

He is a cipher. Nay, he is worse than that; he is No. 106,542; *vide* the wooden tag that hangs from a button on his waterproof; *vide* also the brass band which is riveted on his wrist.

It may be recorded to his credit that he is proud of this ornament; he never tries to cut or unrivet it; he realizes dimly that it is a symbol of his refinement, signifying a revaluation of the values of life.

Detail for detail he finds himself clothed like five thousand others; a waterproof is his to button up; and he must needs explore the mysteries of a button-hole.

Plant him five yards away and, if he isn't remarkably tall or short, he is the living image of his fellow. At least, in the old life,

he was distinguishable from his fellow by degrees of uncouthness. Again, to receive exactly the same number of coppers *per diem* is disturbing after the ups and downs of a civilian coolie existence. Many are the minor irreconcilable things. To spend a day in jail for an offence on the parade ground—at any time a natural operation—would seem to defy the most elementary laws of justice. To be caned on the side for saying something fresh and fraternal to a brother in the ranks would surely belong to the same category. To be forcibly taken to hospital on the casual declaration of a stomach-ache is simply absurd. To be sent home because the lids of the eyes are inflamed is insane. A sequence indeed of unreasonable matters. He cannot see them as a sequence. The waves that buffet him are too large for him to descry the sea. But over a sea he has sailed ; in the storm he is vaguely conscious of having covered great distances. He is now a long way from the shore of the old life. In moments of calm, when for example he is curled up on the top shelf of his Bunk-house, he is aware of a happiness in the new life ; he does not want

to go back ; the light of adventure is dawning in him ; his imagination quickens though his fancies soon perish, for he has but weak elusive facts and hearsays to base them on. Most of the day he is mentally in a state of mild coma. He cannot live up to the pace of his life. Things have gone past him. The changes have rushed and swamped him like waves. A little while and he will awaken, perhaps in France, and consider what has happened to him ; he will cautiously explore the new ground of his life ; he will relive the days in Tsangkou Camp and the length of the great voyage from China will contract, and here and there the vivid stages, with their concomitant scenes, will be visible.

But at present it is all blur and shouting and the swishing of canes and swirls of dust from the barren knolls and broken farmlands roundabout.

And this business of photography this afternoon is calculated not least to mystify him. He stands at attention, still as a stone, forty minutes, an hour, an hour and twenty minutes, while a little fur-capped Jap, pinnacled on a scaffolding, plays peekaboo behind a black cloth, waving his arms

frantically now and again in an effort to compress an odd 2000 men within visual grasp of his bothering lens. Officers shout and wave their canes. At last, everything seems ready for something to occur. A silence falls. Even the wind drops. The little Jap holds up his hand and lowers it a moment later. It is all over. It is impossible to say what it is all about. It is no more confusing but less tangible, more mysterious, perhaps, than the process of inoculation.

"J.T." party is now ready to go. Nothing remains now but to mark time a few days and then—to embark.

Then came Embarkation Day. "J.T." party left camp about 9.30, to the blare of bugles and the blast of crackers. Fully equipped, looking less like labourers than China's first contingent, they marched to the station a few hundred yards away, where they were entrained for Tsingtau. Before finally leaving the parade ground they were allowed to break ranks, and make purchases from the stalls and shops of mushroom growth which had sprung up around there overnight. These sons of China, suddenly rich, indulged

their fondest likes. Singlets they bought, and socks; grey tunics and satin shoes; waist-band purses to hold their newly-earned silver dollars; caps and canes of Japanese manufacture; all sorts of useful and useless knick-knacks; and never a man but who carried a linen sack in which he had flung meat-pies and oranges, dried fish, and sundry other kinds of "chow," to sustain him on his voyage to the antipodes.

For once the Chinese flung from them their habitual mask of indifference. Emotion among them ran riot. Many were drunk with excitement. Early in the morning they had been bathed and given new clothes. That had stirred them. Then had come the sudden getting of wealth; a round sum of so many Mexican dollars, solid and heavy and immediately touchable. For weeks they had done uncommon things, the thought of which was profoundly exciting. And the future lay before them like a land of immense possibilities. But thought of both the past and the future came to them only subconsciously. They gladly lived for the moment and made a glorious thing out of life.

It was all in the spirit of a children's

garden fête, at which money ran like water. Proudly the parents stood apart, not untouched by the scene, yet not borne away, for they were turning over in their minds the troublesome hours to come: the entraining, the embarkation, the allotment of the men to their bunks, the suppression of undue excitement on board, the checking of the men, and this and that to do with shipping an odd 2000 coolies to France.

A quiet day followed on the departure of "J.T." party which, by the way, included Redbrick whose Yankeeisms and repartee will be missed by the mess; as well as the Russian who until the ninth hour was tempted to return to his country and get the Bolshevik government to recognize him, voting, in the end, in favour of finding fame in the C.L.C.; not to speak of Captain Linen, whose exemplary manners and "cricket" spirit have been such an efficacious antidote to our lance-corporal crudity. Others who have gone with him will be missed, each in his place—particularly at table where there is considerable rivalry to sit at the head, there being four heads in all. Why this rivalry should exist is inexplicable, save

perhaps on the score that for a voluble chin-wagger it is positively inspiring to speak to two converging lines of heads all looking in his direction.

Harvie, the missionary and mountaineer of Japan, has the gift of the gab, being as facile in speech as he is on paper. At tiffin he flickered like a moth around the flaming question: Are those of us who have youth and sound bodies justified in joining the C.L.C. ?

"What you mean to say," cried Clarison, "is, are we a bunch of bally slackers for not going home straight and getting into some O.T.C. ? "

Harvie said he didn't wish to put the thing as bluntly as that.

"What I am driving at is, what's the social position at home of a C.L.C. officer ? "

Medcork ventured—ostracization. A new arrival, a Scot (known as Hackenschmidt, presumably because he is a size larger than Little Tich), scorned the notion:

"We're treated as any other wee officers of the army and we work just as hard as most." Hackenschmidt knows, because he is clothed in khaki, having been at home with

the coolies. "Our job," he went on, "is a special job. None but a mon who has lived out East could do it. All his civilian life out East is a training. Remember that."

It was something worth remembering, to be sure, and none spoke for a little while. And then Clarison said—not inconsequentially:

"I consider a commission in the C.L.C. a damned good billet." And he quoted Captain Linen to the effect that C.L.C. life in France was a desirable thing, carrying with it many perquisites, such as periodical home-leave, reasonable immunity from shells and bombs, bathing in Calais, "busts" in Boulogne, and even a week-end in Paris.

And he spoke of the French girls he would parley with and the English nurses he would meet. The which Hackenschmidt somewhat palliated by warning him that the lassies in France were usually too busy to flirt.

"And it's as well to bear in mind that there's a war on. Oh, ay, there's a war on."

XVIII

AND still the coolies come, two train-loads a day, although I hear that recruiting is stopped. And the new-comers are nothing different from their departed brothers ; given to open-mouthed wonder, and to childish excitements which, after a while, one ceases to share within one, save in extreme cases, where the coruscating eye and open mouth and gleaming teeth have an undefinable charm. It is difficult to move among the new recruits, showing them how and in what order to don their new unaccustomed clothes, forming them into squads of fifteen, appointing a lance-corporal and leading them off into their Bunk-houses, without reflecting on the vast change that is coming over their lives, in what a turmoil of surprise and expectancy must their minds be ; something akin, I suppose, to the emotion of a boy on his arrival at a boarding-school ; the unknown delightful to him, the confidence that he is going to be well-treated, immediate

guarantee of which he finds in his splendid outfit. Yet in a clear sky of hopes and surprises blows a wind of strangeness, touched with an element of dread, the likelihood of a great hoax, or of sudden expulsion and ignoble return to village humdrum.

The Chinese is emotional, though leading a normal life, treading the deep-rutted ancestral path, he will not manifest emotion save at exceptional moments. Here, of course, we catch them as it were off their guard; their conscious reserve has been rudely awakened; they display deep feelings. At first it is simple astonishment which drives them to erratic movement, wild gesture, all the abandon of a folk of southern Europe; and then, after a few days, the distressing novelty passes and they slow down to something of their old passivity, some growing thoughtful of the life that is gone, nostalgia not being infrequent among them.

The coolie is as fond of his home as the Englishman; and he also can be a great lover. Officers have told stories of coolies suddenly bursting into tears and sitting down in the ranks for no apparent reason. Not

sick, but homesick, is the explanation ; notwithstanding it is not accepted on parade as sufficient to justify a sedentary position.

One has only to live in China six weeks to explode for oneself the theory that all Chinese look alike. It can as reasonably be said that all Italians look alike. One has only to be in a North China coolie camp a few days to become convinced that never such a variety of faces existed as among the Chinese. The practised eye fails to notice the nursery characteristics of a Chinese face—slanting eyes and yellowness—and looks for differences in the shape of the head, in the profile, in the size and quality of the eyes, etc. A high cheek-bone is, perhaps, the one common denominator. But there are exceptions to that ; chubby cherubic faces, faces as round as an O, with cheeks as red as a haw; and faces white and Western. These latter not infrequently remind one of some one one knows. Again and again I have seen some distant friend looking at me through the eyes of a coolie. It is not so often a similarity of features as a similar manner of glancing, a corresponding spiritual light in the face.

XIX

THE party that was to go at the end of the month have given up hope of going before the middle or end of February. A great disappointment, over which some officers are like to kick their heels, but it will not do them the least good to raise a shindy.

Our fate is with the War Office, which is not only preoccupied these days, but at the other end of the earth.

"Our first experience with the War Office," said a Canadian missionary, who has lain sick of a fever for many weeks and who now reappears looking like an alabaster image of a man, as much fit to drill coolies as a delicate nun.

"And now our last," added Medcork.

As usual those in authority know nothing, for they want to make no promises. Clarison has drifted from boredom into a beautiful contentment with life. Each morning he goes forth to his coolies with fresh enthusiasm; like a vicar visiting his flock. He puts words

of caution and encouragement into the mouth of his interpreter, conveying that the longer his sons are here the more efficient must they eventually become, the better they will be thought of in France, the more envied by their colleagues already there. He crushes their ardent desire to go, taunting them with an unpatriotic impulse to walk before they can stand, to leave their country just because they are in camp. He sums up irresistibly, averring that a good thing once got seems all the better for having waited for it. Clarison's spirit is admirable; an example to the mess.

He is deeply attached to his sons and goes about the business of bringing them up with a quiet conviction in the splendour of their future. In return he is rewarded with obedience. Even his sons refuse their pay, thinking it comes out of his own pocket and wishing him to benefit by their modest incomes. Five coppers each *per diem,* and these they would return to him, and he must needs use a cane in order to compel them to keep the money for their own pleasure. No longer has he need to fine for insubordination or to cane for something worse; nothing

goes wrong; and nothing much happens. For when an officer has slipped from boredom into a beautiful contentment with life, he no longer spits fire at his men or slashes or stamps or does anything of a magnetic nature calculated to produce swift motion; he is not a friend of inertia, nor is he an enemy; he has compromised with his virgin instinct to make machines of his men; he suffers their tendency to take it easy.

Others of a stiffer fibre, like Harris, resist the decadent ravages of time. Harris, being a journalist, knows human nature.

"Give a man something different to do every day," he cries, "and he will never grow stale."

Notwithstanding, staleness is creeping over his company—like paralysis. He has been too long at them; they do not quicken at his command; no longer do the *p'aitous* tremble and the men bow down. They know their C.O. too well. They have discovered in him a human kindness and are trading on it for all they are worth. Of which, of course, Harris is innocent. He alternates drill with calisthenics, relay races with tugs-o'-war; he makes his company form fours

at all points of the compass; march backwards; goose-step; do jiu-jitsu; he harangues them in several languages; he listens to their innumerable complaints and suggestions; he makes and breaks promises; he imposes sweeping fines; gives efficiency prizes; in fact, does every mortal thing to maintain their interest in camp existence. But staleness is like a plague—difficult of prevention. The ginger is going out of their manual drill; the sparkle out of their marching. There is a tendency to take things easy. A little while, and Harris will notice it; and then he, too, will join in the choice denunciation of the War Office; which, we may hazard, is not responsible. Nobody is responsible. Nobody has ever been responsible for any of the disasters of this war.

XX

ONE night towards the end of the month the monotony of camp life was magnificently broken, and in a (for me) quite unexpected manner. I was having a pipe in my bedroom, talking Russian literature with Harris, when about six o'clock came the sound of police whistles continuously and excitedly blown. I rushed downstairs and carried on with several officers, who had run out into the nippy night hatless, and (what seemed to me a foolish omission) stickless, towards the seat of disturbance. Arrived there, we found one of the Bunk-houses in an uproar; a confusion of shouting coolies who were being clubbed and tumbled by the sentries, some showing fight, but most trying to get out of the way and only getting in one another's in the attempt. An arc lamp shed a pale bluish light on a liquid mob of figures which, like a rapid, fell and rose angrily over a bed of boulders. It was plain that the native police had lost their heads, and in the

effort to avert a peril were bruising and blood-letting without respect of persons or flesh. Among us was one who spoke Chinese and he soon got out of an hysterical sentry that a mob of coolies had rushed a certain gate-keeper, obtained the key to a back entrance to the camp and fled over towards the moonlit hills before the latter could recover himself sufficiently to effect the capture of a single insurrectionist. How many had escaped he did not know. Some said hundreds, others thousands. At all events it was a successful *coup ;* and it went without saying he had nothing to do with it.

" Then," cried an officer, " why the devil are you knocking these men about ? "

He did not know ; and, at the time, no more was said, for he was impressed into a chase-and-capture party which was hurriedly improvised and which set out after the miscreants at the double. The latter had a start of at least a quarter of an hour, which enabled them to scatter widely over the up and down sand-dunish country which lies between camp and a range of rocky barren hills distant about forty *li*.

Being pathless and roadless and full of

channels and fissures and gullies, as though it had been trench-dug and then shelled with high explosives, the country was not quickly covered and a moon which cast deceptive shadows did not help to quicken the chase. But, unluckily for them, the Chinese are not good short-distance runners; that is, they can run most of the day, but are left by us when it comes to sprinting; and to sprinting it came, for many fatigued and peace-seeking officers. Few men regret an adventure of this kind, but all have their notions about the time it should take place. Six o'clock; tea; a pipe; gossip. As he ran panting, Harris poured out execrations on the heads of coolies in general, at the same time backing his own physique against the physique of any man who ran in the chase. He prophesied the coming of his second breath, with which he swore to catch the fleetest absconder. Stragglers were soon overtaken; breathless and bewildered wretches, who as soon as they were caught went down on their knees and knocked their heads on the ground. The mercy they asked was not shown. The camp police, outnumbering the captives, cast them down and sat upon them

and beat them as one would beat a carpet—a thing of neither head nor foot. After which they were bound together and sent back to camp. This took place on the confines of a village which rang with the noise and excitement of the chase; some searched perfectly peaceable huts, which gave forth howling dogs and gaping natives, but nothing like escaped units of the C.L.C.

A brief confab of chasers at this point resulted in the adoption of deploying tactics. It was found possible to beat up a wide extent of country with a score of officers and police. So, from the village, out and on towards the hills, each man pushed his lonely and perilous way, hallooing now and again to keep in touch with his confederates. For a considerable distance we chased imaginary coolies over an imaginary way of escape and, nothing transpiring, the futility of these moments of life was brought home to us; and we would have given up hope of being heroic and reaching the hills (whither, of course, bandits, coolies, criminals and the like hasten in time of trouble), when one among us stumbled against a pile of something soft and cushion-like, which on inspection proved to be cast-

off maroon-coloured waterproofs. About ten. It was indeed paper, and tally-ho ! We now skirmished through a grove of mulberry trees. The branches extended their curving arms and crooked fingers in the moonlight. And then came an exciting moment. We sighted shadows moving swiftly towards us from our left. They came on, dodging the trees, three—four—six of them. "Coolies," I thought, "who have lost their sense of direction." Followed a silent chase of the "enemy," from tree to tree. It was very curious. As much as they desired escape they appeared attracted towards us, chasing rather than being chased, yet hesitating—till I cornered one between a tree and a frozen creek, the solidity of which he did not seem anxious to test. I don't know whether they or we had deployed in the wrong direction. But the chasers were chasing one another among mulberry trees on a moonlight night in January. It was rather absurd.

From this point, the chase lost its salt, the adventure its savour. We plodded rather than sprinted over thousands of yards of broken ground, frequently losing sight of

camp whose lights were splendidly visible so long as one could get high enough to see them. A roundabout route brought us back to camp in time for a late dinner. Stories of the hunt were strung together and it was ascertained that not more than a score of the runaways had been recovered. These were snugly housed in jail. The remainder, approximately eighty, were goodness knows where; and it is unlikely we shall ever know.

They are fools to go, as their more patient fellows will tell them in the years to come. They run away from immediate security of life; from good food and good clothes and much rest; also, they slip the opportunity to see the world and make money, and what more could a coolie desire?

It may well be asked: if these things are apparent to the coolies, why do they plan and effect an escape in the spirit of prisoners circumventing their warder? The exact cause is unknown. This much is determined: a malicious report has lately gained credence among them that the last two transports were either torpedoed, or captured by the Germans; a story, needless to say, entirely baseless. Chinese of this class are an im-

pressionable folk ; a ringleader (possibly in the pay of the enemy, for there are Germans at large close by) could without difficulty so work on the minds of many that they should come to believe that escape from camp was as good as escape from death. It is said that the coolies cried "Save your life," "Save your life," as they rushed the sentry. Be this as it may, the incidence of the Chinese New Year is not to be overlooked. New Year is general settlement time ; all debts are paid ; all feuds are settled ; the family gathers round and feasts and merrymakes. It is a favourite festival, deprivation of which makes a Chinese fretful. The more so if a coolie, instead of being embarked on the new life that is promised him, is detained in camp well-nigh a moon awaiting the arrival of a transport.

One could moralize on the matter until sunrise. Suffice it that our sons were well harangued to-day ; they were humoured into good temper and remain simple and happy, which is their true nature. We are not in mourning for the loss of our children ; after all we have so many ; and it is best to be rid of bad eggs.

The following night there was a repetition of the affair, though on a smaller scale, and more cunningly carried out. A score escaped by making a hole in the roof of their Bunk-house, whence a climb down to the road which half encircles camp, was a simple matter. The escape was complete, no alarm being given by the sentries; which was perhaps a good thing, as the fatigued fathers were enabled to pass the night without disturbance. Clarison, to his mortification, was the chief loser.

"What are the fellows playing at?" he cried indignantly at breakfast. "I was so fond of them and they were so fond of me; there was not the faintest mist of misunderstanding between us."

Clarison, losing none in the previous *coup*, had prided himself that neither nostalgia nor enemy machinations could deprive him of the weakest of his sons. He was sorely put out.

"Och, aye!" said Hackenschmidt, "the lads are verra homesick."

Then Medcork, after his manner:

"You see; in a week we won't have a coolie left in camp."

"What happens to us, then?" asked Harvie, much disturbed.

Goodyear ventured to say that even if the fathers were childless they would in the end get landed in France. Medcork made the tame remark that in any case we were bound to get landed. Goodyear persisted that our fate was in the hands of God. None in mess daring to dispute this, a silence fell; and the fathers meditated the ingratitude of certain of their sons; and when conversation sprang up again, it centred on the reason why they had run away. Accusations were made of unnecessary cruelty; the imposition for instance of fourteen days' fine for losing a cap, and imprisonment for arguing the point with a native N.C.O., exposure on certain days to the north wind, and so forth; at which Clarison held up his hands in horror, saying that moral chastisement such as shaming a man before his company was much more effective than bodily reprimand.

Lieutenant Hitard, who, after recovering from being gassed in the early anxious days of the war, was gazetted to the C.L.C., on account of his knowledge of Chinese (many others at home have, by the way, suffered a

similar fate for the same reason), and who is an iron disciplinarian, having been "put through it" himself as a Tommy, laughed at Clarison's kindly dogma.

"Nothing," laid down Lieutenant Hitard, "knocks anything into a coolie so well as a nose-bleed." He is well practised at drawing a coolie's blood at first slap.

"Giving a coolie a bloody nose, do you mean to say?" asked Harvie academically.

"A bit thick," some one commented in a whisper.

"Och, mon," cried Hackenschmidt, "they soon get over it and bear you no malice, either."

The truth of this would have undoubtedly been challenged by Clarison had he not been in a weak position, having lost so many men the night before.

XXI

WITH the spirit of unrest abroad, it is clearly the duty of the officer of the night guard to pay frequent and unexpected visits to the Bunk-houses. It may be his luck to nip an escape in the bud. At any rate, he now goes his rounds looking for trouble. In this frame of mind he is likely to frighten innocents with his menacing approach and presence. Stealthily he lifts the latch of a Bunk-house and peers within, thinking to frustrate some daring plot at the psychological moment. It is perhaps with a sense of disappointment that he sees how snugly Chinese can pack their bodies on shelves and sleep peacefully, mostly on their backs, with not two inches between them to spare. Hundreds and hundreds of them, for the most part capped and coated, with their shoes stuck in racks, neat and orderly. A few have taken off their clothes and lie naked, with a blanket under them, and their waterproof thrown over them for cover. Unaware, and if aware, careless,

of his presence, they turn over in their sleep, one, it may be, wriggling to his knees rearranging his narrow bed and collapsing into unconsciousness. He may be squinted at by half-open bloodshot eyes, but the eyes will not take cognisance of him. Some lie with their hands dangling over the shelf; they are snoring horribly; it does not seem to matter. Like no man he has known; like no animal he can imagine. Others are completely wrapt in their coats, head and all, mummified.

Heads next to feet, and feet next to heads; shelves of bodies generating heat. A small oil lamp at either end of the tomb. It is indeed a tomb of the living, ghostly lit. Perhaps in one corner, on the second shelf, three dots of light which move and a wisp of smoke, denoting life. Three coolies in confab, sitting close together on their heels, mumbling in monotone an endless triologue.

For all he knows, they are discussing escape; wakeful ringleaders of all those asleep and snoring; he regrets his ignorance of their language; and leaves them. In another house he may find more activity, more wakefulness, more attention to his

presence. Grins may greet him, he may have things said to him. One may be straining his eyes over some Chinese novel; another may have squatted down near a lamp to write a letter. A plump little specimen may reach out at him from the floor and grasp his ankle playfully or hold and shake his stick; with no word but the silent welcome of a smile; with no intention but a child's; gentle, comforting, inexplicable. By and by he returns to the guard-room, confident that to-night there is no spirit of unrest abroad.

XXII

A FOOTNOTE to recent orders reminded officers that the recreation of coolies off parade was as important as the business of drilling them. Since when there has been considerable head-scratching over the most politic manner of recreating our sons. Five o'clock tea and a tango on the top shelf of the Bunk-house met with well-merited derision. Mr. Goodyear suggested that more valuable use of the time could not be made than to preach the gospel; he pictured the conversion to Christianity of his entire company.

"A wide field for a missionary, quite untilled! I don't know why it didn't occur to me before," he said, with the air of one who has made a great discovery.

But his enthusiasm cooled when some one pointed out that he would have to preach the gospel through an interpreter, he not knowing a dozen words of Chinese. Japanese he could speak like a native.

"But what good is that? Like Greek speaking to Roman." And forgetting all about recreating the coolies he began to talk about the helplessness of an officer ignorant of the lingo. "Why," said he in Canadian-intoned English, "I can't help saying there are many times when I would give anything to smack a coolie in the face, but I dare not for he might not be aware why I struck him, and if he asked me I should not be able to explain. If a man be punished and know not why, he is punished to no avail."

Mr. Goodyear confessed, however, that once, perhaps twice, anger had driven him to lift his hand against his fellow-creature; he had regretted the act and shaped an apology which he would have assuredly made, had he been able to make it in person. ("Damned good thing he doesn't know the language," commented Lieutenant Hitard a little later.) Again, he considered his nocturnal visits to the Bunk-houses lost their spice, nay, inspired distrust and a sense of espionage, because he could not chat with his men in Chinese.

"I go into those evil-smelling places, and

prowl about silent and gloomy as a sphinx, as though I would not willingly speak with the least of my sons, and let him know that I had his lot in my mind, comfort him if need be and encourage him to have patience till the transport come. I would try to paint for him the life to come; how on his return from the pilgrimage to France he would be treated in his own land as one of the elect; how he could turn his military training to great advantage by becoming a soldier of China, a unit of a powerful army, which would rid the rich province of Shantung of the covetous Japanese for a generation at any rate. A glorious aim, which he would do well to bear in mind."

Returning to the recreation problem, Clarison suggested such indoor pastimes as tiddle-y-winks, dice-throwing and coin tossing, the Chinese being passionately fond of gaming of all kinds. But the idea carried with it hints of internecine trouble, so it was turned down. Harvie submitted that the initiation of evening classes for the study of English and French would both relax the coolies and refine them. Hackenschmidt, who plays the violin, foreshadowed for his

company a series of afternoon and evening concerts, to embrace both the classics and ragtime, with a savouring of free adaptations from Chinese melodies. Branch, a cock-sure, lay-down-the-law individual, who recently returned from up-country, where he was engaged in recruiting coolies, and who is something of a water-colourist, proposed an exhibition in his company's Bunk-house of Chinese landscapes.

So great was the diversity of suggestions that none was adopted, and the executive, in desperation to get the new order carried out, laid down that coolies, when off parade, should be amused with football, tug-o'-war, and leap-frog; all admittedly manly sports, but sports which are played after dark only with attendant risks and difficulties.

"Aside from the fact," grumbled Clarison, "that it is deucedly awkward to umpire a game of soccer when 250 are playing on each side."

XXIII

BEING a lover of a good polemic, I delighted to hear Lieutenant Hitard and Harvie raise their voices over the question whether or not the Chinese coolie is possessed of the finer emotions. Neither disputant attempted to define the latter—which would have been well for the clarity and orderliness of the argument—and before they had gone very far I gathered that they were wrangling not about emotions at all, but about traits of character. Lieutenant Hitard would not credit the coolie with any sense of gratitude, with any good faith, with any trustworthiness.

He said it was all very well to idealize them—that is to place them on a moral level with the white man—in camp, where the conditions of life were as near perfect as possible; that is they were heartily fed, warmly clothed, and dryly housed: they had no complaints, no deprivations to pit the darkest instincts in them against the

best. Like lions they lay down with the hart and the lamb so long as they were contented. Empty their bellies and let the north wind blow on them and the rain of Flanders lash them and they roared like the ungovernable beast. In France, where, for all the Press eulogies about the perfect arrangements made for the rationing of the C.L.C., an abundance of rice was not always obtainable, and where, of course, the weather was hopelessly variable, refusals to go out to work, resulting in riots, were not infrequent. Hitard gave several examples from his own experience. And he warned Harvie he would find out the thing for himself.

"There isn't a spark of gratitude in a coolie; deprive and discomfort him, as I have already described, and he'll forget everything decent and indecent that you ever did for him. Being primitive he lives completely in the moment. His memory—such as it is—serves him only for bad, not for good. So long as you treat him well he will remember you; turn your back on him and he will forget you; maltreat him and he will show his teeth." Hitard leaned back in his chair (it was after dinner in the cosy room)

and pulled at his pipe with an air of "the argument is done," thinking that his opponent had not a leg to stand on.

As indeed he hadn't, the academic fellow; but not to be silenced he insisted on his first principle that there is a fund of good in every man, be he Cockney or Caucasian, cannibal or coolie.

"It only needs to be drawn upon, like a bank account, in order to be profitably spent. Devotion and daring can be purchased—the two cardinal virtues of the Westerner—they are instinct in every coolie that ever came into this camp; and there is no reason why we should not cultivate them in him to such a point that mere rain and hunger should not cancel his loyalty."

The mess admired Harvie's rhetoric but not the force of his argument. Hitard, not wishing to destroy Harvie's faith in the innate soundness of coolie nature—a beautiful faith to be sure, which may or may not meet with disillusionment—began to talk inconsequentially of the pleasures of Paris and Boulogne, which is always a favourite topic of mess conversation.

XXIV

ONE night, not long before our own Embarkation Day, came suddenly the sound of police whistles. The centre of disturbance lay in the hospital. One of the inmates, a surly criminal type, was howling within like a wild cat and rushing about gaily breaking everything humanly breakable. He wanted to be sent home and decided that the Administration would not tolerate a madman for many hours. So he feigned insanity; and with perfect success. He must now admit, however, that it was rather a costly manner of going about the business, for before spending the night in jail, he had first to be rendered unconscious and then bound hand and foot. Clarison had the honour of dealing the knock-out, "with a stick," that equable-minded officer will add in his version of the story, "nearly as stout as a baseball bat." Had it been a Western cranium, it would have cracked. A Chinese head stands astonishingly more than a stiff blow.

If it had taken place elsewhere than in a hospital where at least a score of our sons lay sick and helpless, the incident would have been welcomed by the mess as a source of excitement, affording the amateur psychologist a striking study in the histrionic powers of the Chinese coolie. As it was, the poor patients were paralysed with fright, and we entered the ward to find many of them kneeling naked on the floor praying to some divinity or other to deliver them from the madness of their fellow.

PART II

FEBRUARY

I

We style ourselves the O.K. party. We are 13 officers and 4200 coolies strong, 8½ companies together with 5 interpreters and a medical assistant. Of the officers, three have seen service in France. Of the coolies, about half have had a month's training in camp; the rest are quite new to the game. My Company (E) is made up mainly of newcomers. I prefer it thus. They have not had time to get stale. They are "carrying on" in the great adventure unhandicapped by cloying memories of misdemeanours in camp. Yet they are not by any means a rabble. It would be strange if I did not consider them the most efficient company in the party. I do. So does Clarison consider his B Company. I am glad to say Clarison is of our party. His temper is so even; his influence over both officers and men so excellent. "Not by any means a rabble," he will tell

you. "The march from camp to the station was the first route march they had ever been on. Ranks were not broken; not even by a horde of niggers who had gathered on the roadside to sing and play for and show deformed limbs to the newly-rich coolies." You see the men had just received their separation bonuses, and possessed on an average $2.50 each. A fortune. They could well afford to fling coppers to their less fortunate countrymen. Imagine their generous gestures, their laughter with gleams of teeth and tossing heads. They had not expected to get away so soon. Only a week in camp. Brothers who took the plunge before them had told of their long detention in camp. A month, six weeks, and over the New Year too, a season when they most liked to gather round the family hearth and festivate.

There they were, a column of 500 men swinging down the road to Tsangkou with the nonchalance and ease of seasoned troops. No more like a gang of labourers than a Highland regiment. It was a delight to see them leap into the goods trucks which were to convey the battalion to Tsingtau — the

EMBARKATION DAY AT TSINGTAU

first brief stage in the long and often broken journey to France. Some of them had never seen the sea before. A mile or so of jolting and a great blue sheet of water, smooth and iridescent as the pupil of an eye, lay stretched before them. Possibly the events of the morning had been too numerous and pressing to leave the mind free to wonder and to meditate much more, but the miracle of this infinite blue thing must certainly have brought home to them, as nothing perhaps had ever done, the inexhaustibleness of the earth. Likewise, though in a lower key, the sight of the ship after which they had so often and so fondly inquired did surely astonish them. To many, without doubt, it was not a ship at all, but a part of the dock (in which our Blue Funnel boat lay) set apart and superior; enterable by three gangways preliminary to embarking on the vessel of their imagination; a colossal sampan, we may picture it, capable of sailing them to the seat of their labours in Whiteman's Land. No wonder, then, that more attention was paid to purchasing sweetmeats and cakes and peanuts and fruit from the hawkers on the dock than to an examination, never so super-

ficial, of the pretty grey mass of steel that awaited her human cargo in Tsingtau Bay.

Company by company, the coolies embarked. It was all done in most orderly fashion. Hardly ever a man out of place in the apparently endless files streaming into the capacious boat up three gangways. On the wharf were piled thousands of well-stuffed kit-bags. Each coolie took one as he moved towards the gangway. Its rich practical contents he was not to explore until he lay securely in his particular bunk, fore, aft, or amidships, as luck placed him, with a strict enough injunction not to stir therefrom until he was told to do so by his commanding officer. To most of them it was a house, part of the quay, as I have already said, in which the quarters were cleaner and roomier and better lighted and heated than in camp. There he stayed, bewildered but comfortable, curiously examining the contents of his kit-bag, while others of his kind were embarking and being berthed in all parts of the ship.

By dusk they were mostly aboard and had already had their first meal; the lance-corporals (or third-class gangers, as we are told to call them now) falling in and marching

through the front and starboard galleys, drawing rations for their men, quite as good, if not better than they had been given in camp. Abundant baskets of rice and tins of boiled cabbage were indeed devourable after the long cold wait on the quay previous to embarkation. When darkness fell, making the decks places of odd dangers with the unexpected pipings and winches and scuppers common to a cargo boat, there were few coolies abroad. With full bellies and a sense of security, they lay in their bunks, hundreds of them in a hold. Confusion of mind as well as physical fatigue drove them to sleep. So many extraordinary things had happened during the day. It was indeed a climax to the sequence of upsetting novelties in camp. I may hazard not one of them took thought for the morrow. To-day was big enough with events. A few of an adventurous turn stole on deck after dark and bruised their shins against ungiving steel.

II

DISCHARGED duties of orderly officer from 11 p.m. of the 25th to 1 p.m. this morning, the 26th. Two hours during which the wind steadily increased in violence. When I turned in, a typhoon was shrieking aloft, with sleet lashing the deck. Now and again a ghostly figure would appear in the hatchway, hesitate before the spectacle of the typhoon, become hunched and glide to a retreat on the other side of the deck. For these Shantung farmers there were many strange moments during this first night on board.

All day we lay on the wharf, the whole ship now coated with ice. Many a coolie slipped and fell, laughing and muttering words of mockery to themselves, as is their childish way. Official appointments were made to-day, special sanitary and police squads being told off to keep order and cleanliness on board. The police were given uniforms and formidable sticks which, they were told, were for the purpose of frightening, not of injuring,

their fellows. Our police are proud and dignified: even they have been known to give "beans" to some undesirable members of the Cantonese crew with, of course, disastrous results. The Cantonese and Northerners are at loggerheads. It seems to be a racial rather than a political antipathy; for our peaceable Shantung men know next to nothing of politics, and have but a vague conception of the whereabouts and importance of Peking. Their village is also their capital. And a few fertile acres of their province is the world. Now, to be sure, they are learning otherwise. They are coming up against Cantonese in the flesh, and as the Shantung men are immeasurably superior physically they manage to more than hold their own.

The matter of policing the ship is easy to arrange. Our 1st and 2nd class gangers (old style: sergeants and corporals) officiate. Used to authority for some days, they find no difficulty in now exercising it to a greater degree. Then, again, the clothes make the man. And the lust of power is strong in every coolie.

With the sanitary squad it is not such

plain sailing. Not only doth dirt corrupt the average Shantung man's house, but it is never removed. They carry their lax habits with them into camp, where the sweeping up is done for them. They do not learn any better until they get on board ship, where they have to do their own cleansing. A section of 15 men is detailed daily to restore the sleeping quarters to a livable condition. If the officer is not particularly careful in his inspection, he will overlook the fact that the "restoration" is quite superficial, orange peel and papers and peanut shells, leek stalks and other malodorous things being swept into a corner and nudged under a board. Again, if he spy after inspection he will probably observe his sanitary squad shelling peanuts on the floor that they have just cleaned. Again, the decks and scuppers in the vicinity of the men's quarters are apt to suffer indignities. It is enough to break the heart of the British seaman: a passionate lover of clean, smooth wood and polished steel. By dint of dealing out severe punishment to offenders, my company, at any rate, will learn to be sanitary. I have ordered my police to arrest any man who thinkingly or unthinkingly

litters the floor of the hold. The culprit will be confined thereto and have a refuse barrel strapped on his back. Above any quality of man I know, a coolie hates to be ridiculed. By wretchedness and ridicule they will come to be clean. If cleanliness is next to godliness, my coolies during the past 24 hours have been on the highroad to Paradise.

Towards dawn of the twenty-seventh, the wind weakened. At 6 a.m. the sun broke through the dark ragged tail of the typhoon, and the town of Tsingtau, with its clean-cut, Rhenish buildings, became visible from deck. The coolies crowded through the hatchways and lined the scuppers, leaning on the deck rail, wondering if after all they were on the ship, if they were really going to start their long-delayed voyage to France. For a whistle had blown, a whistle which made their ears sing. A few minutes later and, to be sure, they were moving away from the dock; as though a portion of the dock had become detached and was drifting out to sea; as though (and this impression was even stronger) the shore were receding from them. And it went on receding until nothing was left but a torn ribbon of hills, snow-clad,

beautiful enough. The last, indeed, that they were to see of China for many a moon; the last, probably, that some were ever to see.

The gale of the preceding 36 hours had left a considerable swell in the China Sea. We were hardly out of the harbour before we began to feel it. It sent the coolies sneaking to their bunks. It caught some of them midway between deck and hatchway. It terrified some so that they fell on their knees before me and clasped their hands and bowed them up and down, as they supplicate before their gods. Had they been children they would have cried. Being childish men, they prayed for a remedy. I cured a few of the youngsters (in my company there are boys of 14 to 18) by laughing at them. The old 'uns, who took the matter dead seriously, I sent to their respective holds. The decks being quickly clear of men, I went down into one of the bunk-holds amidships, where an odd 150 of my company are quartered. I could hear their groans before I got down to them. Like a house of mild torture. The majority had collapsed. A few, their strength suddenly gone, lay on the boarded floor, unable to climb into their bunks. It

was a spectacle of weakness. A handful—old sea-dogs or those fortunate ones who are not affected at sea—were assisting their brothers. They showed the sort of spirit which makes one positively love the Chinese—the Chinese of Shantung at any rate. They are wonderfully good to one another in adversity. They have warm hearts and willing hands. There was something so eternally and touchingly human about this business that whatever vestige remained in me of the conventional conception of the coolie quite disappeared. I could and can no longer associate (primarily) with the coolie the faintest idea of frigidity, of yellow skin stretched over puny bones. The red blood runs strong within them. They are the backbone of China, whose body one day shall be again politically and spiritually great.

The twenty-eighth was an uneventful day at sea. A score or two of coolies, standing on newly-begotten sea-legs, roamed about the boat with a spirit of curiosity. They peered into the engine-room as an excursionist might peer into the mouth of an active volcano. They hearkened to the clang and roar of the reciprocating engines and shook their

heads at the mystery of it all. They stood in the fo'c'sle-head and watched for hours the deliberate parting of the waters. They fondly examined the winches and, like boys at the mechanical age, unscrewed any nut that would turn, not infrequently with resultant escape of steam and a curse from the Cantonese crew. They loitered in the galleys, befriended the cooks, and watched the rice bubbling and steaming in half a dozen enormous cauldrons. In the holds they climbed up into the topmost bunks and fondled the steel plates and rivets of the decks. A lifebelt being provided for each man and to be found in his bunk, he must needs put it on and amuse himself. Defying their own police, they ventured into forbidden places, the boat deck for instance, where the boatswain caught them and lashed at them with a davit rope. Even they set foot on the ladder leading up to the captain's bridge and grinned at the officer on duty. Do what they would, it was mischievously done, done out of unrestrainable curiosity; never with thought of giving the least offence. One could no more punish them for it than one could prohibit the springtime lark of a schoolboy. The officers

of the ship might openly scowl at them for some minor breach of ship's discipline, but behind their backs, in the compact seclusion of our little saloon, they would laugh at the infant ways of the coolies and say what jolly good fellows they were.

Their simple, sunny natures make them easy to handle. A laugh is cheaply purchased. One has only to stand in the fo'c'sle-head, lean on the deck railing, let a few coolies gather around one, heave one's arm broadly indicating the China Sea, say "*kao pu kao*" (good-not good?), and shouts of laughter and assenting cries of *kao kao* will greet one graciously enough. Then, perhaps if one lingers, "taking in" the scene in order to satisfy a quickening sense of beauty, one will presently find a coolie by one's side, imitating one's own meditative pose, looking out oversea in the same direction and glancing at one surreptitiously now and again to see if one is still looking. A little while, and perhaps the coolie will edge a bit closer and whisper a few words in a tone of great confidence, whether of complaint or faith or interrogation one knows not through ignorance (how often deplored!) of their language.

III

We dropped anchor in the outer bay of Nagasaki a little after midnight of the twenty-eighth. For one coolie who noticed (full moon as it was) the beauty of the most fairylike harbour on earth, perhaps four thousand commented on the fact that the engines had stopped, that there were lights flickering and reflected all around the ship, and that those jagged-edged bulks, darker than the night, lying to starboard and to port, were land. Land! The question was: What land? Many argued the point until dawn (when the fishing sampans were gliding out to sea with the tide), without coming to a conclusion. At one hour of the morning the decision was that the land was none other than England, possibly France. But the wiser laughed this to scorn, saying that the voyage was a long one, and took more than a moon. It was not until daylight came and we were buoyed in the inner harbour, the coaling barges clinging to us like so

many leeches, that the coolies knew we were in Japan. Little men and women in indigo black and blue kimonos squatted beneath expansive cream sails on glinting coal, shouting one to another and gesturing as the rudder-men guided the barges against our hull. No time was lost in emplacing ladders, and the work of coaling proceeded to the great amusement of the coolies. They took up positions fore and aft and watched the little women pass on and up the ladder basket after basket of coal—4000 tons odd of the same—loaded in less than twelve hours. It was strenuous, high-pressure work. It was pleasant—nay, something finer than that, luxurious perhaps—to sit on the boat deck with back propped against an emergency-raft, smoking a cigarette or nibbling at a leek, while little men and women sweated away—was it not for their sakes? Why, they had almost forgotten how to do a spell of work. They had not had a spade or a rake or a hoe or barrow handles in their hands for a moon or two. There was a certain amount of labour to do on board: cleaning and patrolling, but that only fell on unlucky heads. It was not general. Life was

not a bad thing. In a vain mood, they wished their poor dear relations at home could see them lazing away existence. To some came the thought, like a distant peal of thunder, that all this travelling was to get somewhere just in order to work; but simultaneously on this parched conception fell a fine rain of ideas springing from the hope that with work in Whiteman's Land would come riches and honour.

I went ashore after tiffin. Members of my company foregathered at the gangway and, after their manner, gave me a hearty send-off, anxiously inquiring what time I would return, if, indeed, I was not going to desert them. I might have been the prolific father of them for all their solicitude. I observe that the farther they get from friends and country the tighter they cling to their Commander. Like a child crossing a number of streets, each more crowded than the other, their grip on the arm tightens and tightens until it becomes the pressure of utter reliance.

We left Nagasaki at 6 a.m., the lights of the town, terraced among the hills, still burning and now glinting through the faint

blue mist of the morning. There was not an inch to spare on the forecastle deck for the crowd of coolies. Few words passed between them. They leant against one another for warmth and silently watched our departure, watched the silhouetting of the cedared hills against the yet invisible sun, watched the sea-gulls wheeling expectantly over us. The intense beauty of the morning quieted and charmed them unawares. And the scent in the air, of camellia and sandal-wood, perhaps, made them breathe deep and feel satisfied with life, they knew not why. Never a coolie knew the cause of his contentment: beauty and the magic of aroma charmed them in secret. They were cheery too. Plumb the depths of their simple smooth minds and maybe they would tell you why. One stage of the journey was complete. They had arrived at and left a foreign port. It mattered not where the port was or who the people thereof. They were getting on with the voyage.

If this idea was present with the coolies, it was present a thousand times more vividly with the officers. And it is high time I said something of the latter. Of

those that I have casually mentioned in this diary only Clarison, Hackenschmidt and Branch are aboard. The latter, who is a linguist, has been in great demand, acting interpreter-in-chief, busy from dawn to dusk explaining to the sanitary squad their duties, ditto to the police. I envy him his eloquence, particularly when it comes to regulating sanitation. The power of example may be greater than that of precept. But it is not so clean and nice. An officer ignorant of the lingo is thrown back on physical illustration: that is, he must go down on his hands and knees before his gangers, pick up orange peel and peanut shells, and mop up that which cannot be picked up, in order to illustrate how to keep clean the floor of the 'tween decks. Having recourse to the official interpreters is useless. Useless and extremely annoying. Not only do these young men delight in misunderstanding, but in misinterpreting that which at least they but half understand. And apparently they think that once a battalion is embarked, all work ceases, the entire day and night being devoted to sleeping off an imaginary sea-sickness. Yes, in interpretation, Branch has found his

level, and his cocksureness aids rather than hinders him in this capacity. He has, however, talked too much. The aspirates of the Northern dialect have disastrously loosened his front teeth. The ship's doctor is going to extract one to-morrow. To-day he is laid up with toothache. It is well that the sanitary squad is sufficiently instructed and practised in its duties to carry on.

As for Hackenschmidt, this quaint little non-pugilistic Scot is our quartermaster.

"Aye," he will tell you, "and it is no sinecure's job."

Apart from looking after the officers' baggage, which is multitudinous, the quartermaster's time is mostly spent selling peanuts, cigarettes, and sugar to the coolies at an unconscionable profit. He has opened a canteen in the port galley, and to-morrow opens a branch establishment in the starboard. The file of coolies waiting to purchase from his canteen sometimes extends to half the length of the boat, quite blocking up the galleys, to the disgust of the ship's cooks, carpenters and engineers. The chief carpenter, it may be noted, has had to make him half a dozen wooden coffers in order to

contain all the coppers he has taken: an impressive mass of metal which he plans selling to the Minister of Munitions at considerably more than face value. Hack's obsessing aim in life is to get rid of his stores.

"Oh, crumbs," he says, "they're a blessed nuisance. I'll never be quartermaster again."

Weak on figures, he faints before calculating the profit on a lakh of Rooster's or Pride of China's.

As for Clarison, I regret to have to record that that gallant gentleman will be seen no more for the rest of the voyage across the Pacific. He "went under" with scarlet fever a few leagues outside Nagasaki harbour. He now lies, equable minded as ever, in the isolation hospital amidships, and there he will stay in unrelieved loneliness until we drop anchor in some Canadian port. A poor, most undeserved start in the great adventure for so gentle a man. His coolies inquire fondly after him. He is grieved not to be among them; to manage and care for them at this above all times. Two officers, a languid sunny Scot and a lanky hollow-eyed graduate of Virginia University, who shared a cabin with him, are also temporarily

interned. They read and sleep away the time in an isolated cabin labelled "Females' Hospital," suffering for the sins of the gentle Clarison. Albeit, they are not downhearted, being buoyed up with the conviction that prematurely they are being called upon to make the great sacrifice. They transmit reassuring messages to their gangers, who are concerned about their absence.

Even first-class gangers, who are men of intelligence, believe in the infallibility of company commanders. They regard them as gods who need not sleep and know not sea-sickness. An officer off colour is an anomaly. Thus the continued absence of Clarison is explained away by the theory that either he has an inordinate amount of clerical work to do indoors or else he is spending the days and nights in prayer and fasting in order to humour Providence into maintaining a calm sea. Company commanders are well aware of this theory, and do all in their power to support it. In calm weather it is easy enough to give an impression of infallibility. With a heavy beam sea running, it is not. Sick and unsteady, the officer shambles along on his rounds of inspection,

lamely acknowledging the salutes of sentries who have the courage to look as ill as they really are. With his gorge rising, he descends to the 'tween decks, whose atmosphere is nigh unbearable in the best of weather. Partly to save his face should he lose it, he soundly rates some unhappy coolie who, collapsed at the foot of the stairs and bent double, is doing the thing which above all things he most dreads to do—in sight of his men. Thickly muttering a few syllables of broken Chinese, which his first and second-class gangers pretend to understand, he steadies himself and signals to the attendant sanitary squad, now reduced to a single horribly yellow member, and orders that the man be placed in his bunk. Accompanied by his sergeant he proceeds to inspect the tiers and tiers of bunks. It is a stumble rather than a march by. But that doesn't matter, for the occupants are feeling so sorry for themselves that they have neither eye nor inclination to criticize the steadiness of his gait. The sight of so many of his men lying under the weather gives him stimulus for the moment. His condition improves enough to allow him to act the good Samaritan

or (if you like) the persuasive nurse. He bids his children buck up and go on deck and drink in the fresh ozone-sodden air. One or two six-foot-three babyish Shantung giants he gently pats on the head, intending to inspire comfort and courage. The giants turn over on their stomachs and groan abominably. Suddenly he has a fit of giddiness and exits hurriedly deckwards; faint but fortitudinous, he gulps in the reviving breeze, happy at heart that he is still an infallible commanding officer.

IV

In the orderly room, which is on the port side not far from the canteen, are a few sacks of peanuts. They are kept there in reserve should there be an unexpected run on this commodity, the hold, where the bulk of the stores are kept, only being open at a certain hour of the morning. The coolies know of this peanut reserve. A knobby, shapeless sack, say they, can contain but one thing—peanuts.

It is midnight and dark and gusty on deck. A light to port flashes unsteadily on the horizon. It is all the O.K. party will see of Yokohama. It is the last land light they will see for many a night. The Pacific is ahead; huge belts of grey skies and days of steady wind. Clearing the coast of Japan, we alter our course, turning northward to track the Great North Circle across to Vancouver.

From the hold hatch emerges a coolie. He is hatless, but has wrapped around his shoulders his maroon waterproof. The

orderly officer for the night would not make a mental note of this quite usual figure. But follow this unit of F Company. He shuffles and glides along the galley, his head tucked down into his shoulder to shut out the cold from his body. As by arrangement with himself, he stops before the orderly room and looks in through the half-opened door. The native sentry within is fast asleep; he is lying on the floor with a strip of cocoa-nut matting under him and his mouth wide open. Unit of F Company is hungry; not that he went to bed hungry but that he had woke up so. Shells of peanuts fairly littered the floor of the 'tween decks. Peanuts appealed to him irresistibly. He thought of neither justification nor result, but glided straight to his task of stealing.

It was only a handful after all; and there was already a slit as large as his fist in one of the sacks. Why the native sentry, who inopportunely stirred from his sleep, wanted to make such a row over a few nuts which he could buy for two coppers any day in the canteen, Heaven only knew. It was a small thing. If he had attempted to get away with a whole sack, then he could have under-

stood his brother dragging him before the foreign officer on duty. But—and this you'll hardly believe—the matter was magnified to such a degree that it became public; public disgrace being meted out to him by court martial. For six hours unit of F Company stood handcuffed to a winch. About his neck was hung a notice which detailed his crime, and warned his fellows against a similar breach of discipline. For six hours he stood, the image of shame, while his brothers loitered about him reading with mingled fear and amusement the brief statement of the crime.

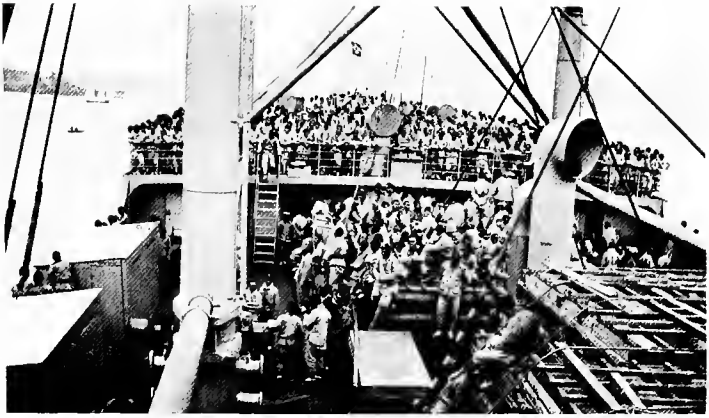
V

I WANT to introduce into this diary-narrative —because it would not be complete without— Julius East or Jule as we call him. Jule is in command of C Company. He threw up a good banking job in China to go home with the coolies. No sooner arrived in camp than he was shipped away with us—who had waited close upon two moons for our movement orders. Neither freak nor favouritism—simply good luck. And we did not envy him a jot. Indeed, we were glad to have him with us. We placed him against the background of a long voyage, and found him not wanting.

"I hope Jule goes with us," Clarison said to me the day before we left camp. "He's an amusing bird."

That's really as good a definition as one can give of Julius East. Saturate with youth and then dry in a literary air, and the rest of the portrait must rely upon his chronicled acts.

The second day out in the Pacific it came to Jule that it would be interesting to know what was passing in the minds of his coolies. He approached the matter in a pure spirit of learning; he did not intend to write a book; should he be asked about the thing in family or club circle, at home or in the East, he wanted to be able to answer readily and with originality. So, picking out the most intelligent of the interpreters, he descended to the 'tween decks and closeted himself with his two sergeants. After two hours' circumlocutory cross-examination this was what he found out. The names of the sergeants were Tang Chi Chang and Sen Shin Lin. They were aged 27 and 26 respectively. The former was for three years a school teacher in Hanking. He had a wife who was also a school teacher. Together they earned (Mexican) $55 a month. Chang was a Christian and a graduate of Weishin University. In the Autumn Festival holidays he had gone home (near Tsingtau) where he heard of the C.L.C. The idea of going abroad fastened on his mind. The descent from a schoolmaster to a labourer was steep. He did not mind the degradation so long as he gained experience. He modestly



A PORT OF CALL ON THE INTERMINABLE JOURNEY

INTOXICATED BY THE MORNING THEY SWUNG ALONG THE CANADIAN ROAD

suggested that his superior intellectual training would sooner or later place him above his fellows. He entered camp as a coolie; he was now a sergeant. He would go to France as a sergeant. Who knew with what honours might he be covered when the time came to go home? He knew that the world was round; also that there was a war in Europe. He had not thought about the ship beyond that it was wonderful. Neither reflection nor anticipation was a rule of his life. And such questions as concerned them belonged to a category of literature on which he did not feel qualified to speak.

Sen Shin Lin, who perspired freely in the effort to express himself, his coal-black eyes glancing timidly from the interpreter to Jule, said that for the last six years he had served in the Chinese Army, having gone with the Governor of Chili on the expedition to Yunnan—wherefore, it is impossible to say, as civil wars in China are nearly as frequent as divorce cases in America, though not half so interesting to the public at large. He lived his life in the Army, but hearing of the C.L.C. from a friend, thought it a better thing, deserting his country's service without

a second thought. He had no forward or backward vision, living contentedly for the day. Only he wanted to be assured of one thing—that he was not being snaffled for the British Army. On which point Jule satisfied him by saying that he hadn't the beans to become a Tommy in a hundred years. As a matter of fact, Jule greatly admired Lin's energy and physique ; but it was just his way of reassuring.

Jule, not satisfied with what he had got out of his two sergeants, chose at random one out of the ranks. In came a six-foot-two, magnificently built, open-mouthed hayseed, one Lun Zun Chong, who hailed from the province of Chili. Jule asked many straight questions, but never a satisfactory answer did he receive. The salient fact he gathered was that Chong was not a farmer by avocation notwithstanding that he lived on a farm and by a farm. "In other words," Jule said to himself, "a slacker, or, to be more polite, a sycophant." Lun was vague as to how he got into the C.L.C. "Through a friend," said the interpreter. He had accepted the whole thing passively, just as a man accepts a cold and blows his nose as a matter of course. One

inkling of thought he did manifest—a thought concerning his parents. He understood that because he was going away his relatives would receive money. The conception of separation allowance was far too complex for him to master. His age and stature made him the money-earning unit of the family; although he had never considered himself as such.

Now, the moral to be drawn from Jule's interview with three members of his company is that nothing passes in the mind of a coolie, whether he be sergeant or plain coolie. Nothing, that is, of a philosophic nature. As I concluded earlier in this narrative, there are certain moments when he is surprised by a vision of home; certain moments when this or that stage of this long journey is hung for him as a picture in the uncrowded academy of his mind, but he looks at it without amazement just as he looked on the more vivid reality. He is absorbing, learning, being changed all the time, but he hastens not one of these processes by conscious assimilation. Whilst experiences are ceaselessly pressing upon him, his attitude towards existence is

the attitude of a domesticated animal. And a very fine one too.

Jule was disappointed over the result of his research work. He expected whimsical points of view, quaint definitions, intellectual oddities. In some shape they were there; he still clung to the belief they were get-at-able.

"But not through an interpreter," he said. "A Frenchman, ignorant of our language, might as well attempt Wordsworth's trick with the English peasant."

Jule looked glum in mess to-night. He told Branch he had decided to learn Chinese.

VI

Our O.C., who is a portly and omnipresent personage, inspecting, reviewing, criticizing, compromising, and encouraging all day long in holds, 'tween decks, galleys, forecastle and wherenot, has a peculiar way with coolies. A way, undoubtedly, successful. I suppose that is why he is O.C. Of course he speaks better Chinese than the coolies themselves. But that is not the quality of his "way." Branch also is a classic speaker; but Branch's manner is brittle. The O.C.'s is elastic. It gives at the right moment. It saves him from wielding the iron fist—a method which in principle and practice is as repugnant to the coolies as it is to the Allies.

For instance, Hurley, an Irishman, commanding H Company and Superintendent of Police, is a thorough advocate of physical persuasion. He believes in blaming the wrong man; and hitting him. Metaphorically speaking, he cracks peanuts with a steam hammer. He deals in punishments as

Moses dealt in mercies. Granted that expectoration is a sin against a sanitary condition of things, Hurley will magnify it into one of the Deadly Seven. With the Adjutant's permission he has sent men to prison (an electric-lit monkey-house hut situate in the fo'c'sle 'tween decks) for less than a spit. He has surprised gambling parties (a popular social pastime in the holds), confiscated the coppers in use and detailed the guilty gamblers to latrine fatigue—the severest allowable form of degradation.

The O.C., whilst recognizing the advantages of being thus severe, has a discipline system of his own. Its secret is humour. He makes a coolie laugh at himself, which for the coolie is a form of self-chastisement. And most efficacious. For example, he will point out that it is just as easy to expectorate into the sea as on the deck. A spittle is nothing once in the sea; whereas on deck it may prove the undignified fall of a company commander; and has, in any case, to be removed by the expectorant. Whereupon the coolie will laugh, go down on his knees and wipe up the spittle—probably with a neck-towel. Equally entertaining instances

could be multiplied. But just to show how a discipline system, humane or otherwise, may be nonplussed, I will give an experience of Jule's.

It is ten o'clock one roughish morning in mid-Pacific. Foregathered in the orderly room are the O.C., the Adjutant, the orderly officer for the day, and a liverish interpreter. They are awaiting the arrival of the chief mate, in whose company the above distinguished gentlemen make a daily tour of inspection. This is a function carried out with all the solemnity befitting its importance. Its object is to inspect the labours of a seasick sanitary squad and to see that the stringers and uprights supporting coolies' bunks have not unduly warped during the night. In a blow the other night these wooden structures bulged and swayed with what might have been fatal results had not a corporal who found himself ignominiously lying on top of a coolie, having fallen through from the bunk above, reported the matter to his company commander. The latter, a man of action and not being sure of the rites of burial-at-sea, descended to the hold and, after a hasty inspection, condemned as dangerous no less

than two hundred bunks, and made the occupants sleep on the floor. Not that the floor was a whit less comfortable, but that, being the floor of a lower hold, it exposed the tenants to an erratic overhead fire (through a lattice ceiling) of peanut shells, orange peel, rice in various stages of cooking, etc.

But to return to the daily inspection. The party, now complete, moves off, headed by the O.C., who lights a large cheroot as much from habit (whenever a C.L.C. O.C. officiates outside France he always smokes) as to show 4200 coolies that whereas smoking is strictly prohibited in the holds and 'tween decks the O.C. is a privileged person. It may be secretly divulged that as many of the company commanders who can, do smoke. Since we left Nagasaki smoking has not been popular. In any case, company commanders do not smoke while the O.C. is on tour of inspection, though they have been known to hold the hot end of a cheroot under the palm of the hand. The whiff of the O.C.'s cheroot is well known in Hold A, whither the party has descended, and there is significant movement in a knot of seasick coolies, some

escaping up the hatch, some wrapping their heads in their blankets, until the O.C. and the cloud he obscures himself in, are well past. In the comparative darkness of Hold B, which is under Hold A, stands Jule earnestly exhorting his sanitary squad to make cleanliness more clean and then to sweep up again.

"Not so dusty," said the O.C. as he flashed an electric torch on a floor which might have been mistaken for the top of a billiard-table just before the felt is laid on.

Jule didn't think so either; and he was particularly proud of the absence of spitting, which he had practically abolished through rigorous discipline. Around stand a score of coolies, awed by the almost ambassadorial dignity of the visitors. The sanitary squad lean on their brooms; the police tuck their truncheons under the arm. Gangers of all classes stand at attention. It is an impressive moment. The O.C. now turns to the chief mate and asks his opinion on the matter. That able and charming seaman, undesirous of venturing an opinion lightly in such weighty circumstances, hesitates, clears his throat, and says:

"Ay, not so dusty." Upon which, as if

to prove to all present that despite this public utterance he is still quite at his ease, clears his throat raucously and—whether or not in a lapse of thought it is impossible to say—expectorates on Jule's incomparable floor.

Coolies, gangers, police, sanitary squad look fearfully from the expectorant to Jule. Many tremble for the fate of the chief mate at the hands of their company commander. But, though Jule glares, nothing happens. So they begin to see the joke and laugh, just as hayseeds of all countries do, venting loud open-air guffaws. He cannot make himself heard to call them to attention. The work of a week is gone to the dickens.

VII

JOE, the ship's carpenter, was busy one morning erecting and strengthening bunks that had fallen in the night. Holds I and J had suffered most. The matter was brought to the attention of the chief mate by Mammon, an American, one of our conducting officers. It may be explained that a conducting officer is a man—usually an American—who does not intend to stay with us in France. His connection with the C.L.C. ceases when he lands his company there. He is looked upon as a passing show. By some as an intruder. He wields a little brief authority—and disappears. He has been likened to a bus-driver. His interest in the coolies ceasing with the end of the journey, it is difficult, not to say impossible, for him to cultivate the paternity attitude which distinguishes the genuine C.L.C. officer. He may be an excellent officer, as Mammon is; but he is not a father. Nor, conscientious as he may be, do the coolies become children

to him. They are so many passengers who must be conveyed safely from a point in the Eastern Hemisphere to a point in the Western. As a rule he does not study their language or their ways. What is passing in their minds is nothing to him. But for all that he is a careful driver, a meticulous disciplinarian.

Imagine, therefore, Mammon making a verbal report to the chief mate.

"It's a wonder my company weren't killed in their sleep last night. Can't you fix these berths so the rolling don't make no difference?"

The chief mate nods and says he'll see what can be done. Two whistles bring the quartermaster; and the quartermaster, duly instructed, brings Joe. Joe, duly instructed, descends to Holds I and J. *En route* he ventures to Mammon:

"I reckon an official report ought to be made about this thing, I could have made a better job of it myself."

Joe is, of course, ship's carpenter and not a bed builder for the C.L.C. Arrived in Hold I Joe is the centre of lively attention. He carries a saw under one arm, a plumber under the other, and a couple of planks in

each hand. He wears the customary blue-black overalls and shaggy mud-guard moustache. Behind him follows his assistant, a miserable knock-kneed Cantonese. The coolies have never before seen anyone like Joe. They cannot place him. He is too shabby and workaday-looking to be a company commander; too skilful with his saw (as they soon see) to be a foreigner. So they ingeniously conclude he is a Chinaman in disguise. The fact that his lingo does not seem to be immediately intelligible to Mammon, their C.O., confirms them in this opinion. Joe is saying, with a wink:

"First thing a mechanician does is to light 'is pipe."

This operation is admiringly followed by gangers of all classes. The circle widens around Joe as his pipe gets under way. A lance-corporal, overcome by direct fire, dives for the deck. Next, the carpenter, addressing his assistant as Flanagan, instructs the latter to climb up into the top tier of bunks and investigate the trouble.

"Walkee too much," presently cries Flanagan; which is pidgin-English for: "The supports have given considerably."

"'Ammer them back," Joe decides.

But the supports are bearing the weight of an odd thirty human bodies. (The vast majority of coolies are bed-ridden on board.) To which fact Flanagan discreetly draws attention. Joe concurs.

"Get the —— out of it," he shouts to two recumbent sections of I Company, ignoring or else being ignorant of the truism that large bodies of men are most easily handled in a polite and orderly manner—Shantung farmers not excepted. Or, as a third possibility, Joe's injunction may have been a subtle but poignant allusion to the non-intimacy of conducting officers with their companies. Whichever, Joe supports his order by brandishing his saw before the face of a slumbering coolie. Sections 12 and 13 of I Company, fearing for the life of a comrade, tumble pell-mell out of their bunks, trailing waterproofs, knapsacks, water-bottles, and dishevelled blankets behind them.

A parenthesis is necessary here to state that whenever and wherever coolies turn or are turned out, they do so in full marching order. This is one of the closest relations they bear to the men in the trenches. The

reason is not preparedness for action, but a precaution against exchange of equipment. That is, a coolie is never satisfied with one of everything that he should have. If he can appropriate an extra water-bottle he will, and he will manage successfully to conceal the spare one on his person when on parade. Two blankets are easily made to look like one; two caps, two waterproofs are easily worn. On the principle that two wrongs make a right, a coolie is no sooner stolen from than he himself steals. Coolies' equipment is in constant circulation. A single waterproof may keep thirty backs dry in as many rainy days. Against this the outfitting department in China have thoughtfully provided by making all equipments of a standard size.

To Joe the coolies are theoretically as the dust under his feet. But the fact that the "yellow 'eathens are 'elping out in France" somewhat redeems them in his sight, and he treats them with jovial respect.

"'E's a smart Alec," he says to Mammon as a coolie rests a board on the edge of a bunk for Joe to stand on and hammer at the support. And, between spurts of hammering,

the carpenter carries on a conversation with his admiring audience in a lingo, which, though quite unintelligible to Mammon, is exquisitely humorous to them.

No one who knows the coolie will deny him a sense of humour. It enables him to override with uncanny cheerfulness the petty annoyances of life. Even he sees fun in being cussed by Joe and glared at by Flanagan. Mammon stands by uninterested.

VIII

JULE paraded his lance-corporals for life-belt drill. The life-belts on board are not of the conventional rubber-tyre type, but canvas-covered slabs of cork. They have been employed as pillows by all ranks. The strings, which attach the belts to the body, being considered an unnecessary adjunct to a pillow, have been removed and used for various purposes — sock-suspenders and trouser-binders, the chief. The belts themselves have given considerable trouble. Not only is there great diversity of opinion in regard to how they should be worn, but many, owing to their stringlessness, are not wearable at all. An inspection of the same proved to Jule that the Chinese are capable of eating cork, the canvas having been slit and chunks nibbled out of more than one belt. It is possible they were taken for biscuits of a foreign and particularly filling kind.

The Chinese are inventive as well as adaptive. For example, novel use is made of

the boiling water which bubbles from the cylinder boxes of the winches. It is *drunk*, the admixture of lubricating oil, unavoidable when water is drawn from so ready a fount, being found to give the drink a piquant flavour. More naturally and, we should say, less harmfully, the scupper hydrants, which are used to scour the deck, are tapped and sea-water drawn to wash the face, tin plates and cups, and garments indiscriminately. It is noticed, however, and reported despairingly by the engineer members of the Cantonese crew that cocks, nuts, washers, taps, and other parts detachable from said hydrants mysteriously disappear. A search in the holds has more than once revealed the missing accessories fastidiously wrapped in paper and tucked away in the crowded corner of some coolie's kit-bag. It is speculative whether the Chinese antecede the Americans in their passion for memorial curios.

Other parts of the ship are put to ingenious use. Thus, the breakwater on the fo'c'sle deck serves successfully to camouflage gambling parties. Gambling on board (dicing, coin-tossing and an Asiatic card game akin to a mild form of poker) is strictly forbidden;

because gambling so often leads to physical argument, suppression of which would inordinately engage the attention of the orderly officer on duty.

The entrance to the officers' galley is employed as a radiator to revive heat in the bone-chilled coolie as well as serving to whet his appetite with whiffs of foreign 'chow' a-cooking.

Not an integral part of a ship but usually found on board, the tin basin (which a coolie finds in his kit-bag) is put to a multitude of uses, among which the most practical are: a receptacle to save the sanitary squad unnecessary work; a receptacle in which to wash the body and socks; a receptacle in which to carry away from the galley a quantity over and above his due portion of rice; a drum.

IX

THE secret of maintaining peace and satisfaction among some 4000 coolies on a long trans-Pacific voyage is to endow for them each day with interest. On rough days this necessity is annulled. To-day, being fine and fairly calm, it was deemed advisable to spring a surprise. This took the shape of a sale of musical instruments. A prodigious quantity of two-stringed fiddles, flutes, and mandolins were unearthed from the hold by the quartermaster and sold, at something just above cost, to a prodigious number of instrumentalists. It astounded Jule, in this connexion, that there were no less than thirty fiddlers in his company. Those skilful with the reed abounded in Branch's company. The mandolins did not meet with equal demand, not only because that instrument is comparatively rare in China, but because they went at double the price of a fiddle. The price of a fiddle was sixty coppers; the price of a flute was forty coppers. This is a

gigantic sum for any individual coolie to spend on an article which does not come under the head of canteen. So it was found expedient, by more than one fair-minded officer, to exact from each and every coolie the sum of two coppers against the cost of the battalion's instruments. A description of these noise-provokers may be of interest.

The fiddle looks like an enormous clay pipe, with a very thin stem and a very fat bowl. The aperture of the latter is bridged and two strings are extended from the bridge to a cross-beam on the top of the stem. When played the instrument is held bowl downwards on the knee; and if feelingly played is capable of producing extreme melancholia and nostalgia in the coolie.

The flute is neither more nor less than a thin bamboo pole, about a yard long, with holes punched at regular intervals. Deft piping excites the coolie to dance or to the deep enjoyment of a "Pride of China" cigarette.

The mandolin is a hollow bread board, to which is attached a fantastically-shaped neck, from the top of which strings sag, like wires between telegraph poles, to the middle

of the board. As previously stated, this is not a popular instrument. It is enjoyed by the select—in secret, as a rule.

Soon after noon (when the sale began) to well past midnight the holds and 'tween decks vibrated with the tuning-up efforts of coolie musicians. It reminded Jule (who has been an exile in China for some years) of nothing so much as the chaos of sound produced by a symphony orchestra just previous to the execution of the first movement of, say, Beethoven's Ninth.

The formation of a picked band of instrumentalists is suggested in mess. If Tommies march to the beat of fife and drum, why not coolies to the shriek of fiddle and flute ?

X

MERIDIAN day is notable chiefly because it is not a day at all. It is an undatable spell of twenty-four hours which we live through in order that we may not be a day ahead of the Gregorian Calendar when we arrive in Canada. The Paymaster does not make allowances for this phenomenon of time. For once we have given our services free to the country.

It is worth chronicling here that ever since we began to go east and steal night marches on time, the mess-room clock has raced, gaining on our watches from nineteen to forty minutes a day. The officers have corrected their time-pieces at midday, mutely accepting this mystery. The matter has, however, caused no little astonishment among watch-owning coolies, who ask for an explanation. Needless to say, they do not get one, inasmuch as the Captain, who is the only man perfectly clear on the matter, does not speak Chinese.

It would be as well if this time-mystery could be solved once and for all, as it allows N.C.O.'s to parade their men for morning drill legitimately late.

XI

Our medico states that you can knock the stuffing but not the superstition out of a coolie. Before the days of Rockefeller-endowed medical colleges it was a common belief in China (still current apparently among Shantung farmers) that diseases were evil winds within the body. Let the wind escape and the patient was cured. Nothing could be easier.

So thought Li Pao Hsiang (coolie, A Company) as he sat in Bunk 45, Hold B, making pinpricks at equal distances in the forehead of his prostrate lance-corporal. He had made rather a mess of things, as our Blue Funnel freighter was, at the time, making a fuss over a heavy beam sea. A dip to port or starboard would cause Li Pao Hsiang to puncture his patient's face deeper than he intended. The result was a somewhat gruesome sight for our medico, who (excellent temperament!) was visiting rounds on behalf of an officer tem-

porarily incapacitated by the aforesaid heavy beam sea.

Unless a medico is keen on the still small hours of the night, keen on having the twenty-four hours artificially divided into five, seven, and twelve-hour watches, he does not discharge the shipboard duties of an orderly officer. Without keeping coolies in order he is sufficiently occupied keeping them in health. Four-fifths of his time is devoted to convincing seasick coolies that they are not in danger of death. Many are afflicted with imaginary maladies. For example, a great song is made over a swollen arm, as the result of scratching vaccination scabs. Observation is daily demanded on this score. Sick leave is requested for the same—but never given.

Occasionally our medico has a surgical job to perform. In a fit of absent-mindedness a coolie may elect to fall four stories of bunks and land more or less heavily on a steel-plate floor. Anyone but a coolie would, of course, be instantly killed. That man of "ardours and endurances" suffers nothing more than the fracture of some insignificant bone. But it may be noted (perhaps to his credit) that for the setting of this bone he will have to be

dragged to hospital. Not that he is a coward, but that maladies which really merit attention he would himself nurse in secret. He will cry like an infant over a cut. If he has received a compound fracture of some limb he will inform nobody and slink to the seclusion of his own bed.

As Li Pao Hsiang's patient had nothing more serious than a headache he was rousing the world over it, and when our medico enters on the scene you may picture half a company of coolies concerned in his cure. A Chinese loves publicity of a mild nature, and you may be sure Li was making the most of the occasion.

"Letting the evil winds escape," he said in reply to our medico's inquiry in regard to the dubious operation. "One must be very careful," the quack explained, "where the escape-holes are made. The wind is contained in certain pockets. One must not prick the brain."

Lucky for Li, our medico is possessed not only of a sense of humour, but of an excellent knowledge of the Chinese. Wherefore the quack went unpunished but not upbraided. And his patient was carried off and a dose of prosaic fruit salts administered to him.

XII

Our long Pacific voyage draws to a close. In two days we are due at a Canadian port. Already we prepare for disembarkation.

The arts of shaving and hair-cutting are being practised daily and continually in the holds. Each company chooses its own barbers, a class of men which abounds in the battalion. Given the necessary razors and clippers, a company proceeds to elect a score of barbers. On an average five are appointed to cut the hair and fifteen to shave. The appointments are carefully made, for not merely the good looks but the lives of the rank-and-file are entrusted to the chosen ones. Appointments of this kind are seldom if ever revoked. A coolie places his fate unreservedly in the hands of the elected barber. Even with the ship switchbacking up and down gigantic Pacific swells he doesn't fear to have his head and beard shaved. Chairs being unknown outside the officers' mess, operator and victim squat down facing one

another, the former holding the latter's head firmly between his knees as he scythes down the black stiff upright crop of two months' growth. The shave is very close, leaving the head bald and smooth as an ostrich's egg.

A quorum of officers agree that this process vastly improves the looks of a coolie, notwithstanding that some, like Jule, are of the opinion that a coolie, in his shaven state, distressingly resembles a Hun. The quartermaster, who is genuinely attached to the Chinese as a people, waxed wroth over what he called "this odious comparison."

"Not the slightest resemblance," he cried. "Have you ever seen a Chinese with anything like a square head? Square-headedness is the mark of the beast, not a bald pate!"

Socks and other washable garments are being feverishly scoured. Whatever its forerunners have done, the O.K. party is determined to present a clean, neat, soldier-like appearance to Canada. Under British officership, the Chinese are marching, clean and straight and strong, to their job of work in France.

To the individual labourer it is, of course, something more than active (though non-

combative) participation in the war. It is a going forth into the world, a pilgrimage to most distant places. It is travel through and sojourn in the lands of the White Man.

PART III

MARCH, APRIL AND MAY

I

CANADA was on the lips of many coolies before we landed. It meant to them (so their officers had told them) the land of the White Man, a land which flowed with milk and honey, where no poverty was, no disobedience, and therefore no punishment; which few of them had seen and which they were highly privileged in seeing. Certainly from the decks, whither the unaccustomed calmness had attracted them, it appeared a land of promise. Snow-capped mountains on one side of a strait whose waters glistened in the morning sun, waters dotted with derelict logs on which sea-gulls perched foolishly at attention; on the other, richly-wooded hills which trailed their blue and emerald skirts in the sea. Hills of the Western world. Here and there a mist, individual, rising probably from some frog-haunted marsh. Those who had stuck doggedly in their dingy beds the voyage long,

came up on deck to be flooded in sunshine and to scent the strong perfume of the Douglas pine. It was new to them and acceptable. Acceptable, I say, because their natures did not allow them to go out and meet the thing at sight. Stolidly, faintly glowing with excitement, they awaited the evening. The chief thing was, it was not China. Some inquired if it were England; if they were at their journey's end. They did not know any better. How should they? Even if it had been explained, they would not have understood. Inter-continental distances were inconceivable. The earth in her immensity was ungraspable.

So, when these simple farmers, carpenters, brickmakers, dressers, weavers, brass-smiths, blacksmiths, bakers, bricklayers, ex-soldiers and stonemasons landed in Canada in the same good order wherewith they had embarked in their native land, they took thought not for the country they were in, but when they would get their next meal. If ever men marched on their stomachs, it was the rank and file of the C.L.C.

They were shortly to feel in novel circumstances. Hitherto rations had been cooked

PITCHING CAMP IN CANADA

THE PRIDE OF CLEAN TENT LINES

for them. Now they were to forage for themselves. They were in camp—a camp run on military lines; which necessitated, as soon as might be, the appointment of company cooks. This was a simple matter, for every coolie is a potential cook. But, as company officers were later to learn, not every cook makes a company cook. For example, a carpenter might know how to boil rice, but probably only an ex-soldier would know how to keep order in the kitchen. The latter function, in the eyes of a company commander, is more important than the former. This, by the way. The thing on arrival in camp was to make a start.

So, out of an odd four thousand volunteers, sixty were chosen. In four hectic hours, during which company commanders taught their men the art of stoking boiler-fires (the rice being boiled in huge caldrons), the first meal was ready. It was eaten under canvas, fifteen men being quartered in a tent. Men had only to stick their heads out of the tent to see the arbutus with its beautiful flesh-tinted bark, to see pine-clad hills, the Pacific blue as the very sky, the Rockies trailing their snowy ridges into the distance.

II

THIS was the beginning of ten weeks in Canada. One day was much like another. Nothing extraordinary ever happened. Life was simple and sunny. If they went out of camp, it was to march along wonderful new-world roads. If they had any work to do, it was to split wood and carry it to the kitchens. Their anxious breaking-in days were over. They saw little of their officers. To-morrow was always the day of departure and to-morrow always came and they were still in camp. They didn't worry. Indeed, why should they? Their lives were comfortably framed. A single night and they were used to sleep under canvas. Two days and they had learnt how to keep their camp lines clean. They had enough to eat. Daily a lorry thundered into camp and brought them rice; the ration boat daily made port from some Harbour of Plenty and brought them whole sides of beef and sacks of vegetables.

They cooked for themselves and were satisfied.

A few new people came into their lives. The colonel, for one. Of whom, as affecting them, more is written below. Also they came into touch with soldiers who unarmed stood at the entrances to camp or sat on the rocks in front of the kitchen and watched them go about their business. They didn't understand who these men were or what they were about. The white soldiers neither helped nor hindered them. They seemed to be as negative a part of camp as the boundary fences. They found they could joke with them without reproof; examine their uniforms; hold their hands and chatter; play ball with them. So that when the Canadian sentries wanted something done, they were simply laughed at or had pebbles playfully thrown at them. Altogether the white soldiers were tame jolly chaps. Obviously they were there not to be obeyed but for a jest.

Sometimes parties of foreigners would visit the camp lines and observe them in their tents. They liked to be a centre of interest. They liked to have their wristlets examined;

to see foreigners pointing at them as though they were remarkable ; to reveal the contents of their kit-bags for curious observation. On such occasions the musicians, tumblers and jugglers among them would be picked out and made to perform. To a tea-drinking audience they would scrape their fiddles and screech their native songs ; do cart-wheels and stand on their heads ; swallow stones and pierce their tongues with a meat skewer. The reward for which would be applause and a cigarette or two for each performer. It was better than drilling and quite as amusing as doing nothing at all.

After a week in camp a ripple of excitement was caused by the arrival of a battalion of brothers. It cheered them to see so many of their kind engaged in the same adventure. They were disappointed when the new battalion moved out of sight and camped on a neighbouring hill. They had hoped to get news of this and that village in Shantung. Nine weeks later, however, both battalions were to continue the Interminable Journey on the same transport. Wherefore, for identification purposes, our men called themselves West of the Mountain men, alluding

to the newly arrived as East of the Mountain men.

A friendly and fruitful rivalry sprang up between the two battalions. They vied with one another in keeping their camp lines clean. The police washed their khaki uniforms until they were white. The sergeants drilled their men after official parade. For all that they saw little of one another for, shortly after their arrival, an epidemic of mumps spread among East of the Mountain men and they were not allowed to come in contact with their rivals.

Shortly after this a disaster (it can be called nothing less) overtook "O.K." party. It was split in two. Transport facilities became available for five companies which were trained across the continent. The conducting officers and Branch went with this lot. Jule stayed behind and was appointed adjutant of the remnant of the party. Behold that enthusiastic officer bidding sorrowful adieu to his company. He was attached to his men; he even loved them. He loved them because they were like children in their simplicity; because they did their best nine times out of ten;

because they always met him with a smile. The tears came into his eyes as, one bright March morning, they trudged out of camp, with their packs on their backs, happy as schoolboys setting out on a holiday. They saluted him as they passed, some crying out a word of salutation ; others imitating the way he would give a command. And Jule stood wondering when he would see his Christian sergeant again and what would be his lot in France ; and for the moment he threw his mind forward and pictured the day when all these magnificent men would return to China and import a new spirit, which would quicken and strengthen them for the part they were to play in the re-building of the world after the war.

III

THEY knew him not as the Colonel but as the king. He was the most impressive person they had ever seen. He did not often come among them. The rarity of his presence made him the more impressive. When he came it was not on foot but mounted on a spirited horse. Up and down their camp lines he would canter, seated boldly upright in his saddle. A kingly figure. Or, returning from a cross-country ride, he would gallop across the parade ground, raising a cloud of dust, regally regardless of them. After all, of what account were they to be noticed? Even company commanders these days didn't have much to do with them. If they had a "strafe" it was with their sergeants and corporals. Did these influentials not satisfy them they would carry their case to the interpreter who would settle the matter for them with their commander. They imagined that if the latter found it impossible to decide upon the point, the

king would decide for them. But, above all, he would not be needlessly troubled. The affair, duly docketed, might well be pigeonholed for days, awaiting supreme settlement.

He was too royal to speak to them but right royally he acknowledged their salutes. And *such* a salute he gave. No company commander saluted so smartly. There was something gracious about him; he held aloof; yet there was something intimate in the way he smiled when saluting. He did not come near enough to be recognized with love. He had not journeyed and suffered (privation) with them as had their company commander. They knew nothing of him save that he looked jolly on horseback and fit to be the king he was. Yet they were endeared to him, some through respect and some through fear. Somehow they felt that he was responsible for their lives; that he would take care of them and see that the ration boat turned up regularly; that he would check their family allotments.

It interested them to know that there was some one greater in the world than a company commander. The O.C. "O.K." party

was in charge. That they knew by the whirlwind manner in which he occasionally descended upon camp and caused drastic changes. And, to be sure, he was now more deeply feared because he so seldom came among them. Notwithstanding, he appeared to be on quite intimate terms with the company commanders; almost "one of them." Whereas the Colonel rode into camp quite alone; sometimes, however, accompanied by his adjutant whom they took to be his equerry. And, if he stopped to talk with company commanders, the latter would stand rigidly at attention, just as they themselves had been taught to stand when on parade. Altogether he was somebody very splendid and exceptional.

As for the Colonel, he did not at first relish the idea of commanding a coolie camp. It didn't sound inviting. But in time he learnt—as he now taught others to do—to weave a new web of ideas around the word "coolie." Instead of recoiling from contact with them, he grew to like them and then to nurture a fondness for them. They were such jolly peaceable fellows. They responded with obedience to fair and square

treatment. They were as simple as children and as lovable in their artlessness. Like children they would go desperately far if one gave them rein enough. But one didn't. He ran his camp strictly. He gathered notions from company commanders in regard to "running the coolies" and added his own. Pretty soon he began to see that the common conception of a coolie was mythical. The coolie had no more treachery, no more beastliness, no more mental sterility in him than the peasant of Europe. In many ways he was a better fellow. His good temper and good humour were priceless. Besides, he could work like the devil if put to it.

Plunging a little deeper into the question the Colonel perceived that the Oriental was almost an ideal man to have in camp. Especially if he had to be confined to camp over a long period. Unlike the white soldier, he did not fret for the world. Cinemas, gaily-lit streets, shop windows, wine and women were nothing to him because they only came obliquely into his vision. He was content with his very simple life. He was content so long as he was decently fed.

It amused the Colonel to watch the coolies in their off-duty moments. How they sat on the rocks, still as statues, gazing out to sea; how they lay in their tents bowing pensively on their native fiddles; how others, of a more industrious spirit, pencilled out dragon and temple and fantastically bordered patterns on the ground; how others would sit under trees, like old women, patiently stitching up a torn tunic; how others would wander about idly, welcoming him with a smile or with an awkward salute as he passed by.

They showed him, too, that they could work. They pleased him in little ways, though to be sure, they never set out to please him. He saw that there was good stuff in them. His fondness for them grew out of not merely the way in which they kept their camp lines but their likeness to children. He liked to jump on his horse of a morning and canter by their ranks. A sea of bronzed faces would upturn and smile at him as he rode by. They would murmur to one another but, notwithstanding he knew nothing of Chinese, he was sure there was no malice in their murmur. If he spent the

day without this greeting he felt there was something missing.

He had no idea that he was a king to them, but he often saw in them a race of little kings.

IV

One April day Spring rushed into being. The wind of Winter died down. There was still a breath of coldness on the air, but it came (as it came the year round) from eternal snows not so distant. We found the way of our route-marches in the shadow of the leaves. The scent of the Douglas pine hung drowsy in the air. The arbutus spread her naked arms over the roadside. The bay and the open sea beyond were never so calm and so blue.

It was too inviting not to go out and march. It was too beautiful not to show the coolies. So off we went, soon after roll-call. They were as keen to go, these coolies, as their officers. They showed their delight by a flood-tide of smiles. They would have leapt, could they have done so and kept in step. As it was, they chattered merrily and were promptly called to order by their corporals.

Intoxicated by the morning they swung

along the Canadian road. They had never seen such foliage in their lives; never so many trees together; never such a clear sky and blue sea. Subconsciously they compared this distinct and colour-shot radiance with the monotone greys and browns of their native land. The light green of the maples and wild plum and cherry trees looked beautiful against the dark green of the firs and spruces. The road was bordered with wild sunflowers and bluebells. Wheat and oats, shooting their delicate blades through the dark earth, they mistook for rice. They could not understand how these rich clearings yielded as they did, for they never saw men and women working in the fields. Yet there must be people, they thought. And if there were people why had they left untouched these riches of the forest? There were trees in glorious abundance, but no one to cut them down. Altogether it seemed a neglected land. The few people they did see rushed past them in motor-cars; or walked up and down dale as though they had nothing to do.

Cows, with their udders full to overflowing, tore at the roadside grass. Now and

again a chicken would shelter her squeaking brood from the feet of so many men. Dogs barked at the approach of the grey masses.

It was all very queer and jolly. It was Canada. And that had to explain all.

About three miles from camp is a broad beach, shaped like a horse-shoe, whereon every incoming tide deposits a quantity of drift-wood; mostly great pine logs which, in tow towards some lumber-mill, break away and become derelict to be washed up on some unfrequented shore. This beach provided our fire-wood. Daily a company of coolies marched thither and brought back enough fuel for the day. That was one of their few jobs in camp. No provision for labour was made in Canada. Advantage was not taken of thousands of willing hands to improve the roads, to clear the land and to farm. The coolies could have done so much during this long wait for transportation. But the pros and cons of the question are by the way. Enough that labour was unthinkable that spring morning we marched to the beach.

The tide was well out. The company formed up on a broad expanse of greyish

golden sand. The sea took light from the sun and threw it back in starry blue. The warm day suggested a swim to the officer in command. He did not indulge the idea for himself but thought of the coolies. A plunge would do them good. So, through the interpreter, he called for volunteer swimmers. There was a moment's hesitation as they stood at grips with the idea and then the delight of it was too much for them. They laughed like children and fell to slipping off their suits. The youngsters were ready first, calling on dignified old farmers of fifty and sixty to hurry up. Nude as mermen they raced over the sand and entered the water with splash and cry. There was beauty in their shining bodies. The splendour of their physique was suddenly shown. Hundreds of figures now moved towards the sea. Some ran, some danced. It was speed and frolic that went with youth. Others, not so headstrong, sat down and clasped their knees, observing how their fellows took the water. A few elders, not overfond of action, sat apart on pine logs and enjoyed the scene.

It was a great day for them ; and it was a great day for us. We who had so often com-

pared the coolies to children now quite unmistakably saw that they were children. They had no foolish dignity of men. They lost themselves in the moment's joy. They lived for that sunlit hour. And, like children, they weren't afraid of giving themselves away ; they had no false reticence, no false notions of nudity. And, that spring morning, they seemed to inherit the earth.

V

WHEN a coolie has been in camp ten days and no rumour reaches him that he is likely soon to be bundled out and to begin a new stage of the Interminable Journey, he sees it is necessary to kill time. An addition or two to his kit-bag may occur to him. Therefore he steals—a pair of socks, a cap, a towel from his brother's equipment. It is easily done ; and no one is the wiser. His stealing has nothing to do with theft. He takes on the principle that if he doesn't take some one will take from him. Possibly he is found out and punished. That does not change his point of view. He is just unlucky. He is a unit of the defaulters' squad for a week. That is one way of killing time.

Another way, and a wiser one, is to set to work and make things for himself. Materials are to hand. In the wire fence that surrounds the camp he sees not the means of enclosure, but the material for making a buckle for his grey cloth belt. Three feet of

wire is not missed. It is no business of his if half the company follow his example. In a few days the fence sags and gapes. There is trouble ahead. The punishment, if any, is widely shared. It is surely worth while.

Possibly his pantaloons have not stood the test of time and of continual use. He works in them, he sleeps in them; they become a part of him. It is time to think of mending when the seams begin to go. He borrows a needle from some officer's orderly. But the latter won't give him thread. The ingenious coolie is not long in overcoming this difficulty. The trousers of his winter suit are padded with cotton wool. He opens the seams thereof, extracts a ball of cotton wool and spins the same in a wooden jenny of his own device. It is a lengthy process. But the thing is *pour passer le temps*.

His native climate is dry from January to December. He suffers a little from the dampness of a Canadian spring. It may be he catches a cold. A belly belt suggests itself to him both as a prevention and a cure. A strip of good strong canvas will admirably suit the purpose. He doesn't cut a $3'' \times 3'$ strip out of his own tent because he thinks

the deed would thus be less easily traced to him. He operates on the next tent because a piece out of his own would let in an abominable draught at night. And, of course, he is quite right.

He now turns his hand to a quite innocent pastime. He unweaves the coco-nut mats which were given to him on board ship, sets aside the coloured threads and reweaves them into baskets. Having accumulated a small stock in trade, he sells them in the dearest market which, with great commercial perception, he creates out of the camp visitors. He charges from ten to fifty cents a basket. The visitors think they are getting a bargain, as indeed they would be if mats had tongues and could tell their own stories.

One day some girls visited the camp. They wore carnations. Whilst exploring the odorous mysteries of Kitchen No. 4 one of them dropped her bouquet. She didn't notice her loss. A company cook picked up the flowers and fondly examined them. He saw their beauty and determined to create more of their kind. So he obtained, it is impossible to say how, a sheet of pink paper out of which he made several blooms. He

showed them proudly to his company officer who, seeing in this new industry a means to an amorous end, detailed a section to making imitation flowers: roses, foxgloves, bluebells, carnations, irises, and so on. A passion for imitating nature spread through the ranks. It was a noble pastime. Some even bettered nature, gathering on route-marches branches from various trees and decorating them with blossoms unknown in any land.

Coolie ingenuities do not stop at this. They glance admiringly at the neat putties worn by the Canadian camp sentries. Having other uses for snipings of tent canvas, they look in another direction for material and find it in the (to them) useless cloth waist-belts which they are made to wear. So by cutting it in two they convert this article into a pair of putties. Hemming and experimenting in regard to the neatest manner of wearing this coveted apparel fill many an idle hour.

Lastly, so much leisure drives the coolie artist mind to local action. Canvases almost without number lie stretched before him, inviting design and colour. But, beyond inscribing thereon the number of his section,

he is forbidden to beautify his tent. So he casts down his eyes and sees the earth. He weeds and levels a patch until the naked clay presents a workable surface. Then he goes to the beach and picks up lumps of sulphur. He crushes a brick and makes madder-brown paste. He gathers coal dust and fragments of multi-coloured glass. His palette is now ready. First tracing a design, whether of a temple or a dragon, some legendary animal or religious figure, he "fills in" with the aforesaid mediums and the result, achieved on a fairly large scale, is the pride of the company commanders and the wonder of visitors.

"LEISURE DRIVES THE COOLIE ARTIST MIND TO ACTION"

VI

At length the rumour spread that we were to move again. Seemingly the coolies knew it before their officers. The news was not officially given out until the day before departure, yet the camp quivered with excitement fully a week before we moved. It might have been a "mass" intuition. More likely a Canadian private gossiped with an interpreter and gave the game away.

For all the easy life in Canada, the remnant of "O.K." party was not reluctant to march off to the wharf on May 23rd. Coolies, like their officers, were anxious to get on with the Interminable Journey, anxious to get *over there.*

It was little to them that we were embarking, not to be ferried across to Vancouver (a few hours' run), but to sail to England via the Panama Canal.

PART IV

JUNE

I

ONE limpid May afternoon, H.M.T. *Empress of Asia* sailed from a quarantine station in Canada with "O.K." party on board, who were now joined by East of the Mountain men. Our party was given the aft part of the ship and theirs the fore part. It was inevitable that the two battalions should collide. They did so—and before embarkation had been completed. The police of both factions found themselves assigned to the same quarters. They fought with their truncheons for the choice bunks. Ours maintained that we, being the senior squad, had first choice in the matter; theirs, on more general grounds, asserted that the two parties were now one and that the sleeping quarters should be fairly divided. They called one another tortoises, and consigned one another to perdition; until a company officer, whose

temper had not been improved by three hours' continuous stowing away of coolies, burst upon the scene and threatened abolition of the entire police force unless order was immediately restored. Order *was* restored and our squad found itself quartered astern where the vibration of the screw shook their bronzed bodies at night.

It was an unlucky quarrel for us, for not only were the grounds on which we fought quite wrong, but by fighting we lost one of the choicest holds of the boat.

East of the Mountain men were right. We were all of one body now. It was no use shouting about seniority when we were going into the submarine zone. After all we were not so senior. We had landed in Canada a week before them. But we had sailed from China only three days before them. And we had lost more than half of our original strength. We were a remnant with but three company officers of our own, not to mention Jule and the O.C. Whereas they had their full strength and a superfluity of officers. Notwithstanding in our hearts there was and could be nothing quite like the "O.K." party, and it seemed to us,

reduced as we were, that we should have first say where say was necessary.

So that from the outset, the idea of a division between the two battalions was discouraged. The main thing was to order our lives to the satisfaction of the Captain, not for officers to wrangle about who should be responsible for the sanitary conditions of this or that hold, or for coolies to dispute amongst themselves the right of way.

It may be interjected here that one of the secrets of efficiently handling coolies (I suppose that as a matter of fact it applies to most organized bodies of men) is to make them responsible to none but themselves. If, for example, a coolie fails to attend lifeboat drill and is found asleep in his bunk, he is informed that had the alarm been given he would have lost his life. He is to blame. Equally so his lance-corporal who should have seen that he was on parade; and in a measure the fault is laid at the door of the corporal of his platoon and the sergeant of his section of the company. The blame, thus internally spread, does not attach to the company officer who, in order to ensure his own blamelessness, covers himself at every

conceivable point. The position of the C.O., however, becomes precarious when there are two parties on board and one is allowed to saddle the other with all wrong-doing. Responsibility ceases; he cannot justify his "strafe" unless he has unmistakable evidence, and such is quite unobtainable at a C.L.C. court-martial or court of inquiry. The only way out of it is to fuse the interests of both battalions. And this was done at a stroke by making all coolies aboard draw their rations at the same time. On the principle that if coolies can eat together they can work together without rupture, it was found possible to stamp out even a friendly rivalry between the East of the Mountain men and the West of the Mountain men.

Ship's bounds did not allow the two to lie down together on the same deck and bask bare-footed in the sun that grew hotter and hotter day after day; but there was no regulation against standing hand in hand, naked as Adam, under a cold shower and blessing the appointments of a modern transport. Neither was there anything against an exchange of social visits after parade had been dismissed. The police sank the enmity

between them and took an oath to increase from that day forth the strength of the defaulters' squad.

I find I have not referred previously in this diary to the task of stowing away coolies. In orders it is alluded to as "embarkation"; by those experienced in the job it is known as "packing." The coolies are not passengers capable of finding each his cabin ; the coolies are so much cargo, live stock, which has to be packed away, so many head in a hold. Picture them streaming into a hold, in single file, their packs on their backs. Now it is plain that if a coolie is not made to stay in the bunk allotted to him, he will wander around and block the incoming stream. Company officers, who are official packers, find that the best way of preserving order is to seize the kit-bag of the coolie as soon as he enters the hold, throw it in his bunk and bundle the owner after it. In this manner, and with the aid of malacca canes and gloved hands, members of the "O.K." party created a record, stowing away no less than 1700 coolies in an hour and thirty-five minutes. Clarison figured prominently in this operation. Full recovery after a long convalescence

fitted him for an unrivalled display of energy. If it had not come from Malacca he would have broken his cane "sweeping the little blighters in."

The next three days on board practically repeat the history of the first three days on our Pacific voyage. Days that were devoted to "settling down"; which process involves the appointment of special sanitary squads, posting the police, determining meal hours and other functions which kept Jule at it quite twenty-five hours a day. But there was this great difference in the inaugural history of the two voyages; the "O.K." party were now old hands at keeping things clean. Two months in China, three weeks across the Pacific, ten weeks in Canada had not gone for nothing. Constant "strafing," endless patient explanation, and stern punishment had awakened in them the pride of a clean life. In camp they had fought for the ownership of a garbage tin; company had sought to outdo company in the speckless-ness of their lines; there had been petty internal quarrels over the discovery of a single grain of cooked rice on an otherwise clean tent floor. They carried this admirable

scrupulousness on board the transport that now bore them onward through tepid turquoise waters under heat-saturated skies, onward to Panama.

Jule had only to think back a few months in order to conjure up one of the strangest contrasts imaginable. Against this present white, this disgust with dirt was set the dark habits with which they came to camp in China ; a complete disregard of their person, a savage aversion to washing, toleration of the dust of years, a coughing and a spitting people. It was indeed wonderful, this contrast ; and lucky it seemed to Jule that these particular battalions had this new bright idea of life before passing through one of the hottest zones in the world.

This morning, for example, they lay on deck, fore and aft, on rafts and winch platforms, wherever there was an inch of space, the quietest, most contented folk in the world. They had finished cleaning their quarters and had come up to stretch themselves at full length in the now tropical sun. The order of the day was no socks or shoes ; some did not think this relinquishment enough against the day's heat, so they

left off their tunics as well. Others ventured on deck in the nude. These moral defaulters were promptly dealt with by their sergeant, who doubtless fired at them some scathing Chinese proverb. But it was hot and one could not blame them for wearing as little as possible. All the morning they would laze in the sun, sleeping, dozing, humming to themselves, happy as so many rabbits in a field at noon. After their curiously childlike and affectionate manner they would lie asleep clasping each the other's hand or gently stroke the arm or neck of a neighbour.

Even more wonderful for Jule were the nights, soft Southern nights that reminded him strongly of a trip, long since taken, through the Indian Ocean. It was too much for fully half of the coolies "down below." The stench was abominable. They could not breathe. So up they came and spread themselves on the decks. For something to lie on they brought their life-belts; pillows as they called them in their own language. There was scarce enough room for all of them, so they lay limb to limb, careless of the heat they communicated one to another,

glad to be where there was a breath of air, with the cool dew falling on them, under the stars. And before such a night was very old, the moon would rise like a tarnished disc of brass, out of a horizon thickened by the day's heat, higher and higher until the rays of it fell on a mysterious jumble of limbs, palely lighting them, so that the deck resembled a scene of death.

II

In order to instance what a Jack of all trades the coolie is, what plastic stuff he is made of, how quickly he responds and adapts himself to a new set of circumstances, it will be well to note here that by degrees he is taking over the diverse duties of the Cantonese crew who have signed on only as far as some Atlantic port. By the time we reach that port he will run the ship. Of course, he won't have anything to do with the navigation or with the engines, but, so far as we know at present, he will be stoker and cook, cabin and bar-boy, baker and laundryman, and he will probably be seen in some official capacity on deck. Progress in this direction has already been made. We find him to be a cabin-boy *par excellence*. He is given a white smock which quite hides the military grey of his working clothes. Wherefore, much pleased with his new uniform, he calls himself an angel. He is always about; surely a great virtue on board an intricate

modern passenger ship (which is now ignominiously called a transport). Not only does he make one's bed, but he darns one's socks. He acutely observes the peculiar position of articles of toilette and leaves or replaces them just there. He even is sentimental. If an officer emblazons his washstand with a picture of his girl, the coolie cabin-boy will decorate the frame with paper flowers of his own creation. He knows where everything is, and apprentice though he be he will not allow his master's private effects to be touched by any Cantonese under the sun.

The bakers are quite in their element. In Shantung they were assistants in cook-shops ; they used to make meat pies. Now, under the supervision of the chief *chef*, they roll flour and bake it and make incomparable breakfast rolls. They wear aprons and look like little *chefs*. The chief *chef* is as proud of his apprentices as a turkey of her brood. They salute him as they salute their company officers. He is a White Man, clothed in white, with a nice ruddy complexion, and they are quite deaf to his strong Cockney accent. Being O.C. that wonderful foreign

kitchen he is able to give them things to eat untasted even by corporals and sergeants.

Gradually they are getting into other positions. The electric laundry is equipped with a staff of efficient controllers. There are officer and errand boys galore. Everywhere the employer meets with the same desire to please, the same versatility, the same canniness. They go at it with a grin. They combine modesty with boundless self-confidence. The volunteers for any job are always too numerous.

I see in the employment of the coolies on board this transport a perfect epitome of the manner in which the Chinese have succeeded in so many parts of the world where other races, less plastic and less enduring, have failed to settle down and make good. The Chinese is the happy colonist; hardship he endures with a grin; he makes the foreign land his own, communicating to it his splendid energy. Consider his range. He moves at ease in the chintz-hung mahogany-furnished cabins of the first saloon, treading lightly and speaking in hushed tones; he descends into the stoke-hole, dons overalls, and fires and rakes a furnace with the scientific

abandon of a Vulcan; ascend with him to the dispensary and perceive him in a white coat red-crossed ministering expertly to the ills of his fellows; follow him to an unoccupied cabin where he is applying himself intently to the tracing of some native design on a length of silk; there is not a manual job which he does not attempt and not many at which he does not excel.

III

If there were no troops on board we could not conscientiously say that we were on a transport. As yet the war touch is lacking. We have no guns. We are not as careful as we should be about not showing lights at night. We should scarcely credit the reality of a periscope if we saw one. To be sure, when the whistle gives five blasts, we make ourselves uncomfortable around the neck with life-belts; unhesitatingly we rush on deck, "fall in" and try to look interested; but we know all the time it is merely camouflage. The Cantonese crew may sweat undoing ropes and letting down boats; but we know that as surely as the whistle has blown five times, after an interval of a quarter of an hour, it will blow once, and that the Cantonese crew will have to sweat a jolly sight worse knotting ropes and pulling up boats. And then it is all over and we resume our safe existences. In our own language we call life-

belts pillows or belts of peace, so assured we are that we will never use them for the purpose for which they were invented. Enemy action is inconceivable. We live on the gunless gun-platforms and loaf in the Southern Pacific sun. We laugh at the flying fish and strain to catch a glimpse of other foreign fish glowing high-coloured in the neighbouring deep. We are just "O.K." party, by tradition and character men of peace going to the Great War.

Jule, of course, knew that once through the Canal things would change. The coolies would see that these theatrical life-boat drills had not been given to tickle their sense of humour; that the gun-platforms were not a recreation ground; that the apparently pernicious order to close all port-holes at night had been enforced on purpose, when the time came, to hold death off at arm's length. But he wagered that, even with the perils of war brought home to them, they would go on grinning and having their child-like jokes.

But there *are* troops on board and we're as truly a transport as any that ever sailed from outpost seas, carrying reinforcements.

They are Canadian recruits, still quite raw. They only had their rifles given to them a week before they sailed. They don't know much about soldiering. In the narrow way of discipline they don't know as much as the coolies, to whom their morning drills are a source of keen enjoyment. The coolies can see them at work covering off, forming fours, marking time; they shout words of encouragement and unrestrainedly laugh at their mistakes which they are quick to note. But, on the whole, the coolies are extremely sympathetic.

The Canadians know them as "Chinks." They have a great admiration for their physique, which in this tropical climate is displayed often *in toto*. Converse between troops and coolies is forbidden; nevertheless it goes on. One may easily observe a coolie in earnest conversation with a sentry. A hopeless difference in language does not prevent fraternization. A coolie's gestures are eloquent; so are a sentry's when he wants something. What he wants more often than not is a souvenir of the Chinks; a basket, a coin, a paper flower. But he doesn't get it as easily as he thinks he should. A coolie,

like all Chinese, has a passion for bargaining. He lingers over the negotiation as long as possible. As a rule he gets his price too.

IV

ONE early morning, hot at six o'clock, we were in sight of new shores, luxuriously vegetated shores that veered straight down into a calm blue lukewarm sea. No sooner seen by them than the coolies started the foolish cry that at length we had reached our destination. Indeed, it will be many a day before any part of France is as peaceful and as silent as the shores of Panama.

The next nine hours of the Interminable Journey quite eclipsed in wonder anything that the coolies had seen before. A few of the better educated understood what we were about when we entered lock after lock, rising something like thirty feet at a time, up to the level of a huge, semi-artificial lake over which cranes and pelicans flew, the haunt of snakes and alligators, and the bygone Home of Fever. Especially they were interested in the little electric engines, four of them on either side of the boat, which towed us into the lock, held us rigidly in

position as we rose or fell, and towed us out again. These engines neither hissed nor chugged; they hummed and suggested incalculable power. Men East of the Hill joined with the men West of the Hill in their open-mouthed admiration of these things. Certainly the White Man was all he was cracked up to be—and a bit more.

They say we passed through the Canal Zone on a day typical for this time of the year. In the Culebra Cut a violent thunderstorm drove below-decks hundreds of fascinated spectators. But not for long. Shortly they reappeared, having removed all unessential garments. At every lock and at every station crowds of coons braved the rain (I suppose they are well used to it) and cheered us on our way. Among the coolies there was considerable dispute as to the reality of the coon. Some said he was a white man besmeared with black oil; others more accurately defined him as a native of India. The first theory was, however, popularly accepted, for when a burly, bare-chested nigger came on board and made his way to the bow in order to take charge of the spring lines there, he was given ready

passage through the multitude of coolies, who fell away from him, crying "Beware, beware, you'll soil your clothes with oil."

Coolies and Canadians passing through the Canal! It was novel enough to attract a crowd of Americans at every lock. They wanted to cheer the Chinks and see what manner of men they were. The Canadians heartily responded, but the coolies, unversed in cheering, clapped their hands, thinking this the most Western thing they could do. Between the locks niggers and negresses ran down the hillside as we passed, shouting and waving with ludicrous gusto. One negress, clothed in a waistless white dress, being carried away by her emotions, tore up a palm by the roots and waved it frantically as John Chinaman sailed by. Her enthusiasm was not to be cooled even by a moderate cloud-burst which, interested as he was, sent John Chinaman flying for shelter.

Perhaps there were some ashore that day who thought the coolies a bloodless crowd. They didn't cheer; they didn't wave flags; hardly one of them waved his hand. They stood massed together in bow and stern, pressed against the side-rails, overflowing

on to the emergency rafts ; they stood and stared, swaying slowly to and fro as a shoulder-to-shoulder mob always does, chattering now and again, but for the most part silent and gestureless. I admit that their mien must have been disappointingly cold, especially so perhaps to the laughter-loving coons ; but I wish that these good people of the Canal Zone could have known, as we knew, what was passing in the hearts of our coolies. Their pulses quickened not so much because they were the heroes of the hour, cheered as lustily as any patriotic Australian who had passed through on his way to the front, but rather on account of the increasing wonder of their voyage, the miracles of engineering to which they were witnesses, the continued good living and easy life of which this day in particular was representative.

V

FOLLOWED a couple of days and nights at Colon, the Atlantic end of the Canal. There we took on three thousand tons of coal. There the coolies were confirmed in their conclusion that they had come to a land where none laboured save the negro, and he did mighty little work. Electric machinery did everything. It even coaled the ship. At dusk and afterwards by the light of arcs, the coolies watched a very coliseum of steel minister to the internal needs of the ship. Vast shovels, swung down from a vast height, opened their claws, clutched a mass of coal, and swung up (the overflow falling back like black water) to empty their quarries in little well-built cars which, as soon as they were filled, automatically moved away on an elevated rail. Little well-built cars (not a man in sight) moved silently and slowly along until opposite something which looked like a grain elevator. The cars were hidden a moment in the elevator's intricacies. Then

"ONWARD TO PANAMA"

"FOLLOWED A COUPLE OF DAYS AND NIGHTS AT COLON"

the coal came sliding down a huge steel belt and so, through a shovel, into the yawning bunkers. It was all so wonderfully manless. The only men visible had nothing to do with the vast machine. They were American regulars who, dwarfed to pigmy size, strutted up and down the wharf under a world of steel. The coolies laughed at them, so tiny they looked. Upon which the little soldiers would tilt their sombrero-like hats at a dangerous angle and nudge the stocks of their rifles desperately under their arm-pits.

In point of fact their manner of carrying their weapons led the coolies to believe that the Yanks were Canal Zone huntsmen, not Sammies who had strict orders to shoot at sight any John Chinaman who attempted to break the immigration laws of Colon.

Once clear of Colon we were, of course, in the Atlantic. In the Atlantic ! That meant a tightening of all ropes. The coolies were solemnly informed by Jule that the real test of their training would now be made. The great moment had arrived. It was now business in earnest.

The seriousness of the matter was brought home to them not by word of mouth but

by "physical" strafing. It just had to be. It was no time to argue and explain. For instance, Lin Ching, a weaver by profession, a quiet and altogether harmless member of H Company, was found without his life-belt not half an hour after we left port. He quite understood the exhortation that a man and his life-belt were to be inseparable from now on, but, you see, a life-belt to his mind was not primarily a life-belt but a pillow. Now it so chanced that a certain company baker (a sworn brother of his), being without a belt of his own and desiring to take forty winks on deck, applied to Lin Ching for the loan of his pillow, which he was readily granted. For, be it said to his credit, a Chinese will stand by his brother through thick and thin; he will both lie and steal for him. It was therefore nothing to Lin Ching to tolerate the temporary absence of his life-belt. And it justifiably puzzled him that Clarison, of all company officers, should man-handle him for upholding the honour existing between Chinese sworn brothers. Clarison's explanation that should the ship suddenly sink, those who wore not life-belts would surely

be drowned, was kind but tardy and really uncalled for. Why, argued Lin, should the ship suddenly sink? And why should he be drowned when he could swim? And was not the life of his sworn brother of more account than his own?

One begins to see the difficulties in the way of *absolute* discipline. But, if there is to be a minimum loss of life, absolute it must be. So Jule would reiterate to company officers.

So the coolies were given to understand that the most heinous of all crimes committable on the Atlantic was to strike a match on deck at night. Now Jule knew that a coolie is more liable to obey an order if he is given a reason for obeying it. The reason he gave was, should a coolie strike a match on deck at night, the instantaneous result would be the blowing up and consequent sinking of the ship. It was not vouchsafed whether the means of destruction was within or came from without, or how a match was suddenly endowed with such terrible powers. Notwithstanding, the Chinese, a myth-loving people, considered the explanation quite enough and fell to devising punishments of

their own to be visited, over and above official justice, upon an offender against the new law.

About this time Jule privately recorded that the coolies saw that there was more in the above "explanation" than meets the eye. "The coolies," he jotted down, "are aware of the existence of the submarine." Indeed the subject was "worked to death" in German propaganda long ago in the recruiting days in China. Rumours were constantly being circulated from "official sources" that hardly a battalion of coolies ever escaped an enemy submarine. Although such rumours were generally discredited, the possible dangers were not. So that it gradually dawned upon them there was some connexion between striking a match at night on the Atlantic and giving away ship's position to the Hun.

Life, to be sure, was dreadfully restricted. Lin Ching found his simplest movements embarrassed by the now ever-present life-belt. It was like living in a strait-waistcoat. He could no longer slink and slide along, after his manner, and get there first. He had to wait and take his turn, whether drawing

rations or visiting the hospital. He found himself misjudging the width of a door. Instead of lying on his side at night, he had now to lie on his back. And, unkindest of all, he had to keep the thing on during meals. Wherefore his sense of decorum (strongly instinct in any Chinese) was outraged.

Furthermore, all port-holes were painted and then sealed up. In a moderate climate this would have been a calamity; in the tropics it was a tragedy. Lin Ching meekly complained to his corporal that it was impossible to breathe the air of his hold. The corporal, a weak man, sympathized and carried the matter to his sergeant. The sergeant, not daring to question the order of the day, somewhat cryptically replied:

"It is better that one man die than four thousand perish."

It was unanswerable and Lin had to be content.

To add to the tension, life-boat drills began. The police did what they could to regulate the traffic of men, but their efforts availed little against a stream of hundreds and hundreds. It was like a crowd rushing for a tram-car. When the whistle blew five

times, it was a signal for all to get on deck as soon as possible. And all did. A footer scrum was not in it. But it was all done without injury, even without loss of temper. And, according to Jule, the orderly officer was justified in noting officially that "life-boat drill was carried out in an orderly manner."

VI

It was a relief to all when what may be called the Atlantic tension was eased temporarily by our putting into a Jamaican port. With port-holes open and wind-shoots out, we lay in harbour some days. We had nothing to do but gaze at the town, with its red roofs brilliant among palms, its toy-like trams racing along and leaving a track of white dust, its quiet old-world water-front. The darkies came alongside in the canoes: boys to dive for pennies and men and girls to sell bananas and mangoes and melons. We (by this time impoverished coolies) had no money to fling away, so bartered parts of our equipment. It was so hot that we had no need for most of our clothes. And, since it has been hot for so long, we assumed it would never grow cold again. A cap purchased half a dozen bananas; a tunic, a small basket of mangoes. The dark men were satisfied with their end of the bargain and so were we with ours. But, early in the

day, our company officers took exception violently to this system of exchange, so that for the rest of our stay it could not be practised openly. The black men called us "Chinks," after the manner of Americans, and treated us with little deference. They impressed us as a dirty, loud-mouthed people, entirely lacking in a sense of delicacy. We smiled at their girls, but didn't think them amusing. We did, however, generously admire the superb swimming and diving of the boys. They didn't lose a single coin.

We took a strong aversion to the dark women, who were not only ill-shaped, but dirty and clothed in poppy-coloured blouses or daffodil yellow or some other abominable colour. When some hundreds of them came on board to help with the coaling and trimming of the bunkers, we gave them a wide berth.

We are never allowed ashore. Nor are our friends, the Canadians. On the contrary, the White Excellencies are. They lose no time about it. As soon as the ship lies at peace in the harbour, the stairs are lowered by our fellow-countrymen, the Cantonese, and the Excellencies, some in uniform and

some in white, are away. Not that we in the least care where they go or what they do; not that we want to grow more intimate with the unsavoury blacks. But the palms and the hills look jolly and we would learn something of the customs of a foreign country. The Canadians do not accept the matter as quietly as we do. According to Interpreter Kwong they raised their voices the other night so that their commander could hear them, crying, "When are we going ashore?" It was not the right way to go about it, for owing to these words they were sent to bed an hour ahead of the usual time.

VII

ONCE more the tension tightened. Life-belts on, port-holes closed, and silence on deck at night. We were steaming in the danger-zone, bound, so we understood, for some Atlantic port, with no guns on board and five submarines in the vicinity. Those who had work were happiest. The sanitary squad busy below decks, the silk workers bending over dragons of their embroidery, the company bakers rolling flour, the cabin boys, the orderlies—none had time to scratch their shaven heads over the inexplicable antics of our transport; how she zigzagged and altered her course and changed her speed and altogether behaved in a creepy manner.

Our friend, Lin Ching, having learnt his lesson, was not loath to attribute everything extraordinary to the presence of enemy under-water craft. It was a darkish night at sea, thirty-six hours' steaming from a West Indian port. The moon was late in rising; a tropical haze obscured the stars. Silently

we parted the waters of a dead calm. The Canadian guards stood motionless, one on the port side, one on the starboard of the boat deck, leaning on their rifles, gazing out to sea in search of the phosphorescent wake of a periscope. On a lower deck astern slept the coolies, some half-naked, some clothed in their thinnest grey summer suits ; altogether an indefinite grey mass on the dark night in question. Lin Ching found it too hot down below in the holds. He tried to fan himself to sleep, but the heat and excitement were too much for him. He felt that something was going to happen. He had just an ounce of imagination which caused him a pound of troubled dreams in which under-sea craft played the leading rôle. So he came on deck to get away from his sergeant who parroted the O.C.'s warning in regard to the fatal attraction which an open port-hole had for an enemy submarine. He came on deck to get fresh air and sleep.

Now when a coolie has to choose his bed-place on deck he does so with great deliberation. There are so many things he has to consider. If there's a wind blowing he has to find shelter. If there's a moon shining he

must needs find shadow. There is always the possibility of rain—especially in the tropics—so he has to have some kind of a roof over his head. He must be away from the beat of a policeman. Policemen are apt to jab their truncheons into some part of the nearest coolie just in order to show a rounds-visiting officer that they are carrying out their duties. Then again it is unwise to lie near a thoroughfare, for an officer, making rounds, has no more respect for the leg or stomach or face of a coolie than he has for the steel stairs of the companion-way. So Lin Ching stood quite still for a few moments, life-belt in hand, deliberating if he would spend the night under an emergency raft (a favourite resort) or on the base of an hydraulic crane. And as he stood his eye roamed and he looked out to sea and saw a light! Yes, it was a light, appearing and disappearing, never dropping behind as though it were fixed, but running with the ship—far away—as if in pursuit. He reasoned what it could be and calmly concluded that it was an enemy submarine. He drew a policeman's attention to it, stating in a conversational tone that it was an enemy submarine. The

two quite agreed that it was an enemy submarine; and the policeman would have left it at that had not our slightly imaginative Lin Ching suggested the suitability of advising the orderly officer that there was a submarine in pursuit. The suggestion appealed to the policeman, but he thought that a third unbiased party might be consulted before any action was taken. So they stirred a coolie who was near into consciousness and asked him to have a look at the light. The third party could not say what it was until Lin hinted that it might be—nay, was an enemy submarine! With which the coolie agreed, consenting to be one of a party of three who would report the matter.

The three lay in wait for the orderly officer, trusting to catch him when he made his next rounds. But orderly officers are almost always somewhere else when they are wanted. So rather than disturb him in the smoking-room (where he was probably playing a rubber of bridge) they decided to report to one of the Canadian guards. Normally this would not be possible without the aid of an interpreter, but the matter being urgent they applied to him directly and pointed out

the light. The reply he gave them was to jab his thumb over his shoulder and tell them to go back where they had come from —and possibly a bit further—towards perdition.

It was pretty bad for Lin and his companions to mistake a revolving land light for an enemy submarine, but in order to palliate Lin's mistake and to demonstrate that white or yellow born, imaginative minds act much alike, it may be stated that not two hours after this incident the Canadian guard, who so scornfully received Lin's report, himself reported to the Captain's bridge a burning ship astern, which turned out to be nothing more than the rising moon.

A setting star befooled the other guard. Passionate Venus he mistook for a light to port ; this, one early morning before dawn when Lin Ching lay asleep beneath an emergency raft.

Later that same morning we joined a small convoy consisting of the *Brat*, our sole escort, a small gunboat taken over from the enemy by U.S. Navy ; *Camouflage*, an awkward old liner decorated in the latest post-impressionist manner ; and *Weary Willie*,

an Australian transport which we unjustly accused of limiting the speed of our convoy to nine knots. The *Brat* was once an enemy craft; so we had little respect for her. Besides, there was something particularly German about her. She was squat and ugly; she lacked poise; she had no lines. She seemed totally inadequate for our protection. And, though she was better than nothing and a faithful companion and competent guide, we positively blushed for her when one morning she hoisted a sail to take advantage of a strong following wind. Apologies were mentally made to *Weary Willie*, for we knew then she was not holding us back.

Outside a serene few who, extraordinarily dense, do not even know that there is a war on and whom nothing less than the explosion of a torpedo amidships would stir to astonishment, perhaps the calmest coolie on board is a hospital dresser, a tubby, round-faced coolie who strongly reminds one of the popular conception of Humpty-Dumpty. Dumpty—as we may call him—did yeoman's service coming across the Pacific. With two C.A.M.C. men "under the weather," and a bespectacled little Chinese doctor on the

point of prostration, Dumpty carried on, making wonderful use of a slight knowledge of medicine. He would bandage, diagnose, take a temperature, prescribe with confident jollity. He always had a smile, truly a generous smile, of the healing effect of which he was quite unconscious. His manner, not skill, won for him an enviable clientele. When calm seas restored the certified medicos to their practice, many coolies would have none of them, preferring to consult Dumpty.

Dumpty is still with us, but he is out of a job, for at this stage of the Interminable Journey there are no sick.

It is worth while chronicling here that our John Chinaman is an exceedingly clever shammer. In terms of trouble and in point of appearance there is no difference between a coolie who is really sick and one who is shamming. Paralysis is a favourite sham.

It is readily resorted to when a coolie thinks he has done enough work for the present. Suddenly, mysteriously he is dispossessed of the power to move his legs. They dangle from him horribly. An officer thinks he is shamming, so he details a couple of men to set the paralytic on his feet. But his feet

will not hold him; he collapses. And, be it said, he will endure both pain and shame to prove that he is not shamming. When his word is tested he becomes perverse. He loses sight of his original object. The maintenance of the sham grows more important than the shirking of work. This is characteristic of our John Chinaman.

In the dull camp stages of the Interminable Journey, the number of malingerers reaches high-water mark. It is only Dumpty who is able to deal with them. They cannot fool him. Maybe they don't want to. His smile reduces them to active reality. His simplicity intensifies their sense of shame.

When there is a move on, there are no shammers. Indeed, the sick in hospital miraculously acquire health. The half-dead pray with pathetic earnestness to be released. On the point of every move the sick are seized with a holy horror of being left behind. To be left behind is to be indefinitely delayed, to be cut off, to be repatriated perhaps. A dreadful business.

I described Dumpty in order to instance that in the submarine zone the coolest may be caught unawares. It is a zone of perils

and surprises, adventures and heroisms, and eminently a zone of false alarms. There is no rest for the nervous. For the imaginative it is a nightmare. For good and for bad it is upsetting. And yet, looking back on a few days of it, nothing has happened ; probably nothing will happen. We have sailed the seas in peace. We have had security. Only we have been troubled by dwelling on the propinquity of these under-water monsters. As if the surface monsters, the winds and the waves, had not been infinitely more perilous to Columbus and his companions who landed long, long ago not far from where we are to-day !

Jule is chatting with the sergeant of police. He is straining his newly acquired Chinese vocabulary to reaffirm the fatalness of smoking on deck after dark. He is struggling with a metaphor when he feels himself lightly touched on the arm. He turns to perceive Dumpty—Dumpty with no smile. Something is wrong. The tubby little fellow is fairly trembling with excitement. At last he speaks. He wishes to draw his Excellency's attention to something over there in the sea, about a couple of hundred yards

astern of *Weary Willie*, something resembling a two-foot section of gas-piping that cuts through the water and causes a wake, something that follows *Weary Willie* with deadly precision, now seeming to gain slightly, now falling behind. What is it? He would like to know; as would a number of coolies whose keen eyes are focused on the phenomenon. To Jule it is a periscope at first sight. The next second he expects *Weary Willie* to say something on the matter, with a diagonal remark perhaps from the *Brat* which is dead ahead of us. But the second passes and no gun spits. Then, instead of the flash and boom of a 4.7, a machine-gun breaks out into intermittent fire. Whereupon jets of water in alignment with the ci-devant phenomenon, some a good deal short and others quite beyond.

"Don't think much of that shooting," says Clarison to Jule.

"A target, of course," cries Jule. And, hailing an interpreter, he proceeds to set Dumpty at rest on the point.

And Dumpty, convinced, duly informs the increasing crowd of coolies.

And so every morning at the same hour

Weary Willie would drop a target from her stern and tow it along. It would be fired at with indifferent results. The coolies would severely criticize the marksmanship. Not all so well informed as Dumpty, there was surprise at the daily punctual appearance of the enemy. The skirmish was always followed with the greatest interest. If the target was hit (you could hear the plunk on the wooden frame) they would cry with delight, and when at length, the day's practice over, the target was cut adrift and fell rapidly behind *Weary Willie*, as if in full retreat, cheering would go up from our decks and they would fall to congratulating one another on the defeat of the enemy.

VIII

LIN CHING, on his return to China years hence, when there is peace in the world again, will tell in a tea-house with friends and relatives around, how on the Interminable Journey to France, he touched at the most wonderful city of the West—New York. He will not be conventional and describe the Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge and the sky-scrapers. The crowded entrance to the harbour, the ceaseless tripping and tooting, the bustling docks, will probably have passed out of his mind. Neither will he remember the entire novelty of everything he saw, from the neat green Narrows to the broad sweep of the Hudson swinging northwards. He, the unassuming weaver, will recall but two things. First, the port lights of the holds were open in New York; last, white people waving from ferries in New York.

There is an incident connected with the first memory. It is midnight. The ship lies

alongside the wharf. If Lin puts his head out of the port, he sees the steel sides of the great warehouse, high and massive in the light of arc-lamps. He sees the water gleaming oilily against the dark hull; he hears it gurgling and gently splashing. A minute, and a siren shrieks. Then the churn and hiss of propellers. It is on the other side of the ship. There between the stern of the ship and the warehouse, as in a rectangular frame of grey and black, he sees a tug pass followed by a barge; a red light gleams, then a green one. The air is keen though not fresh; it is coldish and odorous like the atmosphere of a cellar in which meat and vegetables are stored. It is appetizing. He inhales it. Presently with a groan a door of the warehouse slides open, revealing a man who manipulates a white broom with considerable energy. Lin perceives that the man is a White Man dressed in dusty-dark clothes with a slouch hat drawn over his eyes. He notices also that the White Man has a stubbly white beard. For which Lin respects him, for age is highly honoured and deferred to in China. He is sweeping out the warehouse. Pausing a moment he sees

the weaver—a bronze hairless head sticking out of a port-hole, two brown eyes, bright as the eyes of a cat. Lin grins. The sweeper grins terribly by way of imitation.

"What's your name, Charlie?" he cries.

Lin politely responds by jerking up his thumb—a native gesture suggesting superlativeness.

"Yer don't get me," says the sweeper, shaking his head.

Lin again signals superlativeness. This time with great animation. His eye, ever on the alert for something to eat or to appropriate permanently, lights on the sweepings of the White Man. Huge emerald cabbage leaves, among wooden shavings and other rubbish, are being rushed towards destruction. Two sweeps of the broom and the delectables will be over the side of the dock, down in the dirty water. It is too wasteful for words—those delicious cabbage leaves going——. By stretching out both arms suddenly he manages to bring the sweeper to a full stop—just in the nick of time.

"Naw then, Chinky, what are yer up to?"

For a moment it looked like suicide.

Having attracted the attention of the

sweeper, Lin mimics the act of eating and intensely enjoying a cabbage leaf.

The sweeper watches him, fascinated, then points to his own head, so attesting his belief in Lin's insanity.

"Go to bed, Chinky, go to bed," he cries in disgust, going on with his work.

But Lin is not to be put off. Since gestures fail to convey his desire, he resorts to speech and explains, beyond a shadow of misapprehension, what he wants. He is meticulously polite too, calling the sweeper "Honourable Aged"; but all his eloquence and politeness are wasted. With one last swish—horribly adept—the sweepings go, cabbage leaves and all, rustling and flapping into the liquid darkness.

Lin's head disappears. New York becomes for him a place of Lost Opportunities.

In respect to the second memory there will come into his mind a picture of the ferries crossing and recrossing the river as we lay at anchor in the Hudson before moving into dock. Oh, those dark red ferries that rushed by, causing such a wash and a stir; crowded they were wherever there was space to sit or stand, crowded with little white men

and women who waved and cheered and jostled one another to get a good view of Lin Ching as he stood leaning against the rail, one of a mass of coolies. Boat after boat passed and there was always cheering, waving, excitement. The humble weaver never knew whether or no he should wave back; he couldn't make up his mind, so he didn't wave; nor did any of his brothers. Yet he dimly felt there was welcome, friendliness, something nice at any rate in this constant display of handkerchiefs. He saw the Excellencies on the higher deck waving back, and possibly they had an acquaintance on each ferry that passed. And he remembered how when night fell the ferries continued to go by, now ablaze with light as if bediamonded. And still there were the same signs of welcome, visible and audible. For many hours he witnessed this wonder, then went below with the sight and sound of the last ferry as a vision in his head, mystified as to the meaning of the little White Men and Women.

It was otherwise with Dumpty. His intelligent eyes were wide open as we glided past quays and colliers at anchor and convoys

awaiting escort up towards Manhattan Island. He saluted the Statue of Liberty as the largest monument he had ever seen. He inquired what manner of Buddha the green bronze lady was. Seen a mile away he mentally docketed New York as a first-class walled city. The walls appeared immeasurably higher and stouter than the Great Wall which he had seen at Nan San, a few miles from Peking. The bridges spanning the East River were incomparable, exceeding surely the most visionary conception of Kubla Khan. Soon he saw the sky-scrapers were not walls, but buildings of astonishing height. The perils of the city, he thought, must be very great. In a strong wind such structures might topple. And it cannot be a nice city to dwell in, for in the streets there must always be more shadow than sunshine. And people who live in everlasting danger and comparative darkness cannot be a happy people and must stand in need of a good deal of medical attention. In which conjectures, so simply reasoned, Dumpty was more correct than one would think.

It was no disappointment to Dumpty that

he was not allowed ashore, for he knew by this time that coolies never disembarked unless the ship had reached her final destination, and he, in common with the rest of the "O.K." party, knew that the transport was to carry them all the way to England or to France, and that New York for a certainty was neither England nor France. Yes, for once the cry, "This is France," was not raised. New York, it almost seems, took the coolies unawares and impressed upon them her own extraordinarily strong identity.

It is one of the tragedies of the war that so many delightful things in connexion with it have to be kept secret. Numbers, positions and movements as affecting the transport of men must on no account be given away in either letter or chin-wag. The theory is that all walls—especially the walls of New York—have ears and that lurking behind the walls is the enemy. This truth was fully appreciated by Jule as he went ashore at "the greatest port in the world," and proceeded in company with friends to see the sights and meet people—people who wanted to know all about the ship which, the day before, had anchored in the Hudson,

crowded in bow and stern with men in grey uniforms—Orientals they were sure—whether Indian, Chinese or Japanese they didn't know. That's what they wanted to learn. Who were all these men and where were they going? A paper said (papers always get inside information) they were Japanese troops which had come through the Panama Canal straight from Nippon, reinforcements in fact for the Western Front. Could Jule throw any light on the matter? Of course he could.

Jule, escorted by his sister who—what luck!—happened to live in New York, was sitting in a fashionable restaurant in Fifth Avenue. They were accompanied by a couple of youthful and charming American beauties—a sisterly provision to which Jule had faintly objected, maintaining chivalrously that, if luck gave him his sister for a day or two, he should give all himself and all his time to her.

"You old hypocrite," she said, promising that if he didn't like her taste in Yankee girls she would send them away and punish him with her sole lovable presence for the rest of his leave, which was about four hours.

Needless to say Jule discovered that he

was in profound agreement with his sister's idea of American beauty.

It was something to two well-dressed young women not long out of college that they were talking to a man who was a banker in China or in some bank—it mattered not which—this was an experience in itself. It was also something that they were having tea with a man who was in charge of they didn't know how many Chinese. But it was infinitely more to the point that they were dancing with Miss East's brother who was "going over." *Going over!* That was the magic phrase of the moment. Into its meaning was infused all the fresh fervour with which America has entered the war; all the commendation of which two patriotic young hearts were capable. There was nothing insincere about their sudden interest in him and his particular job of work; nothing artificial or in the least galling about their openly affectionate treatment of him that afternoon of talk and tea and dance. He felt with some misgiving that he was being lionized. He didn't want or deserve it; months ago he had said his real farewell, away in China, who had held out her hands

to him and beflagged and tin-deified him until he felt that never in this world would he become a hero. This was quite aside from the consideration that as yet he had done nothing worth speaking about; he had merely been with a battalion of coolies for a few months; he had seen strange parts of the world with them; he was going to take them to France. He was less of a soldier than old Sammy who sat at the next table, trained and in uniform, probably going over there in the same convoy as himself. Yes, technically he had not even got his commission and he sat there in ignominious mufti.

So in order to defend himself against undeserved praises and pettings, he began to talk about the coolies and to tell everything he could which would redound to their credit and which in the telling would be within the honour of an officer. He told of their gentle and generous natures, their response to stern fair treatment with the right spirit of obedience, their submission and simplicity, their endurance of serious ill, their contentment over long periods with the bare necessities of life without any of life's adornments or degeneracies, their wonderful

health and magnificent bodies, bodies capable of almost unbelievable labour, labour that was lifting them in France to the praiseful respect of their brother, the British navvy and the Colonel of Labour alike. Also he told of their keen sense of humour. It was either that or a prevailing joy of life in their simple worriless outlook which enabled them to grin and keep on grinning.

"A coolie with a grouch," Jule went on, warming up to his fair audience, "is as rare as a camel without a hump. I don't think he exists. His sense of humour is too keenly developed to allow him to make an ass of himself. He is continually seeing fun in little things. His lips shape to a laugh on the faintest provocation. He is a jolly chap. My O.C. tells me that he has stopped a riot by making a joke. Show a coolie the ludicrous side of anything and he is submissive, beaten. This is the kind of man we have to deal with. And he is doing his bit over there. I don't think it matters greatly whether he is conscious of doing his bit or no. At least fifty per cent of them but faintly realize there is a war on. It is a huge game to them, and they don't know the sides or the ways or the

rules of it. All they know is that they are going to take part and earn some money and keep on seeing new things. The whole matter is placed before them in the light of a business proposition. Transport to France, and back to China when their job of work is done; a franc a day while they are at it and a separation allowance made to their families. Roughly that. They are not conscripted; their services are voluntary. There is no question of 'Go and labour in France, for China is one of the Allies.' It is: 'Here's a chance to see the world and earn good money.' The patriotic strain may be absent in the beginning and in the getting there, but it was shown but recently."

Jule stopped. Horrified he heard himself talking like a book. Wasn't he making himself a bore? There was a fox-trot in full swing. Why wasn't he dancing instead of talking about something he didn't know a great deal about? He requested the pleasure of—— In a minute he was away, swaying to the melody of *Poor Butterfly*.

As they danced, he found himself continuing his peroration:

"Yes, it's said they fought with picks and

shovels, anything hard and sharp that they could lay their hands on to keep the Hun from breaking through. Of course, the whole thing may be a bit of journalism, but from what I know of the coolie it's quite possible. At any rate it was only a tiny incident on a tiny bit of the front, but it fairly shows the spirit of these fellows. As a matter of fact they don't have to be caught in one of our retreats to deal the enemy a blow. They are doing that well enough behind the lines. Remember, practically every coolie who goes to France releases an able-bodied man to go into the trenches. I'm not sure, though, that the coolie himself wouldn't like a turn in the trenches!"

"He won't be given a turn, will he?" asked Jule's partner.

"I'm afraid not. Yet you never can tell. If the war goes on long enough I don't see why they shouldn't bring over a few hundred thousand of these splendid fellows. Probably they would make good fighters—almost as good fighters as they are labourers. At all events, if they don't get a Tommy's chance in this war, they will get it sooner or later in their own country. It will be a war of their

own—a civil war—not flesh and blood against flesh and blood, but clean, clear open minds against the dirt and truck and turgidness of centuries. When these men go back to China they won't be satisfied with the old life, the constricted and congested village life; they will want an existence more akin to our Western ideas and ideals of life; they will want more order, more open spaces, more cleanliness, and they won't want to stick in one place their whole lives. They will want to move from one part of the country to the other, and mix and throw light into one another's lives. In a word they will be progressive."

"Not surely as we have been progressive," commented the young collegian. "Look where our progress has led us."

The dance had finished and they were sitting again at the table.

"No," continued Jule, "their progress won't lead them to racial suicide. And I think if the truth were known their leaders are pretty sick of civil war. They want to get together, as you Americans say, and construct. Indeed, I shouldn't wonder if a really stable form of government resulted from their

labour movement. Just a few drops of the best blood of China are in France—the simple solid farming folk of China—and that blood will go back one day to leaven the whole lump."

"What are you young people talking about?" put in Jule's sister.

"Something we don't know much about," he answered blushingly. "The old Chinks ——" he began.

"Don't call them *Chinks*," the American girl said, pouting. "I'll never call them Chinks again! I think they are just little tin gods!"

. . . . .

It is the destiny of all Coolie Labour Battalions, once landed in France, to be divided into I don't know how many parts, and dispersed over a wide area of usefulness. Only in transportation is it a body, having a character quite its own. It ceases to exist, save in name.

If, in certain minds, the "O.K." Battalion is immortalized it shall be for these:

The Christian sergeant of E Company, who renounced pedagogy in China for labour in

France. He converted his entire company if not to Christianity, then to hymn-singing and to a kind of prayer which certainly was not "heathenish." I see him again, in his company's hold, the centre of a throng of coolies. His squat little Napoleonic figure is swaying in time to the melody of "Onward, Christian Soldiers." He beats the time with a red paper-covered book. His voice clear and strong, though to our ears quite unattractive, rings above the rest. And the rest in varying pitch and with tinsel timbre follow him as best they can. And they find themselves being led not by his definite beat, but by his boundless enthusiasm. I don't suppose the Christian sergeant had missionary ideas of conversion. He had a pretty good idea of Christianity himself; he could teach probably as well as he had been taught. But he knew better than the missionary the dangers of half turning a man towards some new light. So he left the creed alone; he didn't preach. Only he sang and prayed, and his song was a rousing hymn and his prayer was a jolly sensible talk.

Nothing could disturb the equanimity of the old chap, not even the report that one of

his own coolies had done wrong. I think he must have thought of it in this way, that unintentionally the coolie hadn't done right, not that he had purposely done wrong. He was kindly and liberal towards his men, but he was not a softie. I imagine that his rebuke, which he never backed up with physical force, was very efficacious. He would take a man apart and explain his error. He would, I dare say, trade upon his knowledge of the classics to awe and gain obedience from the offender. The Chinese profoundly respect learning and listen more readily to figurative reason than to bullying rebuke. How well the Christian sergeant understood his men and what excellent results he obtained!

Then there was the little actor of F Company who had belonged to a company of strolling players in China and who never ceased to play the fool from the day he became a labourer. He was a little fellow who looked not more than seventeen or eighteen. Mischief was writ large on every feature of his little bronze face; his hazel squint eyes danced from dawn to sundown. For just a coolie he was almost dangerously

intelligent. He had a great following in his company. He could amuse a crowd at any moment, and when he hadn't a crowd he could amuse himself. He was something of an acrobat. He would turn cartwheels or do the splits or stand on his head for no reason at all. But he could amuse best by mimicry. He would take off company commanders in their most solemn moments. He would imitate a Canadian sentry on guard, flagrantly showing his disrespect for that gentleman. As for the coolie police, he would play the clown before those dignitaries as they filed to their posts whether on board ship or in camp. He was intensely in his element when in Canada a company of actors and acrobats was called for to amuse parties of jaded Brass Hats who came out to visit or inspect the camp. Nobody interfered with him, and he gradually worked up into the unofficial position of battalion clown. Nobody interfered with him until one day (between a port in Western Canada and the Panama Canal) he lodged a complaint with the Adjutant of the "O.K." party to the effect that his company commander had in a fit of anger or insanity seized his kit-bag and thrown the

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same overboard. Inquiry revealed that said company commander had confiscated his sleeping mat—the least important item of a coolie's kit—owing to its uncleanness. As for the essentials—shoes, socks, spare uniform, waterproof coat, water-bottle, etc.—these were in the hands of a Canadian private (a trophy collector and evidently possessed of private means) who had paid what to the mind of the little actor was a fair price. A negotiation most uningeniously explained, thought the Adjutant, who after meting out due punishment and regaining the kit for safe-keeping, appointed the culprit personal servant of the battalion sergeant-major, with the strict injunction to devote himself personally to the cleanliness of the latter's quarters.

This didn't end the career of the actor. He made himself so objectionable to the sergeant-major that that worthy wouldn't have him at any price. So he was sent back to his company. An opportunity to cut a caper soon presented itself. At New York a British gun crew came on board our transport. They had their quarters in the stern not far from the coolies' quarters. The

battalion clown lost no time in trading upon the new-comers' fascination with the coolies, and he had soon ensconced himself as servant in their quarters. He played up to them—they petted him and thought him a "quaint little Chink." Two days out from port a gun-layer missed his watch! then in swift succession several other articles disappeared. Suspicion, of course, fell on the actor. The gun crew complained to a C.L.C. officer.

What could be done? They had paid the price of their ignorance and the actor of his folly. For a long time he ceased to amuse the battalion.

We cannot forget the Chinese doctor, a lad of five-and-twenty, who wore large gold-rimmed spectacles and looked a student every inch of him. Dr. Fang was bookish and didactic. His knowledge of materia medica was wide and exact. He was very fond of diagnosing in circumlocutory fashion the disease of a coolie. A theorist he was, but a practitioner also, and a jolly good one. He had extraordinary patience. It takes patience to prescribe correctly for a score of coolies, not a quarter of whom have the least idea what is wrong with them. When not prac-

tising, he read. He used modestly to tell how in his final exam. at Peking University, he passed second in a class of fifty. He was going to France to work in the Chinese hospital there. Nothing was going to disturb him, not even the war. He was such a calm fellow. The stay in France was going to be just an interlude in life. And then one day he would go back to Peking and take the final exam. again and come out right on top.

There was the interpreter, Kwong, who spoke better Chinese than do most interpreters. He used to be a clerk in a large shipping firm in Hankow. He was accustomed to ordering men about. His position as chief interpreter to the "O.K." party developed his ability in this direction. But let it be said to the credit of his character, he never abused his authority. His finest moment was when lecturing a mass meeting of all ranks. The Adjutant would suggest what had to be said and Kwong would say it, finely employing emphasis by tone and gesture. Kwong's great sorrow was that he couldn't stand the slightest sea. When it was not calm he was nobody on board.

Kwong's kind are generally stigmatized as

"interrupters" simply because they are failures as interpreters. The sense of one's say has to be understood by the medium before it can be communicated. Interpreters as a rule either misconstrue or do not understand at all. They interrupt. Not so Kwong. The most idiomatic English was not too much for him. And the faster one spoke the more clearly he seemed to comprehend.

For a Chinese he saw the war in remarkably clear outline. He knew why we were at war, which is more than half of us know. A fusion of patriotic and financial motives had moved him to resign a hopeful position in Hankow. Although not a northerner he loved the coolies and himself settled many a petty dispute.

There was also the "Good-looker" who was so like a girl, what with his large playful brown eyes, Cupid lips and a rose in either cheek, that passing him one could not but help have a second look at him, and desire half involuntarily to catch his eye and hold him at gaze. On seeing an officer he would come to attention with lightning precision and stand smiling—his smile (never to be forgotten) at strange variance with his

serious rigid pose. He was the friend of all, and even after being promoted to policeman he continued to be a friend of all; which is notable, for a C.L.C. policeman is seldom anything but the enemy of all.

There was the plump sergeant-major who when appointed to that most honoured rank (the highest to which a coolie can attain) protested modestly that his education had not fitted him therefor and that he would rather see (for the good of the battalion) So-and-so made sergeant-major. Which, of course, was camouflage, in the classic Chinese manner. He no more expected to have his sergeant-majority taken away than a coolie who offers you his dish of rice expects you to take it from him.

And these among others too numerous to name are at work in France. Some are marching by the harvested fields of the Somme country on their way to chalk pits to dig ballast for light railways; others are on the docks in great ports of the South, loading and unloading the cargoes of war; yet others are digging trenches within sound of the guns, with 'planes droning overhead, not so far away from the wings of death. A few on

account of their special knowledges are retained at Base Headquarters, happy in the field office or the Y.M.C.A. Canteen.

And they are shod with heavy army boots and their shins are bound about with puttees. They sleep for the most part in huts and are well supplied with blankets. They have enough to eat and enough to do. And they are earning money.

The Interminable Journey is over. France at last. "And it's not so bad," said Lin Ching to himself as he saluted a British N.C.O. who affectionately called him Jumbo.

THE END