

We remained only a few days in Gantok, and then pushed on toward the Tibetan frontier, for we were well on in the summer now, and we wanted, if possible, to get the matter settled before winter. The rain never ceased: bucketfuls and bucketfuls came drenching down. The ordinary waterproofing in which we wrapped our luggage was soaked through as if it had been paper. In the valley bottom we passed the camp of the 32nd Pioneers engaged in improving the road, and anything more depressing and miserable I have never seen. Tents, clothes, furniture—everything was soaking. The heat was stifling, the insect pests unbearable. Fever sapped the life out of the men, and one shuddered at the misery of life under such conditions: day after day, week after week, month after month, digging and blasting away at a road which as soon as it was made was washed into the river again; wet through with rain and with perspiration while at work, and finding everything equally moist on returning to camp; tormented with insect pests at work and in camp by night and by day. Yet it was only by mastering such conditions as these that the eventual settlement with Tibet was ever rendered possible.

Fortunately for them, some 200 were now to leave these dismal surroundings and accompany me to the Tibetan frontier as escort. We marched on up the valley by a road carried in many places along the side of precipices overhanging the roaring river, and with neither wall nor railing intervening between one and destruction. Only in Hunza, beyond Kashmir, have I seen a more precarious roadway. The same luxuriant vegetation extended everywhere. But what impressed me most in this middle region of Sikkim were the glorious waterfalls. Never anywhere have I seen their equal. We were in the midst of the rains. The torrents were full to the limit, and they would come, boiling, foaming, thundering down the mountain-sides in long series of cascades, gleaming white through the ever-green forest, and festooned over and framed with every graceful form of palm and fern and foliage.

And now, as we reached the higher regions, the loathsome leeches, the mosquitoes, gnats, and midges, were left