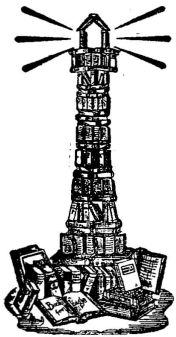
ESCAPE FROM THE YELLOW PERIL

Personal Experiences of an Evacuee from Burma

by

ALLAN KNIGHT



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TO
ALL THOSE
LESS FORTUNATE THAN
MYSELF
WHO TREKKED THROUGH
THE VALLEY OF DEATH,
THE HUKAWNG VALLEY.

FOREWORD

Journalism was not a profession which was advanced in Burma and consequently, after coming over to India from Japanese-invaded Burma, but few evacuees took up their pens and described their adventures on the way out. Those who have done so have confined themselves to magazine articles giving briefly an account of their journeys. Some fiction has also been published describing life while fleeing before the oncoming Japanese. There are, however, but few published records of day-to-day events showing how any particular person managed to get out of Burma and come to India.

The following pages will therefore be a supplement to what little has already appeared or they may even fill a gap. I trust the account will be valuable as a documentary record and also of interest to the general reader.

The narrative is based on brief notes,

which I kept in a small pocket-diary where two days were assigned to a page. It was written in Lahore in the Albert-Victor Hospital, which I had entered soon after my arrival from Burma, to check up on my health. I was at one time 12½ stone and, although I had already begun losing weight before leaving Burma, I had gone down in weight a great deal and was at this time only 9 stone and 6 pounds.

I could do sustained literary work; for, although in hospital, I was not actually ill. I was kept under observation only and was the subject of all kinds of tests, but that was all. After thirteen days I was discharged as the medical authorities could find nothing wrong with me. It was during these few days that I wrote the following narrative.

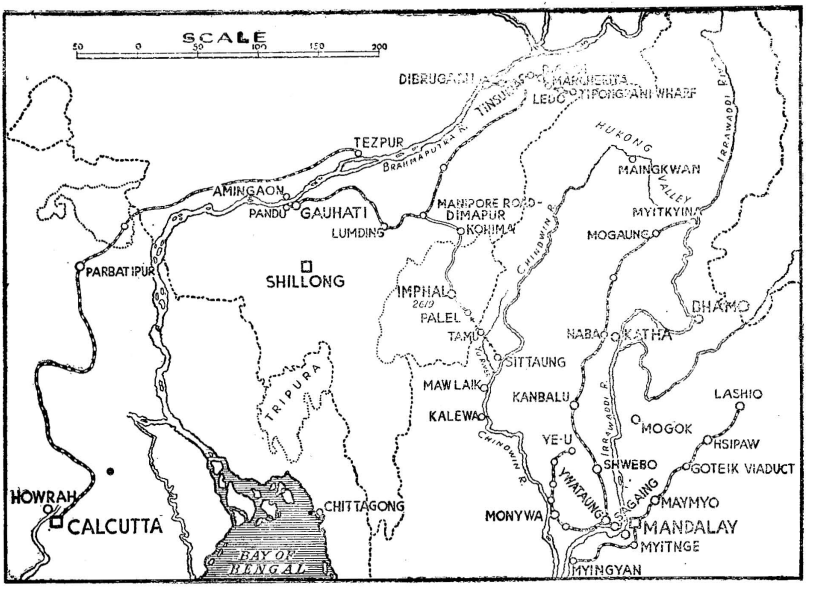
I typed out a copy during the rains, of 1942 at Moradabad in the United Provinces, but after I had completed the job, I was too busy moving from place to place. These journeyings were occasioned partly by calls to Delhi for interviews in connection with posts to which I was never

lucky enough to be appointed and partly on account of the necessity to dodge passing the hot weather in the inland plains. Thus the typescript was put away for two years or more while I wandered about from Bangalore to Kashmir and from Allahabad to Bombay.

Having had an attack of cholera in Kashmir in October 1944, I came back to Moradabad with my mind made up not to seek employment. With my mind set at rest on the subject of work, I again turned to my typescript. I added to it and decided to have it published. This is how it appears at this juncture when the British are again back in Burma.

BOMBAY,
June, 1945.

ALLAN KNIGHT



Map of Burma Showing Routes of evacuation.

PLANS FRUSTRATED BY THE WAR

After two or three years on duty, persons employed in Government service in the East usually begin to cast about and make plans for their next period of long leave. Late in 1938 and in 1939, I was dreaming in Rangoon of going down the Nile valley by river steamer. My idea was to take leave in 1940 and to go to Mombassa, then through Kenya, and down the Nile valley to Cairo *en route* to Europe, where I was going to visit Rome, Buda-Pest, Vienna and Paris, on my way to England.

The outbreak of the War put an end to these plans and I stayed in Rangoon and continued to slog away at my files in the Burma Secretariat. I never imagined that instead of steaming down the Nile, I would be making my way up the Irrawaddy

and Chindwin rivers in Burma itself in 1942. But such was my fate that I was glad to avail myself of the dingy vessels of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company as an evacuee fleeing before the ferocious and cunning Japanese.

UNPERTURBED RANGOON

After a series of practice blackouts, a permanent blackout descended on the city. Although these measures and the erection of baffle walls and air-raid shelters should have made the populace war-minded, this was not the case and life went on as usual. At a time when there should have been questionings as to the strength of the defences and the preparations for strengthening them further, there was complacency.

Burra Sahibs, satisfied with themselves and all around them, puffed their fat Burma cheroots and swigged their pegs in the Pegu and Gymkhana Clubs, contentedly fattening on the extraordinarily large shipments of rice and lead being loaded on to the numerous Jap freighters in the river. The Gloucester Regiment orchestra still played soft and hot music alternately at the before and after dinner dances at the Gymkhana and

the Silver Grill, Rangoon's top-notch place for dinners and dances, was in full swing. The Mayo Marine Club still held its weekly Wednesday night dances. There were RAF men in the city now. They and the men of the attenuated battalion of the Gloucester Regiment filled the small Park Restaurant, the Mayfair and Maxim's to capacity and the demi-monde was having a good time, dancing, sweating and making assignments. Neither the Burra Sahibs, nor the military, nor the civilian population knew what was coming to them in a short time.

Pearl Harbour gave a jolt, but there was no alarm. The first real sign to disturb the prevailing equanimity was the order to the staff of the Burma Secretariat to pack up for dispersal to the suburbs of Rangoon. This order was given on the 9th December and was swiftly followed by the news of the Japanese invasion of Burma on that very day.

On the 13th December there were three air-raid warnings, but nothing happened, and as the defences had not been tested, complacency still continued. All this was,

however, suddenly changed on December 23, when Rangoon had its first bombs.

Tuesday December 23, First Bombs on Rangoon.

I was in the centre of the European business quarter, busily buying Christmas cards in a shop, which was a few steps from Fytche Square, when the first bombs dropped at 10-10 a. m. After one or two explosions, I left the shop, which was full of glass show-cases and therefore dangerous. I went down the side-street and sheltered in a doorway. The bombs came nearer and nearer and at last there was a terrible crash close by. The old building, where I and some others had taken shelter, creaked and rumbled so much that I feared it would topple on our heads. In a few moments, there was another crash, but luckily, not so near. All of us in that vestibule were terrified. One of the Muhammedans who was there was every now and then down on his knees muttering prayers. He was evidently a man strong in faith; for after the others had gone and he and I were left alone, he assured me that nothing could happen to us unless Allah gave the *hukum*. I later visited the scene and found

that the first big crash near us had been caused by a bomb which has fallen about one hundred feet away from where we had sheltered—lower down the side street.

At midday, although the "All Clear" had not yet been sounded, I left my shelter and found a series of proper air-raid shelters nearby. To my surprise, they were completely empty. After staying here for about half an hour, I made my way on foot to 49th Street East Rangoon, about a mile away. At the corner of Phayre and Dalhousie Street, where a bomb had burst a water-main just outside the Central Telegraph Office, water was gushing out. In Phayre Street, a large European owned shop which had its premises on both sides of the street was badly damaged and glass from its windows were all over the street. I spoke to a gentleman employed at the shop and he told me that the Burra Sahib, his wife and a French hairdresser had been killed Here, as in Fraser Street the dead lay around. One was a stall-keeper, who used to sell cigarettes cold drinks and betel-nut. He was sitting up in his stall case. I was making my way to the house of a relative and when

I got to there I found they were packing up to leave, as their locality had been badly attacked. I had a hurried meal and left with them, going to another relative's house in the superior residential area near Government House. I remained here all day and at night had a lift in a motor car to the house of a friend living at Kanbe, 4½ miles out of town.

The Japs had had it entirely their own way over the city. The wave that had attacked the air-field at Mingaladon, 12 miles away, had met with resistance from the planes on the British side, but those which had come over the city were met, with only inadequate anti-aircraft fire. They had not only dropped their bombs, but had flown low and machine-gunned the streets. About 2,000 were reported killed. There was utter confusion and alarm among the people, but the organized bodies did their duty well and by nightfall most of the dead had been removed from the streets. Lorries came and picked them up and they were taken to the cemeteries and cremated. The transport system broke down and taxis were charging Rs. 5 for mile trips in town.

By the afternoon, thousands of terrified Indians were streaming out of the city along the Prome Road. They were going anywhere so long as they got out of the city. Most of them, however, in the end were making their way to Chittagong, *via* Prome, Padaung, Taungup and Akyab.

On Christmas Day I was still at Kanbe. A few minutes afternoon, we sat down to lunch and the first person to be served was just helping herself when the siren sounded. Abandoning our meal, we went into the trench and soon the bombs began to drop. This time the Japs had another target. They were trying to hit. Government House and the Electric Power Station; so my relatives, who had gone to that area, were having another taste of the Jap bombs. The Gymkhana Club was hit, the Dufferin Hospital was hit and a whole area in West Rangoon was burnt out. Government House was and the Power Station were not hit and my relatives came through their second bombing safely. No bombs came near Kanbe, but we had our Christmas lunch cold at 2 p. m.

December 25, 1941. Second Bombing of Rangoon.

The city became still more disorganized. Large numbers were in a state of consternation. Bazaars and shops were closing: servants were decamping and difficulties increased in every way. By the 27th the General Post Office was temporarily not functioning and on that day we could get no bread.

After these two bombings, there were no more attacks on the city itself. In all later attacks, the target was the airfield, except on two occasions—once when the suburbs were bombed and another time when a liquor shop in Pazundaung was gutted. My diary shows that raids and warnings were as follows:

January	4	1942	Warning	5 a. m.
,,	5	,,	Air-raid	2-30 a. m.
,,	6	,,	Air-raid	2 a. m.
,,	7	,,	Air-raids	4 p. m. and 10 p. m.
,,	8	,,	Air-raid	3 a. m.
,,	9	,,	Air-raid	5-30 a. m.
,,	10	,,	Air-raids	Early morning and 1 p. m.
,,	11	,,	Warning	Early morning.
,,	12	,,	Heavy air-raid	4 a. m
,,	13	,,	Air-raid	5-35. a. m. for an hour.
,,	14	,,	Air-raid	Early morning Very widespread. Suburbs hit.

It went on like this. I made up my mind to go to India thinking I would be able to return after six months. I obtained leave from my Burman boss and my idea was to go *via* Bassein, Sandoway and Akyab to Chittagong. This would be a less congested route, I thought, and better than the one *via* Prome and Taungup, on which cholera had broken out.

DEPARTURE

Saturday, February 14, I leave Rangoon.

My first difficulty was to get on board the launch going to Bassein. Crowds were apparently taking the same route as myself. However, I managed to get aboard with my cabin trunk, bedding roll and tiffin carrier and to obtain possession of the Second Class berth, which I had booked. One of the Passengers on the same vessel was 'Tiger' Ady, a well-known figure in athletic circles in Rangoon and now an Officer in the Burma Rifles.

FIRST SETBACK DUE TO GOVT. ACTION

Sunday, February 15, Singapore surrenders.

On our arrival at Bassein the next day, a visit to the District Superintendent of Police, Mr. C. B. Orr, disclosed the fact that

no one proceeding to Akyab would be allowed to go on, as the crowds of evacuees arriving at Akyab from Prome were already too large and it was undesirable that another stream of evacuees should converge on that town. This was setback No. 1.

I was not the only one who was disappointed. There were many others, including large numbers of South Indian Coolies who were later massacred by the Bassein Burmans. As the Japanese advance into Burma was very rapid, time was of great consequence. All those who went to Bassein intending to go on to Akyab lost very precious time.

SECOND SETBACK

Arrangements were being made for the evacuation of a number by launch to Chittagong ; but I learnt that only women and children could be accommodated. This was setback No. 2.

THIRD SETBACK DUE TO RED TAPE

There was a steamer in port which

would be sailing for Calcutta and my hopes of a comfortable get-away rose high. Here would be an easy way out, but I was to encounter set-back No. 3. Although Singapore had fallen and the Japanese could sail at any time up the Bay of Bengal to Rangoon and Bassein, red tape still held fast. The vessel was a tramp and the Board of Trade did not permit of its taking more than twelve passengers. The shipping company in Rangoon could not see their way to relax the regulations! As the number was so limited, all the berths would, of course, have to go to women and children.

Monday February 16, Thaton captured by the Japanese.

AN ALTERNATIVE—SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

Consequently, I and some others canvassed the idea of engaging a native craft and proceeding by sea to Chittagong. The West Coast Burmans regularly sail up and down the coast in their boats and the journey could be made. Our party, however, could muster only six men and we were entirely without fire-arms. The crew could easily attack us while we were sea-sick,

take our money and throw us overboard; so after several sleepless nights and anxious days, given to the consideration of the question whether we should take the risk, the proposal was turned down.

SECOND ROUTE DECIDED ON

Thursday, February 19, I decide to go to North.

When this decision had been made, I at once took steps to leave Bassein as soon as possible. The Northern route *via* Manipur was the one for me as the Prome-Taungup-Akyab-Chittagong route was undesirable on account of cholera.

I could go back to Rangoon and take train to Mandalay; but there was a rush to Mandalay even before I left Rangoon and I knew it would be very difficult to get along that way. Besides I did not know what the situation was as the arrival of newspapers from Rangoon ceased. Accordingly when I went to the Bassein Railway Station, I made arrangements to go to Prome by train. The train was leaving early next morning and Mr. J. Simon, the Senior Customs Officer, who had very kindly

extended the hospitality of his bunglow to me, took me and the little belongings left to me down to the station in his car the same night. He said it was usual in Bassein to board the train the previous night and to make sure of a good seat.

BASSEIN TO LETPADAN

The train started on time and I was glad to find myself in the same carriage with people known to me. We arrived at Henzada and then went on to Henzada Shore where we got the ferry to take us to the opposite bank of the river. On the ferry I met a Burman lawyer whom I knew; and, as I was going to Prome where there are no hotels I did not know where I was going to stay. I mentioned my difficulty to him and he wrote in my diary a note to a friend in the Police asking that officer to put me up. On the other bank, the Burman lawyer and I got into the same carriage, but we parted at Letpadan beyond which the train did not go. Here at Letpadan I was to catch the Prome Mail at midnight. I had a refreshing bath and dinner at the house of a friend and then went to the station

to await the mail train. It was now February 20.

NEWS OF THE GENERAL EVACUATION OF RANGOON

Friday February 20, Order issued for the general evacuation of Rangoon within 48 hours.

At about 10 p. m. the station was buzzing with the news that the order to evacuate Rangoon within forty-eight hours had been given earlier in the day and that the Prome Mail had been cancelled to make way for an evacuation train which was coming through. Soon, people fleeing from Rangoon in motor cars, began to stop at the Station and excitement ran high as more and more details about the situation in Rangoon became known. It was learnt, for instance, that the prisoners at the Insein Jail, nine miles from Rangoon, had been liberated and that the roads were jammed with motor vehicles of all sorts coming out of Rangoon.

At about 11 p. m. the evacuation train came to a halt at the station and Indian soldiers with fixed bayonets got out and stood guard on the platform. It was a train

evacuating women essential workers, of whom there were very few, so that the train was almost empty. At the station there was a gentleman who had been a rubber planter and miner in Mergui and who had lost everything. His wife and seven small children were in the waiting room. Seeing the train almost empty, he pleaded with the Military officer-in-charge to allow his wife and children to travel by the train which was going to Prome. The officer asked him why he was running away and told him that only those with passes which had been issued in Rangoon could travel on the train. Red tape again. When asked why he was on the run, the gentleman very naturally asked what necessity there was to evacuate those in the train if there was no reason to flee. The military officer preferred not to attempt a reply and walked away.

NIGHTMARE JOURNEY FROM LETPADAN TO PROME ON A REFUGEE TRAIN

There was a local train to leave Prome at 7 a. m. This came alongside the platform at midnight. The gentleman with the large

family formed a party including myself. We knew that there were no first-class passengers to travel by the train; and, led by him, we made for the only first class compartment. It was a very long train and, as the station was blacked out and the platform chock full of people and their baggage, it was with difficulty that we managed to secure place in the compartment. In the end, there were in this compartment, which was designated to seat eight persons, no less than twenty-seven of us including a coolie, some servants and one of the liberated convicts. The top bunks were let down and some of the children were put up there. The coolie and the ex-convict had no luggage, but the belongings of all the rest of us were also in the compartment and in the adjoining lavatory. I and two others were perched on top of boxes in this delactable adjoining chamber and I dozed off during the night. In the morning the train started off fully loaded with humanity. They were mostly Indians and were everywhere: in the other compartments, in goods wagons, hanging on at the sides and even on the roofs of the bogies.

Saturday, February 21, I arrive at Prome.

The train was very slow one; and, as it was a local, it stopped at every station and brought us into Prome only at about 2 P. M. Relatives of mine who had left Rangoon earlier I found to be still at Prome and so I had no necessity to seek the hospitability of the Police Officer to whom I had a note. My relatives had no room in the house, but they provided me with a cot in the front porch and I had a good night's rest.

ANOTHER SETBACK AND HOW I OVERCAME IT

Sunday, February 22, I leave Prome.

Next day was a Sunday. After church, I went to the bazaar with Mr. F. J. S. Boudville and bought an umbrella—a cheap one such as is supplied to Durwans. This umbrella proved very useful subsequently in the trek both to myself and others who shared its shelter when it rained. After a good breakfast I made my way to make enquiries to the wharf used by the river steamers. I was near it when the air-raid siren blew and I had to flee into a near-by

trench. The Japanese planes flew overhead; but it must have been only a reconnaissance flight; for no bombs were dropped. Soon, I had said my good-byes to my relatives, put my worldly goods in a rickshaw and was on my way back to the wharf. Having descended the steep slope of the river bank, I was just making my way to the *flat*, which served as a pontoon, when I found my way barred by a European. He stated that the vessel going to Mandalay was midstream and that he would allow me to go on board only if there was room and that in the meanwhile I was to stay on the river bank. Later when others were allowed on the pontoon, I went too. By the time a small launch came alongside to take passengers on board the larger vessel going upstream, there was a rush. I got on board too and my luggage was just coming aboard when the same European whom I had encountered before ordered me off the boat. I obeyed unquestioningly, but my heart sank as I had heard rumours that this daily service to Mandalay would close with this sailing. I hung about the pontoon for an hour wondering whether

I should go with my luggage and sit by the highway and hitch hike. Then I espied some local craft going alongside the Mandalay launch. When one such boat, on returning from the launch, came near the pontoon, I asked the boatman to take me also to the launch promising them a rupee. When I got alongside, I saw a clerk from the shore office of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, which maintained the river service, and promised him ten rupees if he would allow me aboard. He agreed and hastily putting my things aboard I followed and crouched down near some Chinese so as not to be noticed. I was on my knees hiding my face, which was near the floor behind the back of a Chinaman. Once when I looked up, I found myself almost face to face with the same European. When he moved off to some other part of the deck, some passengers who had noticed that I was not wishing to be seen advised me to go on the other side of the forward cabin. I ran there leaving my spectacles and pocket-book behind. Here I sat down on the deck near some Indian ladies. Soon after, the launch weighed

anchor, and I knew that the European must have left for the shore. I then went back to my baggage near the Chinese and got back my glasses and my pocket-book—but minus a five rupee note which was in the book. The clerk, to whom I had promised the ten rupees, had also disappeared; so I was not so badly off.

AMONG DECK PASSENGERS

When I had gone to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Office at Prome, they had told me that there was no room in the first or second class, so I felt I must make the best of it as a deck passenger. The deck was crowded and I had no room to unroll my bedding and spread it for a sleep. I sat up the whole night on my bedding roll and it was very cold in the early hours of the morning. Although so crowded, the launch put in at every stopping place apparently and more and more deck passengers were allowed to come aboard. My place was near the gangway and at Allanmyo there was a great rush and I had to endure a deal of pushing and shoving.

BURMAN LAUNCH CLERK TREATS ME WITH SCANT CIVILITY—TRANSFER TO THE SECOND CLASS

I realized that again for the second and remaining nights there would be no chance to lie down, so I went to the clerk of the boat and told him that I would like to transfer to the second class and that it did not matter whether I had a berth or not—I would be content to sleep on the floor of the saloon. He said he could not be sure whether arrangements could be made, but would let me know. After two hours, as he had not come and told me anything, I went to his cabin. He was entertaining friends and put me off. I remained outside his door for two hours and then he conducted me to the second class. Later, when my baggage was being brought up, the butler started making objections. I had, however, made friends with certain of the second class passengers and they spoke to the butler and settled me in.

MYINGYAN TO MANDALAY

At Myingyan, where we had to transfer to another river steamer and where there was railway connection with Mandalay, I

debated with myself whether to go on by river or whether to take the train. The trouble to reach the station decided me against going by train. The river was very low on account of the fact that we were well on into the dry season and the distance between the steamer and the station was about three miles, a stretch which would have to be covered by bullock-cart. The "Kinu" brought us up to Mandalay and we were alongside at 10 A. M. the next day, after a journey of three nights and over two days. Here four Burmans, in two parties of two each, quarrelled over my baggage as both parties wanted to be my coolies.

Tuesday, February 24, British forces withdraw west of the Sittang river.

Thursday, February 26, I arrive at Mandalay.

NOWHERE TO STAY BUT GOOD NEWS

On a previous occasion when I had come to Mandalay on a pleasure trip in my motor car, I had put up at the Railway Rest Rooms; but I realized that that place the Circuit House and the Dak Bungalow would be full up. I went instead to the Commissioner's Office, where I knew the Per-

sonal Assistant, who kept my things in his office while I went off to find accommodation. At the Commissioner's office, I met a lady friend, evacuated from Rangoon, who informed me that convoys to go to India *via* Tamu were being formed in Mandalay and that a Mr. Windsor of the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation was registering names. The lady also gave me the welcome information that the convoys were being provided with armed escorts. All this was new indeed; I went straight to Mr. Windsor and put my name down. He asked my age and when I told him I was 48 he indicated that there would be some difficulty since I was under 50; but he told me to keep in touch.

Mandalay is a place of distances. It was now about noon and, as I was beginning to feel hungry, I was making my way to the bazaar, where I knew of some Chinese eating houses. On the way, I met a gentleman known to me in Rangoon, and I mentioned that I had not yet arranged about accommodation. He at once invited me to come and stay with himself and family, saying that he was living

across the river. Thinking that his place was directly across the river, I gratefully accepted, only to find that Mingun, the village near to which he was staying, was seven miles up the river. Sometimes a launch would give one a lift, but usually the distance had to be covered by sampan, taking three hours to and one and a half hours from Mingun. There were 2 'alerts' on this my first day in Mandalay.

AT MINGUN

Having been told that those who go in the convoys are limited to luggage weighing not more than sixty pounds, I spent my first day at Mingun lightening my trunk, in which I had more papers than clothes. I broke up a book of cuttings of my own writings and saved only those sheets on which cuttings were pasted. I destroyed every unnecessary paper and where only half a sheet had been used, I cut off the blank half. In this way, I reduced the weight by three pounds. Mingun is famous for its great bell, second in size to that at the Kremlin but I had no time to go and see it.

I MOVE TO MANDALAY

Sunday, March 1, I leave Mingun and come back to Mandalay.

Rangoon-Mandalay railway cut by the Japs.

On my visit to Mandalay the next day I learnt that male evacuees were being afforded shelter at St. Peter's School, the institution of the Christian Brothers. I went there, was introduced to the brother Director (a Breton) and obtained permission to stay. After three nights at Mingun, on Sunday, March 1st, I thanked my Mingun host and hostess and came over to Mandalay, which had 3 'alerts' on that day.

I MEET A CLOSE PAL

Next morning (March 2), when in town I was hailed by my closest pal, whom I had seen off to the front some time before when I was in Rangoon. He belonged to the Armoured Car Section of the Rangoon Battalion Burma Auxiliary Force. He and his companions had to run across the Sittang Bridge leaving their car behind just before it was blown up. Not knowing where the headquarters of their unit was,

they had made their way to Mandalay. They had reported to the Upper Burma Battalion of the Burma Auxiliary Force, to the Brigade Office and elsewhere, but no authority seemed to be concerned or interested in them. All this and much else he told me in the back parlour of a Chinese eating house, which, though unlicensed, could produce beer for back-parlour customers. After a meal of Panthay Kautkswe, a speciality of the Chinese Mohammedans, we went off and my friend bought a wedding ring; for in the lull he was going off to Pakokku to marry the girl whom he had been courting for five years. The best of it was that he did not know whether there would be a *padre* at or near that town to perform the ceremony.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

March 3, Govt. of Burma left Rangoon.

In the dormitory in St. Peter's school there were with me some members of the Rangoon Fire Brigade. There were also some half a dozen Europeans, whose average weight would have been nearer fifteen

stone than twelve. On enquiry, I was informed that these heavyweights were members of the Rangoon Auxiliary Fire Service. I should have liked to have seen them shining down poles at a Fire Station or scrambling up ladders at a fire. But I suppose they never attempted anything calling for agility and were not expected to.

RUMOURS

As there were no newspapers in English, the only news that one got in Mandalay was what one as told by others. All kinds of rumours were floating about. On the first day of my arrival in Mandalay, I was repeating news which I had heard, *viz.* that Prome had been bombed. This was in the street as I was walking along with someone else. A British Officer overheard me and took it upon himself to tell me off. On the same day rumour had it that the whole central portion of the city of Rangoon had been blown up. This later proved to be untrue. I heard, at the same time, that my friend Mr. Bond and his younger son were making their way to India *via* Prome. The very

next day I was definitely told that they were at Pakokku. On the 6th March, there was definite news from the Rangoon Radio. It stated that the Japanese had been pushed back somewhat; that Rangoon was quiet but that Indians and rich Burmans were being looted in the suburbs. It also stated that the situation in Java was grave. Rumour added that 100,000 Chinese troops were moving towards the Sittang and that the Burma W. A. Cs., about 160 in number, had been evacuated by sea to India and were to go to Delhi.

DATE OF DEPARTURE FIXED

Everyday, I went to the office where the arrangements for the convoys were being made. This was not a Government Office but that of the Bombay-Burma Trading Co. Objection on the score that I was not yet 50 years of age seemed to fade; and, after a few days, I was told the glad news that I was to go in the 3rd convoy, leaving Mandalay on Sunday, 8th March.

FORGETFULNESS ALMOST LEADS TO DISASTER

We were to be at the Railway Station

at 8-30 A. M. I was at the station well before the time and it soon become evident from the prevailing confusion that the train would not be starting on time. I was passing the time away chatting on the platform when the man I was talking to, mentioned something about money and this made me put my hand to my side to feel for my own money. To my consternation, I found that I had started on my journey without my cash. I flew out of the station and, forgetting that there were taxis, I jumped into a *gharry* and promised the driver a very good fare. It was about half a mile to the house of a friend where I had left my money. The *gharry-wallah* did his best and I got to the house and dashed straight into the bathroom.

Sunday, March 8, I leave Mandalay for India.

There was the money bag, which I kept tied round my waist and which I had taken off the evening before when I had had a bath. Having examined it and finding the contents intact, I hurriedly explained the cause of my return to the people of the house, wished them good-bye once more and was off again to the station as fast as

the *gharry* could go. What a relief it was to find that the train had not gone off without me. Indeed, there was plenty of time; for another hour or so passed before it steamed out of the station bound for Monywa, where we were to embark on a launch of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, for our trip up the Chindwin River.

MANDALAY TO MONYWA BY TRAIN

Soon after leaving Mandalay, the train crossed the Irrawaddy river over the great Ava bridge, which was opened in 1934 and is comparable in size with the Dufferin bridge near Benares. When we had crossed the bridge, the train came to Sagaing, a spread-out town built on hills which rise immediately out of the river, with pagodas on every high point. The scene was of green trees with pagodas, mostly white, standing out everywhere.

The train came to Monywa, our destination, at about two in the afternoon and two other men and I had a ride of about a mile to the riverside in a bullock-cart seated on top of our luggage.

Another steep incline, down which we had to scramble, brought us to the stern-

wheeler which was to be our home for the next few days, while we proceeded up the Chindwin river. We were to be deck passengers and we all secured places by spreading our bedding rolls. When we had been settled in, some went ashore to make last-minute purchases.

SHORTAGE OF CIGARETTES

There had been a shortage of cigarettes in Mandalay and many went in search of some here. But the position in Monywa in regard to smokes was even worse than in the Upper Burma capital. Even Indian *bidees* were unobtainable and the mild type of Burmese cigars were purchased by many.

Arrangements were made to feed the whole party and at dinner time an excellent mutton stew was served out of a bucket. The quality of the meal gave general satisfaction and everyone was happy and contented when they settled down for the night.

AWAY UP THE CHINDWIN RIVER—STUCK ON A SANDBANK

Early in the morning, the vessel was away up the river. We steamed the whole

day without interruption, but in the evening went aground on a sand-bank off a village. The launch was got off the obstruction and brought to the bank of the river. This gave a welcome opportunity to go ashore and stretch one's legs.

Monday, March 9. Departure from Monywa.

The next day, about noon, everyone was asked to go ashore so as to lighten the vessel. Most of us, thinking that the vessel would get over the sand-bank and proceed up the river, walked upstream for two miles under the impression that we would go on board above the obstruction. However, we were called to a halt and had to turn back. We were hot and tired when we got back to the village and were very glad to be able to regale ourselves with water from green cocoa-nuts which were on sale. All the efforts of the *serang* to get the launch over the sand-bank had been in vain and it was decided to return to Monywa and lighten the vessel by removing the cargo of sugar and salt which she had in her hold. As the launch did not steam but always tied up at nights, the start was not made till the next morning. Thus we lost Monday and Tuesday

nights at the village. The vessel, travelling with the current, moved faster and we were back in Monywa the same afternoon. Unloading began very soon. Lower Burmans are often described as shirkers rather than workers; but the way, these Upper Burmans worked at the unloading surprised me. They worked with such energy that the vessel was ready that night for a fresh start upstream early the next morning—with a draught of eight inches less than before.

BACK AT MONYWA

While the unloading was going on, I went up to the Chindwin Club and met former office mates, who were now stationed here, as their office had been evacuated to Monywa. They were drinking toddy as no beer or spirits were obtainable. They informed me that the club *boy* knew where to obtain some Polo cigarettes, but that the price was eight annas a packet instead of the usual figure of two and a half annas. Having been without smokes for a couple of days, I handed over a five-rupee note and thus

became the possessor of ten packets. When I got on board I kept quiet about my cigarettes, as it would not do to let everyone know that I had so many as a hundred; there was no knowing when I would be able to get some more.

SECOND START FROM MONYWA—A CHAT WITH A BENGALI

Thursday, March 12. Left Monywa for the second time early this morning. During the day, heard from a Bengali, who was in the convoy as a special case, about Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to India. He added that India might come to terms with the Japanese on conditions. When I asked him what the conditions might be, he said that one of them might be to surrender all the Europeans in India to the Japs! I said nothing; but thought this a very disconcerting idea. At night there was a concert; most of the items being rendered by children in voices which were almost inaudible.

Friday, March 13. We got over the

Friday, March 13, Fighting in the Nyaunglebin Shwegyin area.

sandbank on which we previously got stuck at about 9-30 A. M. and arrived at Thindaw at 10-45 the same morning.

EXTRA GUARDS

Saturday, March 14. We tied up near a village as usual at dusk. Evidently the villages round about the locality we had reached have an unsavoury reputation ; for, Stanley Baxter, the leader of the party, appointed some of the men to keep guard at night, turn by turn for two hours each. The military police sentry was to be on the shore and there were to be two additional guards, one at the bow and one at the stern.

Sunday, March 15. Last night I accompanied Leslie Parnham who was guard at the bow from 2 to 4 A. M. During this time, the furnace was prepared for the day by one of the *khallasies.*

MAWLAIK-NEWS

Arrived at Mawlaik, the headquarters of the Upper Chindwin District at 9 A. M. We remained here the rest of the day and

for the night. The party was visited by Mr. Jock Stewart, the Deputy Commissioner, and by Mr. Sutherland of the Imperial Forest Service, the latter being in charge of evacuation. Heard here that Pegu was in flames and also parts of Toungoo. Heard also that at one place some of our troops, who had been cut off, rejoined the main body in the wake of tanks which broke through the Japanese lines. I went ashore in the morning and had a look around. The whole of the river front was faced with stone, with long flights of steps here and there to go up and down. In the afternoon I took the opportunity to wash a shirt by the river bank. Later, I went to the main shopping street and bought from a Chinese shop a bottle of mango chutney. I also purchased a fork, as I had none, mine having slipped into the river one day while I was washing up after a meal.

TRAVELLING PARTIES FORMED

Monday, March 16. Transferred to a smaller launch, "Namtu". This also was a stern-wheeler. Only some of the party were on board. All small children and persons

who could not march were left behind at Mawlaik. The reduced party included about 25 ladies and 10 big children, the rest being men—120 in all. In the morning a boy who went ashore bought me a pair of Burmese wooden slippers for 3 annas to replace my leather Punjabi slippers which were falling to bits. We left Mawlaik at 1 P. M. Soon after we left, there was some excitement when some awning caught fire on the lower deck just below where I was lying.

WE ARE ASKED TO HAND IN OUR PROVISIONS AND TRICKED

This morning we were asked to pool our provisions. I had been looking forward to enjoying two tins of Heinz soup, so I opened these for lunch and shared them with the Parnhams who let me have some tinned kippers in return. After lunch we all handed over our provisions. I surrendered a dozen or more tins of sardines, a tin of cream crackers, some other biscuits, some sugar and a tin of bacon, keeping only two tins of cocoa and two bottles of potted fish.

As a *padre* sat at the door of the cabin in which they were to be temporarily stored, we all thought that the arrangement was a genuine one intended for the benefit of the whole party; but later on, while on trek, none of the provisions were forthcoming and we found we had been tricked. Enquiries made afterwards in India revealed that the (European) Officials in charge of evacuee arrangements played the same dirty trick on other parties. As each one of the hundred of us had spent about Rs. 10 on our provisions, we were done out of Rs. 1,000.

ARRIVAL AT SITTAUNG—CAMP 1

Tuesday, March 17. Arrived at Sittaung about 3 P. M. and went ashore after tea. This was our first camp. The buildings were entirely of bamboo with thatch roofs and earthen floors. They were divided up into cabins which were like those of a ship with four berths in each, two upper and two lower. My cabin mates were the Rev. Manton, Methodist and American, Mr. Wade, Anglo-Indian of the Saddlery

Dept. of Watson & Son, Rangoon, and Mr. Harold Scott, a concert pianist, who had been spending the previous twelve months in Rangoon with his sister who was married to a business man in the city. There were two rows of cabins with a dining shed in between. A row of bath-rooms was on one side and at the back were the sanitary arrangements. As there were no *sweepers*, the sanitary arrangements consisted of seat with pits below. Loose earth and lime was provided for use. In the dining room were pots of drinking water, which was very strongly chlorinated. Dippers were made of bamboo and even the salt—sellers and sugar containers on the tables were made of the same material.

After we had got settled in, we had another tea and at 7 P. M. we queued up with our plates for dinner consisting of dhall and rice with fish curry and chappatis.

A STORM—FURTHER DIVISION

After dinner there was a storm—thunder lightning and heavy rain. Thatch roofs are not water-tight under the first showers

and as these were quite new, they leaked and many got their things wet. Luckily my bedding was in a good spot and got only slightly wet.

Mr. Brown of the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation, who was in charge of the camp, divided us into two groups and I found myself in the first group of 54 due to start next morning for Camp 2.

THE TREK BEGINS—ELEPHANTS FOR THE BAGGAGE

Wednesday, March 18. Up before dawn, Group 1 had their kit ready outside their cabin doors in good time and, while we had our mug of tea and a chappati, the *mahouts* came and put the baggage on elephants. There was an examination of the baggage first to see that one's box or suit-case and bedding together did not exceed approximately sixty pounds in weight. The first day's trek was a short and easy one, Camp 2 being only 5 miles away over practically level country and in a valley. It was very hard for me, however, for the first two miles. To make sure that my baggage

would not exceed the prescribed limit of 60 lbs. I had taken out of my bedding roll a suit-case which weighed over 10 or 15 lbs. I carried it tied to a stick over my shoulder and found it very heavy; it felt more like 20 lbs. to me. I had also other encumbrances, namely a tiffin-carrier aud a large aluminium water container. I was sweating and feeling the weight so much, that when I saw a native of the locality I made up my mind to ask him to carry the suit-case for me on payment—even though he was not likely to, seeing that he was coming the opposite way. However, the offer of Rs. 3 induced him to agree and he carried the suit-case for the rest of the way to Camp 2 much to my relief.

BAD LUCK

Four untoward events today. At Camp 2, on opening my attache case, I found one of my two bottles of chlorodyne was smashed into little pieces. Clearing out the mess, a tiny splinter of glass got into one of my fingers. Then I made a mistake by going to sleep during the day

on a bare bunk. The bamboo on which I lay could have been described as open-work and I caught a cold in the back. I had brought a bottle of Thermogene with me and, at night, an old friend Fred Hembrough, rubbed me down. The fourth misfortune was the worst—one which made me suffer for weeks. Trying to get into my bunk, which was an upper one, I hurt my left ribs, or muscles thereabouts, rather badly—a sudden sharp pain.

CAMP 2—AN ELEPHANT INTRUDES

We had been warned to keep clear of the elephant camp ; but at night, soon after most of us had retired an elephant did not reciprocate in observing the rule in regard to our camp and caused consternation by coming up almost to our row of cabins. *Mahouts* had to be called to drive him off. Each elephant is afraid of only his own particular *mahout* and one of them who was shooting off the elephant had to run from the beast.

A PRECIPICE

Tuesday, March 19. As there was to be no more examination of luggage, I

confidentially stuck into my bedding roll the suit-case which had caused me so much trouble the previous day and it went off on the elephants. I could not have managed to carry it this day as immediately after leaving Camp 2 there was a stiff climb of 500 feet. After this, the route was one of easy ups and downs. The trek was one of 7 miles this day and Camp 3 was on the side of a hill in very wild country.

CAMP 3

Trying to get down to a stream which was 75 or 100 feet below the camp, I happened to go alone and to take the wrong path. After going down a part of the way I found I could go no further; and, as the way I had come was difficult, I took another route. Soon I found myself on the edge of a precipice and I was afraid to walk on the path as it was very near the actual edge which might give way under my weight. I had to scramble in a sitting position sideways, catching at jungle growths as I proceeded. My hands, arms and face were scratched and I lost one of my wooden slippers. I later rewarded

a small boy with annas eight for recovering it for me. The loss of a slipper would be nothing in a town, but here in the wilds, where nothing could be replaced, a loss would be a disaster.

Lunch consisted of potato stew with a little chicken in it and dhall and rice. At tea, we had two chappattis each, an addition which was regarded as a treat.

AN ALTERCATION

Friday, March 20. Up at 5 A. M. this morning. As the baggage was being loaded on to the elephants, there was an altercation between the headman in charge of the *mahouts* and elephants and one of the *mahouts.* If some of the men of the party and the Camp Superintendent had not intervened, knives might have been drawn resulting in bloodshed. The headman had been shouting in a very loud and rough manner all the time and evidently one of the *mahouts* had resented it.

A Jewish boy, named Cohen, and the little son of Mr. Baxter, the leader of the party, were put on an elephant today. Cohen was suffering from rheumatism.

Leaving at 7-30 A. M. we walked 8¾ miles this day arriving at Camp 4 at 11-50 A. M. Three people helped me to carry my tiffin-carrier and water-pot.

Camp 4 is in a valley.

The lunch at this camp was better than what we had been having for the last few days. The chicken curry did contain a substantial amount of chicken and the rice was better cooked. There was, of course, the inevitable dhall. At tea, we had dry bread.

We had reached a fairly high altitude and it was delightfully cool all day.

A LANDSLIDE IMPEDES PROGRESS

Saturday, March 21. It had rained practically the whole of the previous night and it was cold and damp when we started out. After marching a mile or more, we came to a place where there had been a landslide. We could not proceed by the path and had to make a diversion of about 100 feet down the *khud* into the jungles. Owing to the rain, the black earth was slippery and slushy. As the

way was a steep incline, there were many slips and falls despite the aid of walking-sticks and staffs and the many helping hands. I slipped several times and was on all fours once. By the time we regained the path many were very dirty with mud on their clothes and hands. On this day, I was very glad I had with me the umbrella I had bought at Prome ; for, during the hour spent in making the diversion, and soon after, it rained again and everyone without protection got wet. We were informed that the elephants also took the same route down and up the *khud*. How elephants managed to descend the slippery path two feet wide and at an angle of 45 degrees made us marvel. We reached Kyauksedi at 1 P. M. and Yenanchaung Camp (Camp 5) at about 1-45 P. M. The party was properly tired out and hungry. The diversion was a gruelling experience and old Mrs. Targett's servants, who carried her in her *dooly* all through it, deserve the highest praise for their devotion. As the party was mostly wet, besides being extra tired and hungry, a runner had been sent ahead to ask that hot tea be served with lunch. As we came

into camp rather late, the lunch was waiting for us and was served immediately on our arrival. The hot tea was very welcome. After lunch there was a downpour. We had escaped this but most beddings were already wet owing to the rain during the nine miles journey from Camp 4.

THE YU RIVER

Sunday, March 22. As my bedding was mostly wet, I sat up in a corner of my bunk last night with a blanket round me and slept that way. We left Yenanchaung Camp late this morning, *viz.* at 8-10 A. M. We marched over flat country for 3 miles to the Yu river, where we made the crossing in batches in a large canoe. Some of the more intrepid ones crossed by the bridge, which consisted of two logs abreast and in some places only one, others again went upstream and got across by fording—up to their thighs in water.

On the other side of the river, a motor van was waiting to take the luggage on its last stage to Tamu. The motor van took only half the luggage, but it took also three

or four persons, who usually had *doolies* and a couple of the children. Mr. Baxter, left me here with two of the military policemen and told me to come in the van on its second trip. It was two hours before the van came back; and, as the sun came out hot and strong, I unrolled my bedding and spread it all out to dry. The sepoys did the same with their's.

When the van came back, despite the pain in my ribs which still persisted, I got busy carrying some of the smaller packages to the rear of the van. One glance was sufficient to tell me that the man who had suddenly appeared belonged to the Public School class. Evidently he had driven the vehicle. I went on with my work and apparently he felt offended because I did not wish him. He strutted about with a superior air, with his pipe in his mouth, and did nothing. My pants were very dirty with the mud of the previous day's *khuds* still on them, but I had on my smart blazer of reds and yellows which I had bought in Australia. I had not shaved since the fourth day after leaving Mandalay and was obvi-

ously an evacuee. Nevertheless he suddenly shot me the question "Who are you?" I told him and then he wanted to know what I was doing there. I told him that because I was unwell I was told to come in the van on its second trip. He replied that I should have gone on the van on its first trip and that now I could not ride in the van. All this he said in a tone that one uses to a menial. I realized that he was one of a nasty type, who, if I stood up to him, would be quite capable of driving off, and leaving me to find my way alone to Tamu, which was 6 or 7 miles away. I meekly said that the leader of the party had told me to stay and that I had to obey orders. Curious to know whether he had come alone, Iwent towards the front of the van and here was another surprise awaiting me. In the front seat was a young Anglo-Burman woman smoking a cigarette and wearing slacks. Apparently mollified by my unchallenging manner, the snob, in the end, told me that I could get in at the back if I still wanted to come along in the van. When the loading was completed, I found myself rolling along squatting on luggage together with

the two Punjabis. On my left was a commode which all the time jolted against me. In this way I came to our camp at Tamu.

TAMU

This was the first really dry day we had since leaving Sittaung. The sun shone all the afternoon and everyone felt bright and all were busy drying out their things. The water in the stream was cold, but I had a nice bath there in the glorious sunshine.

Monday, March 23. The sun was up and it was quite warm when we left our Tamu camp after 9 A. M. Part of the journey to Camp 6, where we arrived after midday, was steep. Camp 6 was situated in a narrow valley; and, although not in Burma, it was, like all the camps on the Burma side, in charge of an employee of the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation. Parnham, De Lemos and I made some cocoa at night, but it was not nice, as we had no sugar. Had a touch of the sun. Mr. Goldberg, the Superintendent of Camp

7, was here and talked a deal of the good conditions at his camp, mentioning that he provided pork curry. There was no meat at Camp 6, so we had vegetable curry and dhall and rice and missed our tinned provisions very much. I did not mind, consoling myself with the thought of the pork curry to come on the morrow.

A SUSPENSION BRIDGE IN THE WILDS

Tuesday, March 24. After starting at 7 A. M. we arrived at Camp 8 at 11 A. M. The last three miles were downhill ; which was almost as bad as uphill. The approach to the camp was over a small suspension bridge which swayed and bounced as one walked over it. At lunch, there was indeed pork curry, but there were potatoes in it too and it was mostly potatoes. I got a bit of pork one inch square. The rice was burnt too and I was altogether disappointed. The one redeeming feature was that there was a curry of sardines also for those who did not like pork. The sardines came from Mr. Goldberg's camp stores.

The camp was in a valley by a stream

and the latrine for the men was away up on the crest of a hill—a hundred yards up a difficult path.

I changed some of the silver I was carrying into paper money. Mr. Goldberg took Rs. 20 in silver and Mr. Parnham, Rs. 25.

At night, singing was started from the cabin occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jansz and it went on for an hour or so. In this dense jungle, it was pleasing to listen in the darkness to tunes old and new. Young Parnham, De Lemos and I joined in from my cabin.

A DOUBLE MARCH

Wednesday March 25. After tea and a chapatti, we started out and did climbing for the first four miles or so. For a considerable distance it was steep. There were some men of the Assam Rifles and of the Assam Police going the same way with some coolies and one of the *Naiks* carried my water-pot, while I regaled him with cigarettes which we had bought from pedlars on the way. We arrived at Camp 9. Mr. Bostock's at 11 A. M. and here a surprise

awaited us. We learnt that the camp buildings were only in the course of construction and that we could not stay here for the night but must push on to the next camp. Mr. Bostock, however, had hot tea and biscuits ready and this was served out in a shed which had divan seats all around. The rest and refreshments were very welcome and most of us were ready to take the road again after half an hour.

THE HIGHEST POINT

This day we reached our highest point 5,200 feet above sea-level. The path followed near the telegraph wires; and, as we went, we could see them in the distance mounting higher and higher and knew that we would have to climb also. I was fresh enough during the morning trek, but I felt very weary in the afternoon. Some others were the same and lagged, the result being that the head and tail of the party were widely separated. I was walking with Mrs. Little and we were separated from the others many times. Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie were the nearest to us. I was somewhat

nervous, as I had just heard that there were bears in the jungle and that, unlike other wild animals, they do not slink away but make for you. However, there was more traffic on the route on this day than on other days. There were parties of natives of the locality going in the opposite direction and some the same way also. A military convoy of about 100 mules also passed us.

ONE OF THE PARTY COLLAPSES

At about 4 P. M. Mr. Mackenzie collapsed and lay down on the roadside near where Mrs. Little and I were already resting. My water-pot was still with the *Naik* and the Assam Rifles had gone on ahead, so I could not produce any for a drink for Mr. Mackenzie. Some of the porters who were with us, piled the baggage they were carrying around Mr. Mackenzie to make some shade for him and an umbrella was opened over him also. One of the porters also went off with a vessel to some houses in the distance to get some water.

NAGAS

While here, we came across the first lot

of *Nagas* we saw. They were a party of about 20 men. They marched past us in single file and were to us a funny sight from the back, as below the waist they had nothing on behind. Mr. Mackenzie revived after about half an hour and soon reached Camp 10, which was not far away. Mr. Little and I arrived at 4-25 P.M. The early arrivals were already there at 1-30 P. M. and the last to arrive came in at about 6 P. M.

The camp was on a hillside down from the path, and we found that the construction of the India-Burma road was here in full swing. It was high above the camp. All the evening there were many *Nagas*, about two or three hundred, coming and going to their own camps which were around ours. They were working on the road-making.

INDIFFERENCE AND LACK OF SYMPATHY

This camp was a thorough disappointment. Those who arrived early informed me that the Camp Superintendent was not aware of their arrival and that it was only when one of them went to his

hut that he came to know that a party was arriving that day. There was no dining shed and we were informed there was a great shortage of water. There were no servants for the camp and the early arrivals set about and did the cooking. When I came in, dhall and rice and boiled potatoes were ready and, soon after, we had tea, but without milk. The early arrivals told me that the Camp Superintendent, who was an appointee of the Government of India, was quite different from the other Camp Superintendents in that he appeared to be indifferent to the welfare of the evacuees and unsympathetic. He informed them that he had no camp staff and that the party would have to shift for themselves as best as they could. He had added that six hundred had already passed through the camp and that our party could manage as these others had done. He said that the provisions for evacuees placed at his disposal were meagre and made things worse by adding that he had three months' stores for himself. He had also given the gratuitous information

that he was once a boxer in the Army and would stand no nonsense from any one.

Mrs. Jansz proved to be a brick. In spite of the eleven mile trek, she very soon got together a number of the servants of the party and supervised the cooking of the evening meal. With her command of the Tamil language, she got the Southern Indian servants busy and when darkness came on there was another meal ready—but this time it was only dhall and rice.

It was rather cold here high up in the hills. A camp fire was lit and, as there was no dining shed with a light, most of us ate our meal in the light of the camp fire.

Later on, I suggested to Mrs. Jansz that we might finish up some cocoa I had with me. She provided the milk and sugar and made the cocoa. Thus, at about 9 P. M. about ten of us had each a nice drink.

The cabins were different in this camp. They were larger and there were field beds for 8, in two tiers of 4 each, instead of the bunks.

Everyone was very tired on account of the double distance of this day's trek,

and consequently easily disgruntled: complaints about the lack of facilities were numerous and also in regard to the attitude of the Camp Superintendent. There was one consoling thought, however, namely that we had shortened the trek by one day and that the morrow would see its end—at Palel.

Thursday, March 26. For some reason, we were served this morning with dhall and rice instead of the usual chapatti. There was tea also, but again without milk. So we fared worse at this camp than at any other, although it was the nearest to India and civilization.

LACK OF GUIDES

Soon after we left camp; we were at a loss whether to follow the new road under construction or the original pathway. If the Camp Superintendent had not been indifferent, he would have sent someone to guide us or come himself part of the way as other Camp Superintendents had done. We followed the road and three American machines with great scoops in

front passed us. Soon after this, workers on the road informed us that blasting was going on ahead and that we would have to make a diversion. This took us up the side of a steep hill and here the path most of the way was only two feet wide. It was dangerous as a slip would mean a roll down the hillside a long way. After sometime, we took to the old track again; and, when we had gone four or five miles further on, started to go downhill for about three miles.

WELCOME REFRESHMENTS AT A HAMLET

At last we came to what appeared to be the plains but really the elevated valley of Manipur. Soon, we were very glad to come to a hamlet where we could buy refreshments from native stalls. What was most appreciated were the fresh eggs, which the stall-holders were ready to boil for us. Tea, cold drinks, biscuits, cigarettes and a few other things were also procurable. I eat three boiled eggs, but there were others who eat many more; like young Parnham, who had eight. Needless to say, hen's eggs

were soon sold out. There were duck's eggs too, but I do not know whether any were bought.

Having satisfied the inner man, we started out for Palel, which was about two and a half miles away. After all these days of trekking, we considered this a short distance.

FINISHING THE TREK IN A BULLOCK-CART

As we were leaving the hamlet, there were some bullock-carts going the same way carrying stones. Young Parnham, Mr. Jansz and I, who were together, had no wish to walk as it was hot, due to the fact that it was open country here and the sun was out. We offered one of the cartmen a rupee each to take us to Palel. The man agreed, brought the cart to the roadside and tipped out the stones. As we were getting in the cart, Mr. Curtice, the Secretary of the Burma Automobile Association, joined us. The cartman walked leading the bulls, Mr. Curtice sat in the front with the reins in his hands, I sat behind him with my umbrella to shade us both, and Mr. Jansz and young Parnham sat at the rear. What

we had come to! Here was the Secretary of the Automobile Association glad to jog along driving a bullock-cart.

PALEL

As it was ten miles from the last camp and as we had made a long halt for refreshments, it was past midday when we arrived at Palel (Camp 11). Here motor omnibuses were waiting; and, after hot tea and biscuits which were ready, we proceeded on the 28-mile run to Camp 12, namely, Imphal, the capital of the Manipur State, where we arrived about 5 P. M.

IMPHAL

Here was indeed a proper camp. There was a considerable compound and everything was spick and span. Instead of cabins, there were dormitories; instead of an eating-shed, there was a large dining hall—and hot water was procurable at two annas a tin for baths! Other facilities were also provided. A representative of a bank was brought to the camp and we were enabled to change our Burma notes for

Indian ones. For the morrow's whole day motor journey, we could place orders for roast chicken, potatoes and bread. Clothing and footwear were also available free for those in need. This camp was conducted, I believe by the Assam Tea Planters and at the head was Mrs. Shaw, an Anglo-Indian lady.

One could see at a glance that Mrs. Shaw was no ordinary person. She was obviously a lady of great personality and capability and kindness were discernable in her countenance.

We had enjoyable baths and then some went out and had a look around the town, which is of considerable size.

The meal that night consisted of a plentiful supply of a very tasty mutton stew with bread and tea and was the first good meal we had had for some time.

We were indeed happy that evening in the cool atmosphere of the elevated valley of Manipur.

THE MANIPUR ROAD

Friday, March 27. At 8 A. M. we got

into motor omnibuses *en route* for Dimapur, 138 miles away. The road, which was a good motor road, was level for some miles, but it became downhill one for most of the day. The route wound round and round the hillsides and was in many places dangerous, although there were no actual hairpin bends anywhere. The danger was much lessened by the fact that one-way traffic was provided for. As far as I could make out, traffic started from both Imphal and Dimapur in the forenoon and all vehicles coming one way had to pass all those coming the other way at a midway point, Man. Along the whole way, operations to widen and repair the road were in full progress, the coolies employed being *Nagas*—but of a type different from those whom we had previously met. These favoured a black garment reaching all round from the waist to the knee.

KOHIMA

We lunched at Mau and at 1-30 P. M. and then reached Kohima, the headquarters of the Naga Hills District of Assam, where a halt was made. It was still cool and nice

here and the place seemed altogether a pleasant hill station.

DIMAPUR

We arrived at Dimapur, which is in the plains, at 6-30 p. m. First we had to show at the Police Station the passes given us at Tamu and then we went to our camp, Camp 13. Basins, towels and soap were thoughtfully ready here for an immediate wash after the long road journey. Then we were conducted straight to a dining-hall, where we were provided with a good meal of stew, bread, and butter, boiled eggs, salad and tea. Our things had meanwhile been taken to the railway station which is called Manipur Road, and there we proceeded after we had done justice to the eats so generously provided. Although this station was an out-of-the-way one, being at the railhead, there was a Refreshment Room which seemed to be able to produce a variety of food.

The train was to leave about midnight, but came alongside the platform at about 10. P. M. as some 1,200 Indian refugees were

to be settled in it besides our party. We had separate compartments in the Intermediate, which is between the Second and Third Class. We had to crowd, but this we did not mind.

NOVEL FEATURES

Saturday, March 28. The train was being shunted about at night, but did not actually leave till 4 A. M. Everyone from Burma commented on the smooth running of the train compared with those in Burma.

The Montague-Chelmsford report made the terse statement, since become famous, that "Burma is not India". We from Burma were beginning to realize that "India is not Burma". Here we found separate stalls on the railway platforms for Hindus and Mohammedans and tea-vendors shouted "Hindu Chai" and "Musalman Chai". This cleavage was new to us. We also began to realize the cheapness of India. We had never in Burma paid such low prices for cigarettes.

PANDU—AN EXCELLENT FERRY SERVICE

After a full day's travel, we arrived at

Pandu at about 7 P. M. Here we had to tranship by ferry to Amingaon. The approaches to and from the ferry were convenient and on the upper deck, which was apparently for upper class passengers, there was a restaurant where European meals could be obtained. The service was excellent and a full dinner cast Rs. 2/8. There was an *a la carte* service also. Everything was spic and span and the lavatories and sanitary arrangements were all that could be desired. They were spacious and fitted up with shining mirrors and electric fans and lights. Some who had never come across liquid soap did not know how to get it out of the receptacles. Those used only to the ramshackle steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company were agreeably surprised with the appointments on this ferry.

AMINGAON

At Amingaon, I settled myself in a small carriage with the Seymours (three) and the Parnham men, father and son. There was just enough room for us to lie down for the night and be comfortable. Accordingly, at stations at which the train stopped, we

requested persons not to enter the carriage. The Indian travellers here were considerate and the statement that the compartment was *'pura'* (full) was quite sufficient. This was a faster train than the last.

PARBARTIPUR

Sunday, March 29. At 5-30 A. M. we arrived at a place called Parbartipur and had to change to another train. We got into a long third class carriage along with some Indians. The train was not full and we had plenty of room all the way to Calcutta. We went over a great Bridgeand arrived at Sealdah Station soon after midday.

CALCUTTA: LORETO CONVENT CAMP

The representative of the European and Anglo-Indian Evacuee Reception Committee, on being telephoned for, came down with two omnibuses for those going to Camp 14, which was at the Loreto Convent, Middleton Row. The representative paid the station coolies and soon we were whisked off to the camp, where we found many

others from Burma. Some of these had come in earlier convoys over the same route as ourselves, others had come by air from Shwebo to Chittagong and thence to Calcutta by train, and others again direct by plane from Shwebo to Dum Dum, the air-port of Calcutta. A meat meal was served to us almost immediately after our arrival in camp.

This Convent Camp was well run. Four meals were provided at stated hours. The fare was wholesome and included fruit and a sweet at dinner. There were no beds, but each one was given a nice new mattress to lay on the clean floors. The Reception Committee had an office with a telephone at the camp and on the notice board there was information about vacant positions which one could apply for. Shops of all kinds and laundries were only a stone's throw away and children and others who wanted ice-cream could buy it from the itinerant vendor of the Magnolia establishment who was practically all day at the gate.

THE BIRKMYRE HOSTEL

Soon after our arrival the single men

were asked to move over to the Birkmyre Hostel, which is almost next door. Our meals were, however, still to be taken at the Convent. There were many rooms vacant at the Birkmyre; but for some reason or another, we were made to camp on the ground floor verandah and most of us bathed under the tap used by the servants of the hostel for their baths. I am sure the Superintendent of the hostel, if he had been approached in the proper way, would have allowed the use of the vacant rooms and of the ample lavatories available.

AVOIDANCE OF CONGESTION

As refugees were coming in everyday, the Reception Committee were anxious to get us away to our final destinations as soon as possible. On the other hand, most of us had some business to transact in Calcutta. Those of us who were in the employ of firms in Burma which had Calcutta offices had naturally to go and report our arrival. Others wanted to transact financial business at banks and most wanted a little time to replenish their wardrobes, to some little

extent at least, or to send their soiled linen to the wash.

A POLICE OFFICIAL RUBS US UP THE WRONG WAY

For those who were destitute and with no place to go to, there were camps at Nagpur, Dinapur, and elsewhere where they could go and stay free of charge. A representative of the Police used to come down to the Convent and make departure arrangements. It was through this individual that pressure was put to hasten us on our way. This official made out that ordinarily we should attend at some Police Station to obtain tickets for the train journey to our destinations and that only because he himself was an Anglo-Indian and had a fellow-feeling, he took the trouble to come to the camp. His tone and manner were altogether objectionable. He entirely forgot that among the evacuees were many persons whose positions in life were much better than his own, which was that of a Police subordinate.

METROPOLITAN CINEMAS

After a welcome bath and the evening meal, young Parnham, Richard De Lemos and I went out to visit one of the cinemas. We had heard in Burma of the magnificence of the Calcutta metropolitan bioscopes and that they were air-conditioned. We were therefore keen to attend a show at one of them. We chose the Lighthouse and went in two rickshaws. Points that struck me were first the presence of smartly uniformed attendants, the size as compared with those in Rangoon and the fact that an orchestra played during the interval upstairs in the bar while one had one's drinks.

I still had my fifteen days growth of beard on me and must have looked a strange sight. Some people might have objected to being seen out with me, but the young lads I was with did not care a jot about my appearance.

PARATHAS AND KABOBS

After the pictures, we felt we wanted something to eat, so we told the *rickshaw-wallahs* to take us to a place where we could

get *parathas* and *kabobs*. They took us somewhere near the New Market to a place which had white tiles round the walls and a marble floor. The *parathas* were thinner than the ones made by the *Chulias* at Mogul Street in Rangoon, but were larger and, together with a stick of *kabob*, cost only two annas against the Rangoon price of six annas. Anglo-Indians and some Europeans sea-faring men were there besides Indians. The place was clean and the heat was relieved by whirring electric fans. The place was noisy, as the waiters shouted to the cooks the orders they received. However, the fare was very good and we enjoyed a good meal. It was about 1 A. M. when we settled down for the night on the Birkmyre verandah.

LAHORE AS BASE FOR VISIT TO KASHMIR

Monday, March 30. I had made up my mind to go to Lahore. For many years I had cherished a desire to visit Kashmir, and Lahore is the nearest Provincial capital to that delectable region. Besides, being more than eleven hundred miles from

Calcutta and far up North, Lahore would be safer than any other large city should the Japanese menace to India develop.

There was only one other whose destination was Lahore, a man called Chemerette, who had relatives there. We arranged to travel together. The Police subordinate wanted us to leave this day, but we objected because we could not get our business done since the day was the Id-i-Milad, an Indian festival and a Bank Holiday.

A VISIT TO FORT WILLIAM

Not knowing that the British Military Hospital, Calcutta, was not in Fort William, I went there to find out whether the British Military Hospital, Mingaladon (Rangoon) had evacuated to India. I took a clean shave and parted with my 15 days' growth before venturing out to the Fort, lest the stupid sentries might take me for a spy. On finding that the British Military Hospital was not located in the Fort, I came out again and found it some distance away. I discovered that the Mingaladon hospital was not there and returned to the camp.

If these journeys had not taken up my time, I would have visited the Queen Victoria Memorial, which I passed on the way. It is said that the marble of its facings, which is not of the same quality as that of the Taj Mahal, is changing colour.

NIGHT CLUBS

At night, Parnham visited a night club called the Honolulu, where young ladies addressed you as 'darling' after ten minutes acquaintance, but I did not accompany him. After dinner, I went out and took my way down Chowringhee in the moonlight and blackout in a rickshaw and then got out and strolled back, stopping some time at the Bristol Bar for some coffee.

VISIT TO BANKS—BASSEIN RECALLED

Tuesday, March 31. This day my travelling companion-to-be, reported himself at the Calcutta offices of the Bombay-Burma Trading Company, his employers. I spent the morning calling at the offices of the British India Line of steamers, at Lloyds Bank, and at the Reserve Bank of India.

I changed my Burma notes into Indian ones at a charge of ¼ per cent as against ½ per cent, which was the charge at Imphal. As is usual at banks in the East, there was a long wait and I spent the time chatting with no other person than Mr. C. B. Orr, the late District Superintendent of Police of Bassein, Burma, the man who had told us there that we could not go on from Bassein by the land route.

MEAL AT A CHINESE RESTAURANT

Owing to the delay at the bank, I missed the midday meal at the camp; so, I visited a Chinese restaurant near-by and had a nice dish called 'French Pork' for seven annas only. If I had gone to the better known Chinese establishment in Central Avenue, I would no doubt have been charged at least a rupee or more.

VISIT TO KIDDERPORE DOCKS

Having obtained information at the offices of the British India steamers, that the vessel on which a friend was employed

was in port, I set out in the afternoon for the dock area. My friend is keen on swimming; so, I first went to the Marine Club to see if he might be at the swimming bath. The club was an old building, but spacious and seemed suitable for the purpose for which it was intended. The swimming pool was smaller than the one at the Mayo Marine Club in Rangoon. My friend was not at the Club and I determined to go aboard his ship. First, I had to go to the dock police office where I got a pass to enter the Kidderpore docks, where the vessel was berthed. As rickshaws are not allowed in the docks, I had to get out at the gates and walk. Having located the vessel, I went on board, only to find that my friend was out. It was now 5 P. M. and the Goan butler very kindly gave me tea in the saloon.

Having had a long and tiresome day, I did not go out after the evening meal but sat beside the tennis court in the moonlight at the Birkmyre with some others till 11 P. M. While we were talking, an aeroplane belonging to the R. A. F. was dashing

about over head all the time, but we by the tennis court were enjoying peace—peace which I greatly appreciated after the recent turmoil, stress and strain in Burma.

Wednesday, April 1. This morning, Chamarette and I saw the Police representative and we arranged to leave for Lahore from Howrah Station this evening at 6-30 P. M. We were rather surprised when he told us that a conveyance would be provided to take us down to the station early in the afternoon.

MY FRIEND CALLS

At midday, my sea-faring friend, who had received a note which I had left for him, came and visited me at the camp. It was indeed a pleasure to see someone who had known me in what were now the good old days in Rangoon. Moreover, I had seen him only once in the past two years.

TO HOWRAH STATION IN AN OPEN LORRY

Soon after he left, word went round that all those leaving that evening were to get

ready to start for Howrah Station. To the consternation of some, we found that we were to go— men, women and children—the whole six miles to the station in an open lorry in the broiling sun at practically the hottest time of the day.

At the station, the Police representative gave us our tickets and departed—leaving us to have a long wait.

Our tickets were for the 3rd class and, when we got into a compartment, it was soon filled, the other passengers being mostly soldiers of Punjab regiments going on leave.

OVERCROWDING

Monday, April 2. Last night, could not unroll my bedding for want of space. Further, it was at the other end of the compartment and a Punjabi soldier was sitting on it. I half stretched out for a couple of hours, partly on the seat and partly on someone else's bedding roll which was between the seats. About midday, a fat *babu* and two boys came into the carriage and it became still more congested. A sta-

tion or two after their arrival, another equally fat *babu* started pushing a tremendous amount of luggage through the windows and then wanted to enter. The first fat *babu*, who was sitting near the door, objected strongly. The two fat *babus* came to words and the second said to the first that he would have to fight him. This only served to make the first louder in his objections and more energetic. He started pushing out the luggage which was half way through the windows. I also joined in and told the second *babu* that for the purpose of saving booking charges he was attempting to inconvenience everyone in the compartment with the great amount of luggage which he had with him. Assisted by the soldiers, we then pushed out all the luggage of the intruder and told him to 'get'. He found there was too much opposition and went elsewhere.

Food could be obtained from the refreshment room at the stations or from the restaurant car and, at every station, there were separate water jars for Hindus and Mohammedans.

PUNJABI SOLDIERS HAVE SOME FUN

Good Friday, April 3. Slept last night much as on the previous night.

In the morning, the Punjabi soldiers were out to have some fun. After having a tray of tea and toast from a seller, they pretended they were not going to pay. The seller thought they were serious and entered the compartment to remonstrate. He said something objectionable and got pushed about by the soldiers. Meanwhile the train steamed out and he had to come along to the next station. This is apparently just what the soldiers wanted and they continued to worry him saying all sorts to him. He retaliated by threatening to pull the communication cord; but the soldiers only worried him more asking him whether he was going to act like a woman being raped. He got his six annas and departed at the next station.

April 3, 1942. Mandalay heavily bombed. British forces retreat from Prome.

ARRIVAL AT LAHORE

The train steamed into Lahore Station

at about 9 A. M. Chamerette, my travelling companion, went off at once and I put my baggage into the cloak room. Then, having bought a local paper, I sat on a bench to look up advertisements of hotels and boarding houses. I had not been sitting down for a couple of minutes, when an air raid siren, which, judging by its loudness, must have been at the Station itself, started sounding. I had come about 2,000 miles from Rangoon, where I had enough of sirens and one of the first things that happens on my arrival at my destination is to hear the siren once again and such a loud one too. I realised of course, that it was just practice.

Then I had my first surprise in Lahore. I visited the lavatory and found that it was not provided with the flush system.

DIFFICULTY IN FINDING ACCOMMODATION

Not finding any place which seemed suitable among the advertisements, I made up my mind to go to the Catholic *padre* and ask him if he knew of any boarding house or of a private party who might

put me up. I enquired where the nearest Catholic church was from some ladies and then drove there in a *tonga*, the local public conveyance, which is a sort of low dog cart with an awning. It is usually ill-balanced and those at the back (where one usually sits) have to hang on for dear life. I interviewed the *padre* but he could not help me. On the way to the priest's house, I had passed a place called the Grand Hotel. It was obviously not grand and looked like a place which would suit my purse, so I stopped and made enquiries only to find that it was merely a restaurant and billiard room. Disappointed here, I drove next to two hotels, the cards of which had been given to me at the station. Both were Indian concerns and the first was decidedly dingy. The second had no accommodation. Then I remembered I might go to the Y.M.C.A., of which I am a member. On arrival, I was again disappointed; for the Lahore Y.M.C.A. provides no residential accommodation. A nice Indian young man there, however, gave me the name of another Indian hotel and kindly directed the *tonga*-

wallah. This was quite a suitable place and they informed me that accommodation would be available that evening. I got my baggage out of the *tonga* and handed it over to the hotel people and so at last found myself at the end of my flight with somewhere to rest—far away from the Japs and immediate danger.

RETROSPECT

This happy situation was due very largely to my own efforts—though taken almost at the eleventh hour—and to the evacuation arrangements carried on in Mandalay. Had I not insisted on getting leave and becoming a free agent, I would, like some of my colleagues, have been needlessly kept back till it was too late to come by the Manipur route; and, as I was in my 48th year, I would probably have lost my life trekking to Assam through the Hukong valley, which, on account of the great numbers who died while attempting this route, has come to be known among Burma evacuees as the Valley of Death.

I have now been more than three years in India. I am a regular subscriber to a monthly Evacuees' Journal published at Madras and so I am in touch with what is going on among evacuees in all parts of India. The strangest thing, which each number of the journal reveals, is the longing displayed by Burma people of all communities to go back as quickly as possible to the land of pagodas and fair ladies. Even Indians, who were born and brought up in India and are now back in their home towns have a yearning for Burma. This longing to return has found expression in many ways, even in verse.

The January 1945 number of *Burma Today*, the monthly issued by the Public Relations Department of the Government of Burma (now located at Simla) shows that at a census made towards the close of 1943 of Asiatic British subjects who came to India from territories East of India since December 8, 1941, 393,735 were enumerated and it is estimated that no less than 500,000 actually came over to India, mostly from Burma. That this

desire to return to Burma prevails universally among such a large number is a tribute to that country. It has been a long wait, but the tide has now turned and a large part of Burma is already liberated from Japanese thraldom. Hopes are running high now. We have been told that no one will be allowed to return during a preliminary period while law and order are yet being restored. We are hoping this period will not be a long one and that energetic measures will be taken to re-establish law and order as quickly as possible. When this period is over, it will be a great day indeed for Burma evacuees. There will be hurried preparations, applications for passages for the sea voyage, a rush to the ports and then, at last, the happy voyage back to Golden Burma.

APPENDIX A

Extract from the Statesman, dated July 29, 1942.

EVACUEES CARRIED BY AIR FROM BURMA

It is now possible to give reasonably accurate figures of evacuees arriving by air from Burma from returns received from official sources.

The total number of evacuees carried by air from January 1 to May 9, was 11,210. Five thousand one hundred and sixteen evacuees were carried to Chittagong and Calcutta from Rangoon, Lashio, Magwe and Shwebo and the number carried from Myitkyina (North Burma) into Assam was 6,094. The former included 1,830 Indians, and 3,060 Europeans and Anglo-Indians, and the latter 2,195 Indians, 291 Europeans, 2,516 Anglo-Indians and 408 Anglo-Burmans.

APPENDIX B

AIR ROUTES USED IN THE EVACUATION

The Flights were as follows:

A. Rangoon to Calcutta
December 1941 to February 17, 1942.

B. Magwe to Calcutta
February 24 to March 4, 1942.

C. Shwebo to Chittagong
March 6 to April 9, 1942.

D. Myitkyina to Dingan (Assam).
April 7 to May 6, 1942.

N. B.—There were also flights from Lashio.

APPENDIX C

Yesterday and Tomorrow ("Rampart Library" No. 57) was published late last year by Thackers.

The routes are as follows:

Route 1. Prome, Padaung, Nyaungkyidauk-Nyaunggyo Taungup—then by river to Myebon-Myinbya-Akyab-Buthidaung. From here to Maungdaw by road and then across Naaf river to Tambru and Chittagong.

Route 2. Same as in Route 1 as far as Taungup. Then by water to Kyaukpyu and then by sea to Akyab (30 miles). From Akyab to Chittagong as in Route 1.

Route 3. Mandalay-Chindwin river—Yu river.—Tamu to Palel (trekking) Palel to Imphal (motor bus) Imphal to Manipur Rd. station (motor bus). Manipur Rd. to Calcutta by Bengal-Assam Ry. *via* Gauhati, Pandu-Amingaon ferry—Parbartipur.

Route 4. Mandalay-Chindwin river to Sittaung. Sittaung to Tamu (trekking) and then as in Route 3.

Route 5. Rangoon or Mandalay to Kalewa. Then by road to Tamu and then as in route 3.

Route 6. Rangoon-Bassein (by river or train); Bassein-Thabaung (by launch) Thabaung to Gwa (trekking); Gwa to Sandoway (motor bus); Sandoway to Akyab (36 hours by launch) then as in Route 1.

Route 7. Myitkyina to Mougaung by train; Mougaung to Mainghkwan (trekking Mainghkwan to Shinghwiyang and Tipang (trekking) Tipang to Dibrugarh by train *via* Ledo, Margherita, Digboi and

Tinsukia. Then by launch on the Brahmaputra to Tezpur and then by rail to Parbartipur and Calcutta.

Route 8. *Via* Lushai and Aijal to Lalghat.

Route 9. Monywa—Homalin—Assam.

Route 10. Indaw—Tongaing, Arapok—Imphal and then as in route 3.

Route 11. Katla—Indaw, Maingkaing—Tohne, Yaripur—Imphal and then as in Route 3.