

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

The story of

CLIFFORD HARRIS

of

PERSIA

by

R. W. HOWARD

Head Master of Liverpool College

"I always saw in him a happy combination of
St. Francis and Peter Pan."

One of his friends

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY
SALISBURY SQUARE, LONDON, E.C. 4

1931

*Printed in Great Britain by
Wyman & Sons, Ltd., London, Fakenham, and Reading*

TO HIS MOTHER

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing Page</i>
CLIFFORD HARRIS AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE	26
CLIFFORD IN THE SISAKHT PASS	36
LIKE "A PICTURE OUT OF SOME OLD BOOK OF FAIRY STORIES"; A VIEW OF YEZDIKHAŠT	43
"AWAY AHEAD TOWARD THE GREAT SNOW-PEAK OF DEMAVAND"	45
STUART MEMORIAL COLLEGE, ISFAHAN—THE CHRISTIAN HOSTEL	58
PEASANTS AT ABIYANI	66
A HARVESTER AT SOH	66
TWO OF CLIFFORD'S GUARDS AT ALIJUDA	66
THE STAFF AT THE STUART MEMORIAL COLLEGE IN 1929	74
CLIFFORD TAKING PHYSICAL TRAINING AT THE S.M.C.	82

MAPS

	<i>Page</i>
PERSIA	28
ENVIRONS OF ISFAHAN	48

The design on the cover is from a snapshot taken by Sayyed Mohammad.

FRONTISPIECE

*When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town ;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing ;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down :
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing ;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven ;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare :
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness ;
The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air ;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.*

ROBERT BRIDGES—*London Snow*

AND so it was when dawn broke after the night of Christmas, 1929, in the Persian city of Isfahan. Some of the busy morning cries came soon from two men who, like their neighbours, were perched on a rooftop to shovel the snow into the street before

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

it could soak through the flat mud roof into the house beneath. As they shovelled they talked, calculating what a hard winter might mean to the city if the roads were blocked and fuel and food became scarce.

Suddenly one of the men grasped his friend's arm and pointed. "Look!" he cried. "See that queer Englishman! What madness is this?" The other turned quickly, and together they gazed at a tall young Englishman who came striding down the street. Over his shoulders hung two stout cords which, held by his hands in front, ran taut behind to a roughly made sledge which he was dragging through the snow. On it lay piled a strange assortment of kit: a small packing-case, blankets, a spare pair of boots, and other belongings, all held together by more cords. Close by walked a Persian boy of about seventeen years old, who was evidently ready to share the pulling when his turn came.

The sledge drew nearer. The Englishman looked up and threw a cheerful greeting to the men on the roof as he passed, and, as if in answer to the question written on their faces, he called: "Sayyed Mohammad and I are off to Mehmeh and on to Soh."

"To Soh!"—they repeated the words incredulously after him; "if there are several inches of snow here, it will be many feet deep up there among the hills!" They knew that Soh was over seventy miles away, by that route. But while each stood staring at the other to see if he believed this wild story, the pair with the sledge had moved steadily forward.

Let us follow them for a while. They have not gone far before they come to a Persian lorry

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

standing in the street, piled high with packing-cases and kit. It is, they find, bound for Tehran, and is due to pass through Mehmeh on the way. After the manner of the East, a long bout of bargaining follows ; but in the end the sledge and its human team are sitting inside on the packing-cases, and bumping along the road that leads to the hills. They pass that night at Murchekhur, thirty miles out from Isfahan. Here, however, the lorry abandons its trip, turns round, and makes for home, for the snow is lying everywhere in deep drifts.

Nothing daunted, the Englishman and his Persian companion have dismounted, and now it is the villagers of Murchekhur who turn out to stare aghast at the two seeming madmen pulling along a heavy load on a cart that has no wheels. Soon they are in the open desert ; but here, as it happens, the depth of snow becomes steadily less, until at length they are pulling their sledge on mother earth herself. A passing villager is hailed, and sent ahead with a message to a distant caravan of donkeys, to ask for help. The sledge is parked by the wayside, and the pair plod on. Before long they are in snow again. Meanwhile the messenger has not forgotten them, and when they reach Bideshk, the next village, he stands in a doorway with a friend, awaiting their arrival.

The Englishman and his friend come in sight and approach the door. At sight of them the other man in the doorway gives a start of delighted surprise. " Why, it's Harris Sahib, from Isfahan ! " he cries. " Come in, come in, sahib, and your friend, too ! It's cold work tramping these hills in the snow. Come inside now, and

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

make yourselves at home. I have often wondered when you would come this way again."

Before many minutes have passed, host and guests are cosily squatting to drink tea together under the *coursi*, a low table over a hole in the floor, filled with red hot glowing ashes from the wood fire. Over the table is spread a large *lahaf*, or cotton-wool quilt. The talk flows fast and free till supper is brought in and placed on the *coursi*. This consists of soup and rice : and supper itself is an exciting competition. There are no spoons used here : instead, large strips of bread are torn up and stuffed into the soup until it ceases to be liquid. Then with great speed each eater seizes handful after handful of soaked bread and stuffs it into his mouth. The quicker and more skilled you are, the more you have for your supper !

After supper, men arrive with the Englishman's kit. At last we see the method behind the seeming madness that has taken him and his friend out into the snow. A "magic" lantern is unpacked, and before long a lantern lecture on the life of Christ is being given to a friendly and appreciative audience of village folk squatting round on the floor. Afterwards some stay to talk and discuss the story told ; and so to bed.

Next morning, a group of men gather again round the *coursi*, and Clifford Harris and Sayyed Mohammad, the Christian Persian boy with him, take it in turns to read and talk of Christ to these villagers, to whom the words of the Christian Gospel come like a breath of spring-time in winter, with its message of cheerful faith in anxious times of poverty, of a Father Whose love toward all men is without fear or

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

favour, and of a life beyond the grave made possible for those who now live and hope in Christ.

But Bideshk is only a halfway house. Soh is the final goal for which these two have embarked on this journey. There are many old friends among the village people there who will welcome a visit from them. So the kit is packed again and the track through the snow is taken once more. Mohammad Agha and his friends speed them on their way, with friendly farewells and promises of hospitality in days to come. The dark figures grow smaller and fainter against the white background. The tall Englishman stands on the last ridge for one more wave of the hand, and Mohammad Agha returns the salute. The figures drop quickly below the skyline; and the villagers slowly turn in, and talk together awhile of the amazing friendliness which could send a man out on an errand like that in such wild weather.

"But it was just like him," said Mohammad Agha, thoughtfully. "He comes because he loves us. I don't think he can stay away while he knows there are men here who want to hear the story by which he lives his own happy life."

"I should like to hear more of it myself," said another; "he brings us good news. Let us hope he will come again soon. When spring comes, perhaps he will return this way."

"Meanwhile," said Mohammad Agha, "we can read together sometimes from this gospel book which he left this morning for me to keep."

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

And so they separated, going to their daily jobs with happier hearts because Clifford Harris and his friend had passed that way ; and with a sense, too, that Someone Who had come with them as an unseen friend and companion had stayed behind to cheer and encourage these struggling villagers through the hard winter days ahead.

PART I

"Life is sweet, brother. There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

"There's the wind on the heath, brother. If I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever . . . I'll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother."

GEORGE BORROW—*Lavengro*

Early Days

ON a beautiful stretch of Sussex upland, two miles from the town of Horsham, stand the stately buildings of Christ's Hospital—the ancient school for boys in the new setting to which it was moved from London early in the twentieth century.

Here, on October 24, 1904, Clifford Harris was born; and some account must be given of his early days and of the family life that was to mean so much to him.

He was the youngest of the three children of the Rev. George Harris, a master at the school. Himself of Irish ancestry, the father always made friends by his quick sense of humour and ready fund of enthusiasm. These gifts his youngest son inherited to the full.

His mother was a cousin of that famous medical missionary, Dr. Theodore Pennell, who spent his

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

adventurous life of service among the frontier folk of the North-West Frontier Province of India. Something of his mantle was destined to fall upon his young kinsman.

From his earliest days Clifford, with his brother and sister, knew the happiness of an undivided family life. His sister Ruth, a year older than himself, was his constant companion throughout all his childhood and his best friend in youth. When apart, they wrote regularly to each other every week. Jordan, the elder brother, always exercised a strong inspiration and influence for good over the younger brother. All through Clifford's career this happy, undivided family life strengthened and moulded his character and service. Those who had most to do with him as a small boy found him delightfully unselfish; this, and his natural gaiety of spirit endeared him to all who knew him. But he was wholesomely mischievous, too. A governess who had the early management of him—and found the task none too easy—tells how, on the death of her own father, Clifford showed his practical sympathy by saying: "I am so very sorry your father has died; and I really will try to behave better now." Some days afterwards, however, the strain proving heavy, he warned her: "I don't think I can keep it up much longer"!

He was by nature active and athletic, learning to swim when he was only five, and taking like a duck to the water. He began to play football at seven. During the many summer holidays which the family spent at Hayling Island, when the children were young, tree climbing was his especial delight.

He early learned to use his energies for the

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

helping of others. There was the old fisherman, for instance, on Hayling island, whose filthy hut the family had once ventured to criticize. "Well," said the old man, "and how can I help it? I've nobody to do a bit of spring cleaning for the likes of me." That was a challenge cheerfully accepted. Clifford Harris enjoyed his first job as house decorator; for his family descended inexorably upon the fisherman's cottage, armed with pails, mops, brooms, buckets, and distemper. Every stick of furniture was first moved out of the large front room. It was then depopulated of innumerable creeping and crawling things, scoured from top to bottom, and freshly distempered till it looked as dainty as a Dorset dairy. The old man returned to find the room swept and garnished and, with an eye to the main chance, retired thenceforward to the back room and hung out a large notice outside the front: "APARTMENT TO LET"!

A Plucky Fight

February 2, 1916, was an anxious day for the Harris family. Bad news came suddenly from St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, that Clifford, who lay there desperately ill, had had a serious relapse in the illness which had wracked and contorted him for several weeks, though he had never grumbled or complained in all the pain. "Spotted fever" the authorities called it, or cerebro-spinal meningitis. But the name was the only clear fact about it. This disease was still a new thing to most English doctors; and very, very few who caught it had ever recovered. How Clifford had come by it was itself a mystery

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

still unsolved ; unless, perhaps, he had picked up the germ from a railway carriage in which some soldier, unwittingly sickening for the disease, had just travelled to or from France.

His parents watched anxiously at the bedside, hour by hour, during that fateful February day. It was the day for the Church's commemoration of Christ's Dedication in the Temple as a child. This son of theirs, too, had been dedicated to God at his birth. It was hard to accept this strange fulfilment of their hopes and prayers for him. But doctor and nurse alike had given up hope. In the evening, however, he suddenly moved, spoke, rallied. Next morning and the following days found him still fighting bravely for recovery, though very weak. Injections were being given him instead of the food which he could not take. But nobody can live for ever on injections, least of all a growing boy. One day, the doctor said : " He *must* eat, or he will go under. We must tempt him. Give him anything he asks for, absolutely anything, no matter how unsuitable it may seem." This generous proposition was put to the boy, and at once he said : " Sardines, please." It appeared that in his half-delirious state he had heard a small boy on the other side of the ward being teased by other patients for his liking of this particular delicacy. Sardines were brought to young Harris now and he made his first meal for many weeks. With so free a range of choice, he went on to display a truly catholic taste in foodstuffs : chocolate creams, plum duff, fried sausages—these and many other strange plate-fellows went down like hot cakes when once the spell of hunger had begun to work again.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Slowly he regained his strength and won his way back to health until, on March 17, he was motored down to Horsham for a long spell of convalescence. Bath chair life followed; then Swedish massage and daily exercises slowly brought back the wasted muscles. But it was a serious early setback to his intellectual equipment for life. One and a half years away from school are not the best preparation for a university degree.

At School—Climbing back

But Clifford Harris had one invaluable gift—persistent determination to overcome difficulties.¹ Let a friend who closely shared this period of his life at school at Christ's Hospital tell the tale in his own words. He is writing to *The Blue*, the school magazine, from New York, in the summer of 1930: "I don't think there was anybody while I was in Maine A who was so well liked by everybody as Clifford Harris. I don't suppose you realized that he used to wake up about six in the morning, and try to learn Mr. Dale's Latin exercises under the bedclothes, although, poor old chap, he didn't manage any better with it than R—— or myself, who never learned them at all! And while he was a conscientious and hard-working fellow, he had a very human way of pulling authority's leg, and getting out of doing things. While there were a number of people who were popular with part of the house, there was nobody but Harris who commanded respect from everybody, and who

¹ "He always seemed to step over difficulties," said a friend who knew him well later.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

was equally gentle and friendly towards people entirely different from himself." He was the tallest boy of his time at the school, six feet four inches in height, and broad in proportion.

When Clifford was sixteen, his father retired from his mastership at Christ's Hospital to become vicar of Wadhurst, not far away in the same county of Sussex. He died in the following year, 1921, on the eve of Clifford's seventeenth birthday, leaving behind him an inspiring example and a treasured memory. His mother had to leave the vicarage, but lived on in the town with her two sons and her daughter. Meanwhile Clifford made his way up the school, stage by stage, towards the higher forms.

At King's—" Breaking through "

In October, 1922, he entered the residential hostel (in Vincent Square, Westminster), of King's College, London, to read theology with a view to ordination. There he really "found himself" at last, in mind, in body, and in the opportunity for leadership. Much of this awakening he owed to the stimulating friendship of the sub-warden of the hostel, the Rev. F. R. Barry, D.S.O., now vicar of St. Mary's, the University Church at Oxford. Mr. Barry speaks thus of his memories of Harris at that time :—

" He was just beginning really to recover from his long illness when he came to King's College. Still behindhand in his work, and knowing it, he willed to learn ; his energetic spirit forced him on against the barriers with which his illness had surrounded him. To me, it was like seeing a trium-

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

phant spirit breaking through. I felt I was, as it were, watching a chrysalis as it emerged into the butterfly stage and spread its wings for a flight. He struggled grimly with his Greek and his Greek Testament. English essays were a torture to him at first. But there came a break in this struggle one day, as I well remember. I had grown tired of his essays—laborious, bombastic journalism as they often were, not coming naturally from him. So I said to him: ‘Look here, Clifford, write me an essay on any subject you care to choose for yourself—a description, for example, of any bit of country or landscape that you particularly like.’ He saw what I wanted, and wrote for me a quite remarkably good essay at once; it was a description, I believe, of the scenery at San Remo, where he had lately spent a holiday. Every word was just right. It was a completely new beginning for his writing of English to find that he had only to express his love of nature in his own way, for he loved nature in all her moods. Colour especially appealed to him, and the water-colour work of other people. He had a wonderful knowledge of birds and flowers.”

This quick mental development made a difference even to his outward looks. His head master at Christ’s Hospital, Mr. W. H. Fyfe, meeting Mr. Barry one day, said: “What has happened to the boy? His whole look has changed, as though a lamp had been lit inside him!”

In games he was still handicapped for a time by having to “go canny” owing to his long illness. In spite of this, he was one of the best swimmers and tennis players in the college. And he played a useful forward game

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

in the college Rugby XV. He also joined the Territorial artillery, with whom he learned to ride.

It was, however, by sheer force of personality that he was elected to a position at the hostel corresponding to the post, at Oxford, of president of the junior common room ; and he also became president of the theological faculty and vice-president of the Union for the whole college. Perhaps he won this position because his evident goodness and whiteness of personal character were combined with an utter freedom from anything "pi" or priggish. Indeed, he was well-known for his escapades and practical jokes—some of which were known to the authorities (and some, perhaps, not !).

While life at King's College quickened his growth in mind and spirit, it also brought him new ideals of social service. One summer vacation, at least, was spent on the hopfields of Kent, where he devoted himself to looking after the hop pickers from the poorer parts of London.

It was in his last term at King's that the General Strike took place, in May, 1926. As with many other university students at that time, it was far less from any political bias than from a desire to be of real use to the community that he volunteered at once for public service. He thus described some of his adventures in the *Wadhurst Parish Magazine*, in June, 1926 :—

"On May 4, when the strike began, I was among the volunteers for unloading milk at Waterloo. When the call for more omnibus drivers came, I felt that the unloading was sufficiently supplied with other fellows to allow me to try my luck as a driver."

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

He passed a rough-and-ready test, and was given a licence as bus-driver. "Next morning," he goes on, "I was up at five a.m., and took my place as a London omnibus driver—this after ten minutes' experience of driving a 'bus and a couple of years with a baby two-seater! Each morning we were allotted our route and received instructions; then there was a dash down to where the 'buses were parked, and each selected the one he thought would go in style. Sometimes they started after five or ten minutes, but more often after half an hour's hard work. Sometimes, too, we found we had backed the wrong horse and it kicked like a mule. The first day I backed a good one, but it was rather annoying to find that the foot brake was out of action! After half an hour I felt quite an old hand at omnibus driving.

"A 'bus is licensed to carry fifty-six passengers, but we allowed a few extra, once totalling ninety-three, who clung on to the stairs and steps and even the bonnet in some cases! One lady came to me and complained in an excited manner how very dangerous it was to carry so many, and said that I ought not to allow it: this was greeted with cheers from those around. I told her the conductor was captain of the 'bus and I drove on with my load. It was all good fun and full of thrills and narrow escapes, and I did not mind how long I was at it."

Doubtless this experience came back to him in the years to be in Persia, where the drivers of lorries to-day are often less trained but even more reckless on the mountain roads than any volunteers in the General Strike!

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

The Call of Persia

For it was from Persia that the call for his service was now to come, rather unexpectedly. To him (as to most of those who read this book—in spite of the great Persian Exhibition in London of 1931) it was still a closed and mysterious land. Lying as it does behind the great mountain ranges that divide it from Russia and Iraq, and almost entirely without railways, it is off the main highway of the nations now, though in the proud days of Cyrus it was the hub of the civilized world. It is a vast land of mighty mountains and dry deserts. Here and there rise cities famous in history—Tehran, the present political capital, or Isfahan, the former capital and now a great educational and religious centre. But between them are only wild mountain roads or desert tracks; across these the camel and donkey caravans have made their immemorial ways, and now motor cars and lorries also run. Perched on the hillsides or clinging to the banks of some precious stream that meanders through a shallow valley are the innumerable villages where, for century after century, life has gone on almost unchanged. Up on the hills wander the nomad tribes in their moving encampments, the Qashgais, the Bakhtiariis, and the Lurs.

Islam holds sway as the main religion of the people: her lovely mosques shine out upon the eye of the traveller as he approaches the outskirts of Yezd or Kermanshah or many another city. If he be devout, your lorry driver, when the minarets of Qum¹ come in sight over the desert

¹ A great carpet from this shrine covered the floor, with a border of box hedge, in Room III at the Persian Exhibition at Burlington House.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

ridge, will jump down from his seat and prostrate himself: for here Fatimeh, sister of the Imam Riza, lies buried, and he is near to holy ground.

But Christian missions have also been at work for many years in Persia. Mission hospitals and schools for boys and girls are bringing to the people something of the knowledge which makes for progress and freedom.

A Christian Public School

There is in the city of Isfahan a Christian public school, the Stuart Memorial College, which is the only school on English public school lines in the whole of Persia. There Persian boys, whether Christian, Jewish, or Moslem, are given an education of almost exactly the same sort as that which may be had at Christ's Hospital or any other school of its kind, though it also aims at retaining all that is best in the native culture and tradition of that ancient land. Its purpose is to train Persian boys for citizenship and leadership in their own country. It is a school where, as in not a few English public schools, day boys from a great city and boarders from places far distant mix together in the give-and-take of daily school life. It is very definitely a Christian school; but no boy is compelled or persuaded against his will to become a Christian.

The school, founded some twenty years before, was enlarged in 1915 as a memorial to Bishop Stuart. He had courageously resigned his see in New Zealand, in 1894, at the age of sixty-seven, in order to spend the remainder of his life at Isfahan in the service of the C.M.S. Persia

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Mission. He died in England in 1911, at the age of eighty-four. The school, which was closed during the war, owing to the evacuation of the British community, was re-opened on January 1, 1921, by the Church Missionary Society, under the leadership of the Rev. W. J. Thompson. Educated at an English public school (Monkton Combe) and Trinity, Cambridge, he had, during the war, served as an engineer officer¹ in Persia. He was ordained soon after the war. Mr. Thompson quickly saw that the only way to make this school successful, like others in India which he knew, was to secure the help of a steady stream of "short service" men from England: men, that is, who, having taken their university degree, wish to get some wider experience abroad before taking up their life work. In 1926, while on his furlough, and in search of such men, Mr. Thompson heard of and met Clifford Harris, who had just taken an honours degree in theology, and put before him the opportunity and the fascination of a period of short service in Persia, as a land where great mountains and lonely deserts form the background to spiritual, mental, and social needs that are little known to most people in England.

But it was a difficult problem to decide. Ought he to leave his widowed mother, and go abroad to a country so inaccessible? She was perfectly ready to spare him, if it seemed clearly the will of God that he should go.

Mr. Barry once again acted as counsellor and adviser. Weighing the pros and cons, believing

¹ It was Mr. Thompson who superintended the preparation of the facsimile of the beautiful gate of the great mosque at Isfahan in 1930, which later was set up in Burlington House at the Persian Exhibition. A former head boy of the school, Bazl, was a chief interpreter at this exhibition.



Photograph]

[Wykeham

Clifford Harris at King's College, at the age of twenty-one, just before he sailed for Persia

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

in Clifford Harris's obvious desire for some life work that would be of service to others, and counting this short service scheme to be a valuable chance for him to find his feet and gain his own outlook in the wider world of men, Mr. Barry urged him to go for a time and live out his Christian ideals of service against the background of the Moslem world. And so the decision was taken. He would go where he was wanted.

Eastward Bound

August, 1926, then, found him on board SS. *Maloja*, bound for Port Said. He had as travelling companion C. L. Hawker, a master at Christ's Hospital, also bound for short service at the Stuart Memorial College in Isfahan—a public school man (Bradfield), a keen athlete, and an Oxford hockey Blue.

Clifford Harris's letters home vividly express the wholehearted zest with which he flung himself into the novel variety of the journey. The route followed the new lines laid down by the introduction of a cross-desert motor service from Beyrout to Baghdad. Again and again the letters reveal the joys that came to him on the journey, as a lover of nature, from the endless variety of colour in the world around, and above all, as a swimmer, from the opportunities, which he never missed, for wayside bathes at places so far apart as Marseilles, Port Said, Tiberias, the Dead Sea, Beyrout, and Baghdad !

The journey from Baghdad into Persia was very interesting : they climbed up huge mountain passes and crossed plain after plain of desert land. What a new revelation of colour made a feast for



A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

the eye here ! The distances in Persia are huge, so that it is a vast expanse of tumbled and craggy groups of reds and yellows and browns lying dry under a blue sky. There would be a patch of trees and houses in the depression between two stony slopes that go, fifteen miles on either side, up to the jagged cliffs above. The only vegetation on these slopes is the scanty camel scrub—small prickly bushes sparsely scattered everywhere. In the cracks of the hills there is occasionally a stream producing a streak of verdure, but dripping away underground as soon as it reaches the plains, where it is carried in deep tunnels, hundreds of years old, to the fields of the central depression.

Isfahan, which stands over 5000 feet above sea level, was reached at last on September 1, 1926, when Mr. Thompson and others, following the hospitable custom of the C.M.S. Mission in Persia, came out some way to meet the travellers. Harris liked the look of the city at once. It was, he wrote, "like all the towns round here, a small, compact, cultivated spot in the midst of a desert plain, with mountains in view all round. There are quite a number of trees in the town, which looks very green and charming."

A New World

"Here we are in a new world," he wrote, on the next day after his arrival, September 2. "Everything is the opposite—it's all very odd. I can see I have got to work absolutely 'all out.' I seem to be teaching all sorts of things to the top forms, which know English quite well. My subjects include geography, geometry, English—

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

grammar and literature, science (elementary), and Scripture. I take the two top forms in Scripture four times a week. Hawker and I see that learning Persian is going to be a life work in itself."

Discipline was not easy at first, especially with a form of newcomers. "Hawker and I have had some fun getting them ship-shape. We can now get them to put up their hands when they want to answer a question ; they don't all get up and shout at once. The form is now quite subdued ; they will even stop talking when we tell them to."

Truthfulness was not a common virtue. "Several of the 'ninth' haven't learnt to tell the truth yet. When I catch one looking up an answer under his desk he will quite merrily say he wasn't. They will be all right in a few months' time I expect. There is one very cheering thing : the more soundly you strafe one of the boys, the more he seems to like you : the boy will come up quite merrily afterwards as if you were his greatest friend !"

"The work is hard, but meanwhile," he writes, "I have been several times with the boys for a swim ; they are very keen and anxious to swim and dive well. The boys are surprisingly nice and jolly—particularly those in the hostel (many of them Christian boys). There is a big difference between the hostel boys (boarders) and those who are day boys."

A day or two later he wrote : "To-day there are to be five baptisms in the college ; it is sure to cause a flutter among the mullahs of the town. Just before we came, during the Moslem festivals, the college had to be guarded with soldiers, as

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

the mullahs were going to let the mob in. Nothing happened, however."

A Strenuous Autumn

The autumn of 1926 was a strenuous novitiate for the newcomer from England. Soon after his arrival Hawker was taken ill with sciatica and had to be in hospital for fourteen weeks. The active English masters were therefore reduced to three, Mr. Thompson, Clifford Harris, and Skipworth Harris. The last named was another "short service" man from England, then nineteen years old, who after leaving school (he, like the principal, had been at Monkton Combe), had done a short spell of schoolmastering at Kingsmead School, Hoylake, in Cheshire. But it was his ambition ultimately to take up political or diplomatic work in the East. Accordingly he had welcomed the invitation to gain the useful experience of a schoolmaster's job in Persia, and went out from England to the Stuart Memorial College in October, 1926. The two Harrises shared a room together, and formed a friendship which was to carry them through many queer adventures in the next two years.

School teaching, the organizing and supervising of games, and the correcting of school work kept the reduced staff busy from early morning till far into the night; but they were fortified by cocoa parties in the late evening. Yet those were delightful days, for all the hard work. The two Harrises found the country and the people alike new and fascinating. Together they explored the byways of this large and populous Persian city, talking to all manner of quaint, queer folk

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

in the broken fragments of Persian which were all they could as yet command. They even made their way boldly into Persian religious assemblies where the mullahs held forth. Clifford's desire was to get inside the mind of all sorts and conditions of men.

To Horse and away

A great piece of luck befell the Harris pair at the end of the year (1926). It must be described in Clifford's words, written home :—

“ I have a great piece of news—the consul has offered to lend Skipworth Harris and me horses for riding!!!! He said the horses would be very fresh as they had been ridden very little. He asked when I would like to begin and how often I would like to ride. I said : ‘ To-morrow morning and every day if possible, bar Sundays.’ It is all fixed up !!

“ At 6.30 yesterday the horses arrived with the groom. It was very fresh and nippy, as the sun was only just rising. We had a glorious ride ; the horses were as fresh as could be and went like the wind. We went right out to the desert and had glorious gallops.”

“ The Wind on the Heath ”

In March, 1927, the Harris pair had their first real piece of climbing together, during a short holiday in the hill village of Soh, some seventy miles from Isfahan. Dr. Donald Carr, of the C.M.S. medical mission in Persia, had bought a small Persian house in the village, and on retiring from Persia in 1928, after over thirty years of

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

medical work there, he presented it to the Persia Mission as a holiday resort for missionaries. It is constantly in use now for this purpose. Soh lies among the mountains where no Europeans are to be found. The Harrises reached it on bicycles in one day. Almost as soon as they arrived Clifford suggested to Skipworth (as we must now call the other Harris, for merciful abbreviation's sake) that they should strike out "into the blue" and explore the surrounding mountains. Skipworth was doubtful about the risks, but agreed. Abiyani was their first objective, a village high up among the mountains, in a lovely valley; its red mud houses are built on to the side of the steep, red rock. They reached it by way of some fine peaks and, arriving at 7 p.m. on Monday evening, stayed the night with the head man of the village.

"We caused," says Clifford, "a terrific excitement—all the village turned out to see two *feranghis* (English) clad in shorts, and without hats walking down the main street (narrow like the old town of San Remo), followed by a donkey and Persian servant with the baggage; then came a string of excited children (we might have been the Pied Piper) followed by the men and women!!"

They tried to converse in Persian, but were embarrassingly tongue-tied. From sheer curiosity, however, the villagers readily accepted the small copies of the Gospel which Clifford had brought with him. "They are in Persian, these books!" they exclaimed in amazement, and read them with keen interest.

There was the chance of practical usefulness, too. In Abiyani they found a girl who had been

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

suffering for many months from a very severe wound caused by a stab in the leg. It took many hours of argument for Clifford to persuade her father to let him put her on a donkey, and send her with an escort to the C.M.S. hospital at Isfahan. Next day, more peaks were climbed and they made friends with the people of Haz, another mountain village. Further climbs brought them round again to Soh.

The Ascent of Kuh-i-Dinar

Those four days of continuous climbing among the mountains whetted the appetites of Clifford and Skipworth Harris for stronger meat ; they wanted longer, higher climbs. That is at once the price and the pleasure of mountaineering. But in a land like Persia the supply waits readily on the demand.

In July of that year the usual summer camp, to which a party of S.M.C. boys always go each year, was pitched at Abiyani. Its purpose was twofold : to give the boys from the school, some of them city dwellers in Isfahan, a first-rate holiday among the wild hills ; and at the same time to show them how naturally Christianity expresses itself in a jolly, open-air, virile way of living. Short talks were given each day at prayers by one or other of the staff. Most of the time was spent in climbing, bathing, or rounders. Not a few college boys have owed the beginning of their Christian life to one of these camps.

When camp was ended their first real adventure began for the two HARRISES. They had already planned a trip to the high peaks of Kuh-i-Dinar,

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

a mountain several days' journey to the southwest of Isfahan.

Their choice of this expedition is explained by Clifford at the beginning of a vivid record of it, which he called "Our Travels with a Donkey and a Silly Ass." They selected it, he says, because Kuh-i-Dinar (18,000 feet) is the second highest mountain in Persia, and because it is in one of the wildest and least known parts: very few white men have ever been there. Their interest was first aroused by seeing all that part of the country marked on their big map (the best obtainable) as "unsurveyed" and "unexplored." The route lay through the mountainous country to which the Qashgai and Bakhtiari tribes migrate in summer.

They left Isfahan on July 21, making for Abadeh, on the Shiraz road. Here they procured a donkey and engaged a muleteer called Ali. They arranged to pay the muleteer ten krans a day for man and beast, and he was to go wherever they wanted him and to feed himself and his donkey. Also he was to feed and serve the pair and do all odd jobs. They explained that they wanted to go up to Kuh-i-Dinar and then back through the Bakhtiari Country to Isfahan. The muleteer said he was prepared to do three stages in one day if necessary and would even drive the donkey to heaven for them!

Ali, however, turned out to be a poor guide and a lazy cook, and was often terrified of the people, especially when they were in a fighting area. Their way lay for many miles through the Qashgai villages, or rather encampments. Sometimes the pair were fiercely attacked by large, wild dogs, but luckily these were usually afraid

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

of stones. On July 25, drawing near to their main objective, the peak of Kuh-i-Dinar itself, they were up before sunrise. They went across the plain and then over a very high pass, climbing over ridge after ridge, and ever mounting higher. It was after mid-day before they reached Seh-deh, the village they were making for. There they found a house to stay at, and large numbers of villagers gathered round, as had become usual, to stare at them. They left odd things out on the ground, shaving things, for example, and these kept the spectators well occupied. A stick of shaving-soap would keep a dozen men quiet for twenty minutes, a tobacco-pouch for fifteen, and a looking-glass for about ten minutes. They would be passed all round and felt, then some one would think of smelling and all would want to smell. In this way the time passed without the travellers being worried.

July 28 saw them at Sisakht, a beautiful village on a little tableland on the side of Kuh-i-Dinar, and quite cut off from the world. In places the track was only two feet wide, with a steep drop below, along which only mules and ponies could pass.

In the evening they walked up above the village and were having a good wash and shave when suddenly they were disturbed by a large cavalcade of armed men who came cantering down the valley. These drew up, enclosing them in a half-circle, and one of them suddenly shouted: "Well, hallo boys, what are you doing here?" It was one of the sons of the Bakhtiari chief, Ali Mohammad Khan. He had been sent by the Persian Government to finish off the tribal war now going on. He spoke English well, having



Photograph]

Clifford in the Sisakht Pass, on the way to Kuh-i-Dinar

[Skipworth Harris

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

been to Oxford for a short time just before the war. The Harrises sat and talked with him while his armed men ate fruit and then got opium pipes going.

They thought now that time was getting short, so they decided to climb Kuh-i-Dinar the next day and try to get down on the other side and walk to Bir, which was sixteen miles down the far side. On July 29 they woke up at 5 a.m. and, setting off alone, climbed as fast as they could. It was very hot as they made their way up the lower slopes with the sun on their backs. The first part of the climb was heavy going, over steep slopes of loose stones and boulders. They came to the first deep snow-drift about 16,000 feet up, lying on the south side. Here they filled their water-bottles with snow, but alas, squeezed too much in; it froze into a solid lump, so that they could not get any water out for quite a long time. Instead, they ate snow, which was not so refreshing.

The last lap was a great effort, taking them over a very steep slope of big loose stones for over a thousand feet. Every time they dragged themselves up two steps they slipped down one. Soon they were gasping like fishes out of water and had to stop and admire the view every ten yards. Their ears, too, began to feel heavy and to buzz. Right at the top of the peak they found a little herd of ibex, which galloped off like lightning as soon as the climbers appeared. There was a great deal of snow hereabouts, but it lay in thick drifts which they could usually get round. It took them six and three-quarter hours to reach the summit. On the way up they saw a huge eagle; it wheeled round and then perched up on a rock

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

above a precipice. They also saw many flowers and birds unknown to them on their climb up Kuh-i-Dinar and on their daily tramps.

They spent an hour and a half on the top of Kuh-i-Dinar and then, beginning to feel cold, thought it was time to look for a place to descend. After searching some time they found a place where they thought they could get down to the pass below. It was a very steep slope of over 1000 feet in depth, covered with loose sand and stones, where they could slide down but could not have found a footing to get back the same way. They succeeded, however, in getting down to the track that led over the pass about 1000 feet from the top. It was a wonderfully high and narrow pass with dark rocks rising up very sheer on both sides. There were big drifts of snow that lay dazzling white in the light of the evening sun, while below deep and gloomy shadows were stretching their arms over the valley. All was silent save for the roar of the icy torrent that went rushing down the mountainside, leaving an angry trail of froth and foam. The sun was low over the distant mountains when the top of the pass was reached, and they had sixteen miles to walk before reaching the village; evidently it would be dark in two hours.

They set off down the mountain track at a long, running pace, and soon reached the foothills which sloped down, ridge after ridge, to the desert plain in the distance; their village lay across the plain at the foot of the distant mountains. Up above them on the mountain slopes they could see the fires of the Qashgai camp. It was a camp that their muleteer had warned them against, and where he had himself refused to go; however

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

it was a very welcome sight. On drawing near they shouted out, and that set all the wild dogs dashing down upon them. The men ran down with sticks and the Harrises used stones to keep the dogs at a safe distance. They answered the men's questions and explained what they were doing at that time of night. The tribesmen would not go down to show them the fords but gave them some hot milk and told them they might sleep outside the tents. So they lay down together, covered over with a couple of light carpets. They had succeeded in getting within about five miles of their village, Bir, which they reached the next morning.

Then came an incident which showed how far-reaching is the influence of the Stuart Memorial College, even in the wildest parts of Persia. On August 3, they walked to Chaqakhur and invited themselves to the camp of Sardar-i-Zaffar, who is the chief of all the Bakhtiari tribes and one of the biggest of the clan. When they arrived at the camp about 1.30 p.m. Sardar-i-Zaffar was asleep. None of the many retainers or servants took any notice of the two visitors. They asked for a tent to sit in, and suggested that a little food would be welcome. Finally they were taken to a big marquee—the dining tent; there they sat and waited in breathless suspense while messengers went to tell His Excellency that two unknown Englishmen had planted themselves down in his camp. The Harrises had said they were from Sahib Thompson's college at Isfahan, hoping that the name would work wonders; but alas! he did not remember any Thompson! They were beginning to feel most uncomfortable, and wishing that they might sink through the

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

ground, when in walked a boy from the S.M.C.¹ He was one of the many sons of Sardar-i-Zaffar. This was a great relief and a very pleasant surprise, for they did not know he would be at the camp. He explained to the authorities who the visitors were, and now they were treated with great kindness, and given a tent to stay in, which was spread with most magnificent Persian carpets.

In the evening they received a message to say that Sardar-i-Zaffar would be pleased to see them. They found the great man outside a grand marquee sitting in a chair and looking through a huge telescope, while a large crowd of retainers and courtiers stood round in a half-circle. Two chairs were placed for the visitors and they sat down and did their best to carry on a conversation in Persian with their host. Skipworth, with his superior knowledge of Persian, managed most skilfully. Sardar-i-Zaffar was a large, portly man and seemed very jolly, but "not the sort of person you would want to disagree with!"

The next morning they wanted to get off early; they were up at 4.30 a.m., and said good-bye to Sardar-i-Zaffar, who was strolling outside his tent in silk pyjamas and dressing-gown. The last day's walk into Isfahan, on August 5, is worth mentioning, if only for the final "close-up" of Ali the muleteer.

"As we entered Isfahan," Clifford writes, "Ali was riding the donkey, sitting on our baggage (he nearly always rode because he could not keep up with our walking pace for many minutes). The donkey was trotting along to keep up when

¹ Stuart Memorial College.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

it tripped and our lazy man was thrown off, landing with a heavy thud. He got up in a raging temper, and seizing his heavy stick brought it whizzing down at the donkey's head ; the donkey wheeled round and ducked and the stick crashed to the ground. We shouted with laughter, only too pleased to get some of our own back. We arrived at the college at 7.30 a.m., after a most amusing, interesting, and enjoyable holiday."

During this journey, they had walked 356 miles in seventeen days, an average of just on twenty-one miles a day. Also they had climbed Kuh-i-Dinar, a mountain marked up to 18,000 feet. They now knew more about Persia, and what was more, they felt "as fit as fiddles."

Twelve Hours in the Day

The autumn of 1927 drew on, and with it came Pat Gausson from Brasenose, Oxford, to lend a hand as short service master at the school. There was plenty of schoolwork for all to do ; but bathes and games kept every one fit. Now, too, there was a kind of spiritual "movement" in the school. Several boys began to inquire seriously about Christ and His claims ; and Clifford Harris and Pat Gausson, in particular, felt the need of meeting to pray together for these boys.

In that November a lively break in the routine took the two Harrises out for a typical adventure. A Persian saint's day on a Thursday, coming next to the usual weekly whole holiday (every Friday is a religious "day off" in Persia) gave them the chance of a day and a half away from school.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

They "pined for air," as they put it, after a spell of continuous hard work.

Mt. Natanz was their objective, the highest mountain anywhere near Isfahan. It lies eighty miles away. They reached its foot on bicycles on Thursday afternoon, climbed to the summit (about 12,500 feet) on Friday, then bicycled home across the desert by moonlight, and were ready for morning school on Saturday!

Runs were now taken almost every day by Clifford and other members of the staff. The diary entry for February 10, 1928, tells of one such run, which aimed at doing a record time up the mountain which overlooks Isfahan. "In afternoon set off with Hawker to run up Kuh-i-Sufi¹ and back in under three hours. Got to top of Hazar Jereeb in twenty minutes and to white house under forty-five minutes. From white house to top in twenty-six minutes. Ate chocolate on top. Came down in light snowstorm. There and back in two hours twenty minutes! It was heavy work going up hill. Then played badminton."

There are diary entries, too, just now which throw a significant light on his steadily growing outlook and purpose.

"Feb. 16 (Thurs.). I had a great discussion in class about our aim in life and what we thought of as the greatest value in life. We nearly all agreed, service for others, and, if need be, suffering to help others. I intend on Monday to carry on and try and show where that falls short, taking John iii.

"Feb. 20 (Mon.). Had a great talk with

¹The name of this peak—"hill of the Sufi"—is locally attributed to the ruined cell or "white house" on its upper slope, where a famous *sufi* (mystic) is reported to have dwelt, many years ago.



Photograph]

Like "a picture out of some old book of fairy stories"; a view of Yazdikhist

[L. Lockhart

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

IX Form in Scripture, following on from the previous discussion. I talked on John iii—Nicodemus.”

An important decision is recorded just now in his diary : “ Walk with Skip and talk about future. I have planned to stay a fourth year to help Pa T. (Mr. Thompson) when he goes home, but on condition that I have a whole summer off—summer term and hols.—for going out in the villages preaching and getting real experience of missionary work.”

“ March 4 (Sun.). I preached my first SERMON in the evening.

“ March 13. Skip’s twenty-first birthday ; presented him with a big wooden case filled with little presents, including a large roll of my exam. papers to correct ! ”

The Hidden Caves of Shaghandab

For some time past the Harrises had heard vague rumours of the existence of certain mysterious large caves at some spot to the east of the Isfahan-Shiraz road, and they decided to use the short spring holiday in March, 1928, to locate these. After a long search, they found and explored them, in a region totally unsurveyed and very wild. From the caves they slowly wandered southwards to Yezdikhast, which they reached one night at sunset. Yezdikhast from a distance reminds the traveller of a picture out of some old book of fairy stories. The village runs along a ridge with perpendicular sides, and the houses cluster on top, clinging like flies to the very edge of the precipice. The pair slept by the roadside in a very public place just outside

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

a *qaveh khaneh* (coffee house). The whole village turned out and rocked with laughter to see the strangers getting into their sheet bags, and with somewhat macabre humour compared them to winding sheets! In spite of the fact that they were lying on cobble-stones they slept like logs, and left their warm beds the next morning with the greatest reluctance.

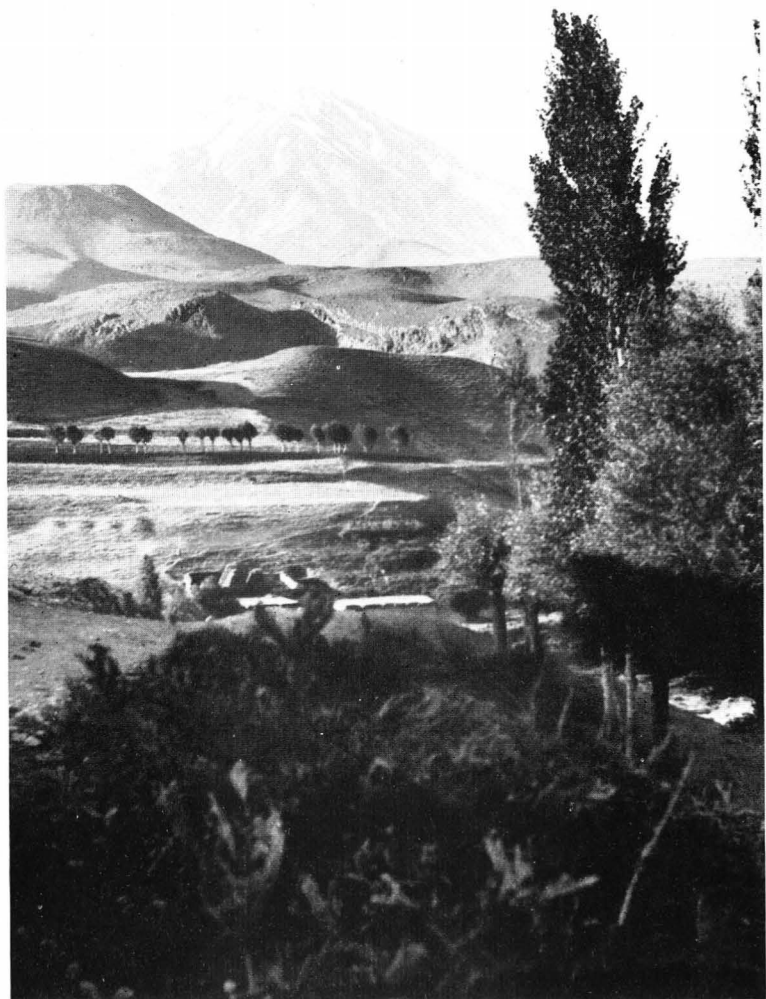
On approaching Yezdikhast, they had seen on the east "a long, snowy range, culminating in a fine peak." This they identified on their map as Kuh-i-Ali Juq, a mountain of 12,220 feet. They lost their hearts to it at first sight, changed all their plans, and, by a day's detour, managed to climb it on their way home.

Clifford Harris, at the end of his diary for this trip writes: "Our Ali Juq day was second only to Kuh-i-Dinar in the amount of distance covered and energy expended; we did it with practically no food. On our trip we had some good times, reading the Bible with Persians in the evenings. Many were very pleased to have a 'gospel' or a tract, *i.e.* the Beatitudes."

The Sulphur Springs of Demavand

That summer, the boys' camp was held at Khunsar, in June. The site had been selected in a typical "two days' dash" which the Harris pair took, early in the month, doing, as usual, much of the journey by moonlight and at least sixty miles of it with a partly broken bicycle! They had some narrow escapes from disaster.

The camp, when it came, was a great success. And more than usually the masters and the



Photograph]

“ Away ahead toward the great snow peak of Demavand ”

[L. Lockhart

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Christian boys felt that the non-Christians were realizing the presence and influence of Christ.

One of these Christian boys was Imani, a particularly sturdy walker. Not long before he had become a baptized Christian, after many runs and talks with Clifford. He was now invited to join the two Harrises in a long and ambitious trek. They intended to climb Mt. Demavand (not far from Tehran), and walk on down to the Caspian Sea. Then they hoped to go by sailing boat along the coast to Chalus, and from there to walk back over the mountains to Tehran.

They started for Tehran on Tuesday, July 17, in a lorry. Saturday found them climbing with their donkey and *chavadar* (muleteer) up the lower slopes of the mountains, which were covered with grass and flowers : below this path was a dashing mountain torrent. Away ahead towered the great snow peak of Demavand.¹ Next day, they climbed over snow-covered slopes to the summit. On top there was a crater, like a white basin full of snow. Coming down, they raced large boulders down steep slopes. Three hours brought them to the camping place, and then ten miles back to Rehneh, through little valleys blue with wild mint and lit up by brilliant patches of poppies. But the night was spent in agonies from snow-blindness : it was just as if they had sharp grit under their eyelids scraping

¹ Of this Lord Curzon writes : " The shapely white cone, cutting so keenly and so high into the air, becomes so familiar and cherished a figure in the daily landscape that on leaving Tehran and losing sight thereof (which . . . he does not do for 160 miles), the traveller is conscious of a very perceptible void. Demavand is a volcano . . . in a state of suspended animation." *Persia*. vol. I, p. 345.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

their eyeballs ; mosquitoes and fleas had undisturbed meals—they were quite out of the running that night, and had no attention paid to them ; the travellers hardly slept a wink. Foolishly, they remembered, they had not worn their coloured glasses when climbing up the snow. But Imani, the Persian boy, was hardly affected. Next day they bathed in the hot sulphur water of Ab-i-Garm. Where the water came out of the ground it was nearly boiling, and villagers boiled their eggs in the spring. There was a very strong smell of sulphur. Many people suffering from rheumatism go to Ab-i-Garm for the hot baths, also the deaf, dumb, blind, and lame, hoping to be cured.

On Tuesday, the 24th, they walked for thirty miles along the River Lar through magnificent gorges. At mid-day they bathed in a clear pool of soda water, and drank from the spring. When they dived in, the water became quite milky with air bubbles. The water was rather flat, but there was a strong taste of soda. But what a night they spent there ! “ One of the worst,” says Skipworth, “ that I can remember. It was a sort of gala day for all the fleas in the district, for they came and danced on us by their thousands.”

They walked on down to Amul, while the valley opened out through fine beech woods and clearings with carpets of fresh, green grass and moss. They felt they might have been back in England. Amul, too, a town of some 15,000 people, had smart little bungalows, roofed with red tiles, so that from a distance it looked like an English seaside resort.

At Amul they changed their route, heading not for Barfarush but for Mohammadabad and the

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Caspian Sea. When at last they saw the sea, like Xenophon's homesick soldiers they shouted to Imani : " The sea, Imani, the sea ! " He had never seen it in his life. But true to type he turned, laconically indifferent, and said : " Do you think this place will do for lunch ? "

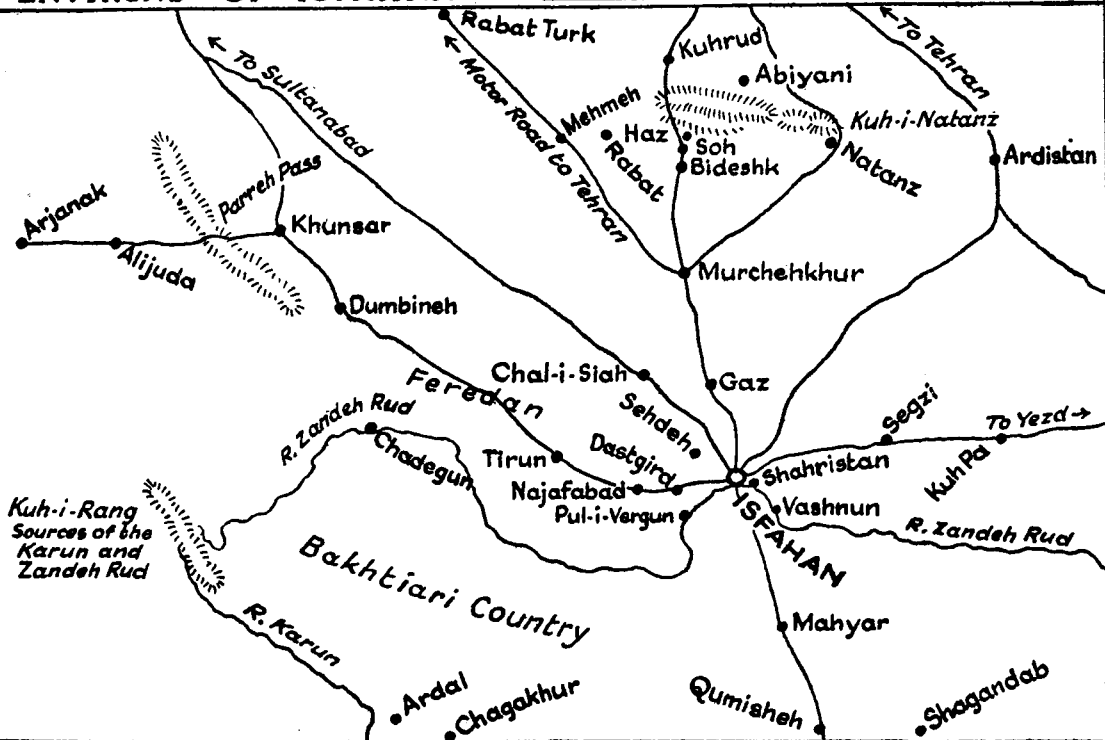
They bathed twice in the sea, slept on the sand that night, and reached Ferikenard next afternoon, to find that the sailing boats they had hoped to catch had left the day before !

No other boat could be got. So they walked on to Mashad-i-Sar, twelve miles on, where Clifford and Imani swam far out to a Port Pahlevi steamer, only to be told that its departure would be too late to be of any use. Back they tramped to Barfarush, where they waited for a lorry bound for Tehran. The route lay through a river which rose swiftly in the night. A ferry took the baggage across ; but before it could convey the passengers, the river had risen to an alarming height. Skipworth and Clifford waded into the water in bathing kit, to see whether it was possible to detain the relief lorry on the far side till they could cross. The current was strong, but Clifford insisted on trying to cross by the diagonal rope, holding on by his arms, till, in midstream, the strain overcame him. " I saw him," says Skipworth, " sink into the rushing torrent, and go careering downstream. You can imagine my feelings ! His chance of safety was almost *nil*. Luckily, however, the current swept him against the stern of the ferry. He grabbed it just in time, and so got to the shore. It was a very near shave."

The lorry on the far side, however, waited, and they made their way to Tehran and back to the college on Sunday, August 5.

ENVIRONS OF ISFAHAN

0 20 40 60 Scale of Miles



PART II

JESUS SAID :

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

*Then with a rush the intolerable craving
Shivers throughout me like a trumpet-call—
Oh to save these ! to perish for their saving,
Die for their life, be offered for them all !*
F. W. H. MYERS, St. Paul

A Spiritual Cross-Roads

NOW began a period which was to have a very creative effect on Clifford Harris's personality and work in the next—and last—eighteen months of his life.

For there came into being a new movement of fellowship with other Christian workers in Isfahan. Pat Gaussen was the leader in this movement. He and Clifford found that others, like themselves, were hungry for the chance to meet and pray and talk together about their life in God and their work for Him in Persia.

So small groups were formed for the purpose, which met regularly but informally in a friendly way in the evenings. Men and women missionaries, Persian and English Christians, could join

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

these groups, where they shared together their experiences, difficulties, and hopes, and prayed for Christ's guidance upon them in the light of common Bible study.

It is quite evident, from his constant reference to them, how much these groups meant to Clifford Harris. One particularly cheerful letter home just now, describing them, is signed: "from Clifford—living in the land of many delightfully keen friends."

It was indeed a crucial turning-point in Clifford's own life and Christian experience. Hitherto he had been the eager but rather vague young adventurer, keen to win new experiences in a landscape full of mystery and fascination; though it is easy to see how the call of spiritual and physical need behind the lives of Persian villagers had already been appealing to his instinctively unselfish spirit; and his Christian life was deep and real, as his sermons show.

But now, while retaining all his *joie de vivre* to the full, he was to enter into a new and still deeper experience of God, into a yet fuller life of living, personal fellowship with Christ and surrender to His influence. And this inward experience was to drive him forth again in a new and purposeful outgoing of his whole personality in utmost self-giving to the deepest needs of his fellow-men, above all to their hunger for the living God. Henceforth men were to feel a new power in his influence. "It was not," writes a friend who knew him well, "his stumbling Persian or his arguments that won people, but the overflowing kindness and love in him, and the unmistakable evidence that Someone was upholding him every moment." He experienced,

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

in fact, what was almost a spiritual "breaking-through," with Pat Gausson as the friend to help him into this new and vital spiritual experience, just as F. R. Barry had formerly been the main instrument in the full liberation of Clifford's fine mental powers at King's College.

To such a personality as Clifford now became, who could fail to respond? As a friend wrote of him, summing up his character and his influence over the Persians to whom he devoted himself so whole-heartedly: "Clifford did great work by simply ministering with loving sympathy to the humblest needs that came in his way. He visited the sick, cared for the boys, encouraged the men, spoke kindly to any who seemed sorrowful or lonely. He never allowed any journey, however long or perilous, through heat or cold, by night or by day, however weary or sick he might be himself, to deter him from carrying all the resources of his ministrations to any human need that had been brought to his notice. His kindness, his courage, his self-denial, his justice touched to life something in those Persians that lay deeper than all the tangle of hideous custom with which they were so rankly overgrown. And what is more, he willingly and gladly received many gifts from these villagers. They lent him coats or other clothing. They fed him generously on his 'tramps.' They taught him many lessons of endurance and faith, courage and comradeship."

For it was the call of the villages and the villagers that was henceforth to him overwhelming. And these "fellowship" groups, with Clifford as their executive leader, now began to launch out on a new campaign of service and witness among the

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

villages in an ever-widening circle, with Isfahan as its centre.

The Village Campaign begins

On September 9, 1928, Clifford, writing home, describes one of these village expeditions, which was planned round the weekly Friday holiday.

“ Last Thursday I went off with two Christian Persian masters to a little village about nine or ten miles away, down the river called Vashnun. We took a lantern and slides. We sent a donkey off early in the afternoon with some bedding and the lantern ; we ourselves dashed off on bikes after school. We found a place where we could show the lantern ; as it was very windy, we used an old, tumbled-down mud tunnel or stable with three sides to it and a bit of roof. We had a delightful little group of listeners and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We did not expect many, as it was the first time the village had been visited.

“ The next morning, Friday, we cycled back five miles to our bathing pool at Shahrستان, met the boys and spent the day bathing with them. About 4 p.m. we returned to Vashnun and arranged everything for the lantern show. While we drank tea we had a group of men round and R—— (a Persian) talked to them and taught them about the life of Christ and read passages from the Bible ; the men seemed very interested and keen. The village barber went round and gave them a shave and hair-cut in turn while our talk went on. Sayyed Nasrullah (a Christian Persian boy) arrived just as we were finishing tea and were ready for our lantern talk. We must have

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

had a good fifty people, and they listened very well and were very keen to get our little books afterwards—such as ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ and the teaching on love from St. John, and the ‘Good Shepherd.’

“We were up the next morning, Saturday, by 4.20 a.m. and packed up our things, setting off on our bikes about 5.10 a.m. We stopped at a quiet place outside the village, where we had stopped before when entering or leaving, and had a prayer at dawn. The ride back was delightful, all along by the river, just at sunrise ; we felt very happy and hearty.”

He asks now, in a letter to his mother, for Bible pictures : “good, artistic prints (coloured). They will come in useful when I go to the villages : sets like the Good Shepherd are very good.”

Meanwhile, inquirers in the village were finding that here is a man who will make time somehow to teach them about Christ.

One day he writes home ; “A *sayyed* (Moslem religious teacher) and his servant have arrived here. They are two very keen inquirers from Seh-deh. Sayyed Nasrullah spent about two hours reading and talking to them and then they stayed to supper. They are going to live near the college for about ten days and are anxious to get as much teaching as possible. We hope to go round whenever we are free.” And he refers to this *sayyed* again in his diary later :—

“Dec. 4. The sayyed was delightful ; he has been having a rough time, other sayyeds and mullahs preaching against him. He said : ‘If God is with us, what does it matter what men do to us ?’ ”

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

A Baptism—and a Parting

November brought another great joy: he begins a letter on the 25th:—

“To-day is a great day—Sayyed Nasrullah was baptized this morning! I am cheered. You know all about him. He is the boy who has been teaching me Persian and who has been out to the villages with me. It is a wonderful answer to prayer. It will be very hard for him; I don't suppose he will be able to go home for a long time. It seems almost too good to be true after wondering and waiting so long. I am sure it will be a great help to other boys.”

But December saw the end of a great partnership. On the 18th he writes:—

“Here we are, just nearing Christmas. Skip leaves this evening; in an hour's time I shall set off with him and go out twelve miles to Pul-i-Vargun. He is going to walk down the Bakhtiari road, only a caravan track which will be blocked with snow in another month. He is taking all his baggage on a mule. We will walk out together and sleep the night and I shall return in the morning.”

So Skipworth made his way into India; and, after teaching for a time at the Aitchison Chiefs' College in Lahore (for sons of chiefs) went up to the newly-formed St. Peter's Hall at Oxford to read for his degree and for work in the Civil Service in Malay, to which he sailed in August, 1931.

“It's quite lonely without Skip,” Clifford wrote, a week later. And again, on December 30: “We begin school to-morrow again—we shall miss Skip.” But Hawker came to share his room for a time.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

A new year, 1929, now came in, and life at the school was as busy as ever. Meanwhile, the fellowship groups went on strongly; a January 16 entry describes a "fellowship group, very helpful and full of power, great answers to prayers."

So did the lantern shows. At Dastgird, on Jan. 18: "Hearty crowd in evening but got quiet and listened remarkably well at end: after the lecture, the people started pushing and many people were rolled down a bank into the garden!"

Ali the Baker

An inquirer of whom we shall later hear much comes now into the picture, "Ali the baker," a Moslem from Jubareh, the Jewish quarter of Isfahan. The diary says: "Jan. 19. The baker, a Moslem working in Jubareh, who is a keen inquirer, got turned out of his work a month ago because he let us give a lantern show in his house; he was looked upon as a Christian. He kept very cheery, with no work and a family to keep. Letter to say he has found work. A man at the lantern show, who also bakes, after a month offered him work. Ali said: 'Think first, because I am now a Christian.' Work still offered. He (Ali) came to Pa T. to read (the Gospel) and brought this other baker along as an inquirer!"

It was a wearing life. After a busy day in school, with inquirers to see afterwards, his diary for February 11 reads:—

"Very tired when I got up and had a full day ahead. Prayed that I might not be tired during

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

day; wonderful answer: hearty all day. . . .
Find my midday prayers very refreshing."

Plans and prospects for the future now begin to take bold and definite shape. On that same day (Feb. 11) he wrote home:—

"What I feel at present is that after coming home for a holiday I shall want to come out to Persia again to work in the villages as a travelling missionary, living among the Persians like a Persian and staying in the villages to gather groups together and to teach them. I should like to work under a doctor in a dispensary when I am in England and get more medical knowledge, so that I could take a medicine chest round with me through the villages, getting food in return for medicine and Persian gospels. I should love to be free to try this, as I am sure there is a great need for people to go out and live among the villagers. I think I would soon get a Persian to join me, living the same sort of life of faith. Just going out to the villages from college is infectious; many people want to go out now!"

Talks by the Way

Village work, as we have seen, was full of increasing fascination for Clifford. But perhaps he liked even better the friendly evangelism of the open highway. Any Persian peasant on the road, young or old, soon found in this cheerful young Englishman a ready friend and fellow traveller. We are almost reminded of Philip's conversation in the desert with the Ethiopian eunuch when we read of the two days' walking which he describes in a letter of March 10:

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“ I am flourishing and feeling in good form after a walk of twenty miles on Thursday afternoon to Najafabad. We got up a party, but I decided to walk, which was a great idea. I soon found friends on the road. One young boy, and a bright old man named Abbas. We had great fun talking. I told them some parables and short stories. The old man was very tired as he had walked twenty-seven miles the day before, getting little sleep. We arrived before the car, at sunset. I went to a caravanserai with my old man and then I bought some bread, butter, and *mast* (curded milk). We both ate together : he was very pleased, I don't think he had any money left. Then I went round and found the others, who were now ready to give the lantern talk.¹ I then read a little—from prepared passages—to a group of men, after which I collected people from the bazaar. We had a wonderfully quiet audience. A group stayed at the end and Ma T. (Mrs. Thompson) read and talked to them. Then Abbas arrived, so he came and had supper with us. He was very quiet and pleased. Then more reading.

“ The next morning, Friday, I set off at 6.45 a.m. to walk back, as I wanted to be in time for a Persian lunch given by Dr. Schaffter for Persian Christians. I soon caught up a man riding a donkey and talked : he had seen the pictures the night before and was keen. After

¹ One of the party writes : “ When Clifford entered the room it was difficult to recognize him, as he was wearing old Abbas's heavy felt coat. This goes to show how drawn the Persians were to him as a real friend. Clifford was wearing the coat of a man he had only known for a few hours, and Abbas was doing without to give warmth to his new-found foreign friend.”

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

half an hour he turned off and I went on at full speed. I stopped half way back and sat in the sun with a young 'road guard' and drank tea, and we shared the dates I had in my pocket. We had a good talk and I read to him a bit from the Sermon on the Mount. I hope when he comes to Isfahan he will pay me a visit. I got back in time for the lunch with the Persian Christians : it's good fun meeting these men, all sorts and ages."

A Bitter Blow

March, 1929, brought a bitter blow to the college, and, in particular, to Clifford and his future plans. He writes, on April 1 :—

"Tragic news—the A.P.O.C.,¹ who have been giving £500 a year to the college and have enabled the college to grow, have now quite suddenly sent a short letter saying that they are going to stop this payment after next November ! This is a terrible blow. It will probably mean that Pa and Ma T. will be leaving us in a week or so for England. It is essential that the money should be found somewhere. They don't want to go home now, but it seems that it is inevitable."

On March 24 Sayyed Mohammad and Musa, two Christian boys, were baptized at the college, and Clifford's diary records on that day how he and a party of three others, who were out on a preaching tour, had prayer in the desert for these two boys at the time of their baptism in Isfahan, many miles away.

¹ Anglo Persian Oil Company.



Stuart Memorial College, Isfahan—the Christian Hostel

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Ali the Dreamer

In a letter written on April 15, yet another "Ali" inquirer comes into the foreground, "Ali the dreamer," as he is afterwards called sometimes in the diary and letters, to distinguish him from "Ali the baker," of Jubareh. The psychoanalysts might find it interesting to reconstruct the dream here mentioned from recent experiences in which Ali had been sharing! Clifford writes:—

"Latest news: I have had a great week. Went out last Monday evening to a village named Sodun. They had never heard about Christ before; they were much interested in all the reading and in the lantern talk. The sporting fellow who drove us out was greatly interested in the lantern talk. He said: 'You have the truth—why haven't you told us before?'

"Last Sunday week I met a man called 'Ali' and talked with him for a few minutes as he walked with us—about parable of lost sheep. . . . Then on Tuesday he saw me bathing in the river—flooded, good, fast stream. Yesterday (Sunday) he came to the service in college chapel and stayed for lunch with some of the inquirers. Then we had reading together.

"In the afternoon, on the way to church I had a swim and along came this Ali again. He said: 'Oh, I hoped to find you here. I have had a dream and had no chance of seeing you alone this morning (he had had the dream the night before). I was drowning in the sea and a man caught me firmly by the arm and dragged me out. Then when I was recovering, I saw he was going,

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

and I ran after him and caught him and found that he was Jesus Christ.'

"Ali knew practically nothing at all about Christ. I went and met him that night again by the river and then walked to the house where he is staying, talking on the way. I stayed there a long time and talked to a group about Christ."

It is worth while to introduce this Ali from another angle, in the words of a missionary who was walking with Clifford on that same Sunday night: "One evening when out for a short walk with Clifford we overtook a man carrying large planks of wood. Immediately Clifford offered to help the man with his load. The man was very glad to share his burden with the 'kind English friend' (as he afterwards called him); such help did not come Ali's way often—one could see that! After the usual salutations Clifford turned to Ali and said: 'Have you ever heard of Christ?' Ali replied that he had not heard of Him, and then Clifford told him of Jesus Christ Who came to seek and save those who were lost. Our ways divided soon; altogether we had walked for seven minutes with this Persian man, and in that short time Clifford had told him of Jesus Christ. Those of us who had the delight of being fellow-workers with Clifford know what a typical picture this is of him. He was always ready to tell others about Christ, and there were many opportunities in this Moslem land. Clifford always had a string of names to pray for at our prayer meetings and each inquirer had his own title to distinguish him. The foregoing Ali is now 'Ali the dreamer.'"

It is easy to learn from this story how naturally and unaffectedly Clifford could speak

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

of religion to any man. "These things," writes another, "were to him the gladdest and happiest part of life, and he never dreamed of looking solemn when talking of them."

Clifford visited Ali the baker on April 17, found him ill and looking very weak, gave him four krans and told him to get a carriage and go to hospital. He arrived on April 20. Clifford saw him settled into a private ward in hospital. He visited him often after that, for talk and reading; and soon Ali expressed a wish to be baptized.

On April 24 came a big break in the college's life—the departure for England of the Thompson family (father and mother and the two small twin daughters, Rachel and Eleanor) with the object of raising £15,000 as an endowment fund, to replace the money which was no longer to be regularly available from such sources as the A.P.O.C. But it meant that Clifford could not take his furlough to England as had been planned.

To contribute their own help to the situation, the college masters, including Clifford, decided at this time to accept a reduction on their already very slender salaries.

"At Home" to all and sundry

Another important step was taken just now. On May 16 he wrote home, evidently in great satisfaction: "I have got a room cleared at the hostel now for receiving Persian villagers and odd people in. It is furnished Persian fashion, *i.e.* people sit on the floor; there is no furniture."

It was decorated with Bible pictures sent out from home. Ali the baker and others became regular visitors to this room. Here many a man

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

who had walked into the city to sell his stock of wares found a ready welcome at any hour, a hearty meal, bedding for the night, and a cheery send-off to his work in the city next day. Unfortunately, at this point Clifford was taken ill with a minor ailment and had to go to hospital for treatment. His diary adds: "Wanted to go into hospital with Persians; this was not allowed."

But he was not cut off from his Persian friends. As he writes, on May 18, from hospital: "I have had many visitors here, including my Persian friends. Among others Ali the dreamer came. He has been turned out of the house where he has been living: the father of his fiancée is very angry because he is learning about Christianity. Some one hit him and then he hit back. There were complaints and he got put into prison! In prison he prayed: 'Oh God, help me out of this.' In the evening some one came in and told him to go!"

Clifford was soon back again at the college.

Contact with an interesting personality from the outer world is mentioned on June 3: "King's Birthday. Consulate dinner. . . . Quite fun. . . . Met *Times*' correspondent, very interesting man; spent most of evening talking to him. Persuaded him to come round to college and give a lecture."

"He that hath two Coats"

Here is a vivid example of the way in which Clifford tried to give literal fulfilment to the challenge of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, "experimenting" as he called it. It was on that summary of our Lord's ideal that he tried more and

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

more to base his own discipleship. To his sister Ruth he wrote on June 9 : " I have a little room downstairs where I can receive all inquirers. The sayyed has been up from Seh-deh ; he wants to be baptized. He was here the other evening : he had on a very old pair of *gihvehs*, Persian shoes, and I happened to have on a new pair which I was wearing in for long tramps in the holidays. He mentioned the facts of the case, comparing our shoes, and then said that verse about ' he that hath two coats. . . . ' I felt it was a definite challenge to see if we tried to live up to what we preached, so I quietly took off my shoes and told him to ' carry on. ' Also he asked for a pair of socks, so I gave him a choice of my shoes and two pairs of socks ! It's all great fun with these fellows and of course they can't understand why we have more than one pair of shoes ! "

" I don't think, " writes a friend of this incident, " that Clifford gave him the shoes because he wanted to win him for Christ or because he thought it was the right thing to do ; but because he was really fond of him, liked him, loved him, though the rest of us could see nothing lovable about the man. "

A Prisoner of War

Summer holiday plans had been partly affected by the unsettled political outlook. He writes home on July 17 : " The country is in a troubled state at present. There is a little war going on in the south between here and Shiraz and the road is not open. "

School ended with a heavy rush of work on June 24, and on June 25 the advance party set

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

off for camp at Chadagun. But camp came to an abrupt end, for the Governor of the district (Feredan) suddenly gave orders to strike tents and leave at midnight, because a raid on that area by the tribespeople was expected to take place at any moment. In spite of this, the camp went off very well. It included a short but memorable trip by Clifford, John Sleath, and Imani to the wild source of the Karun River, which comes roaring out of a deep snow cavern at the foot of steep snow mountains; here it divides, and the water thunders into two long snow tunnels. "Our walk," Clifford wrote after, "was one of the grandest I have had in Persia."

On July 10 the boys returned to Isfahan in lorries and Clifford set off with a donkey and chavadar for a holiday in some distant villages. He had not succeeded in finding any one bold enough to accompany him, for the times were troubled.

"I did not get very far," he writes, "on the first day, for I found that my chavadar had gone lame! He had fallen down from a ladder or some such thing and his left foot had struck a peg in the ground." In the company of a peasant whom he met, called Sadir, he walked to the foot of the Parreh Pass, where they had lunch in one of the two little mud huts. He goes on:—

"Here we made some great friends. I showed Bible pictures and read some parables. The two men stay on here in the winter alone and get cut off completely from the world by deep snow: they can't go outside the house for months. They can both read so I gave them each a gospel. They invited me to spend the winter with them! It might be well worth while?"

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“The next morning Ghasim Ali greeted me at sunrise by telling me his foot was worse ! I decided to go on alone : so I packed up my traps for him to take back to Isfahan. I loaded a haversack with a few necessary things and said farewell to my merry little shrivelled-up bit of a man. I may add that I was rash enough to pay him his full wage for a week in advance to enable him to reach Isfahan.

“On reaching a village called Hogbatieh I received an invitation, or rather summons, to go to the house of the *kadkhuda* or headman of the village. I entered the dark little room, and when my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness I saw a well-dressed man sitting down smoking opium. He had on a ‘Pahlevi’ hat and smartly cut Tehran suit ; he turned out to be the chief man responsible for order among the Lur tent dwellers.

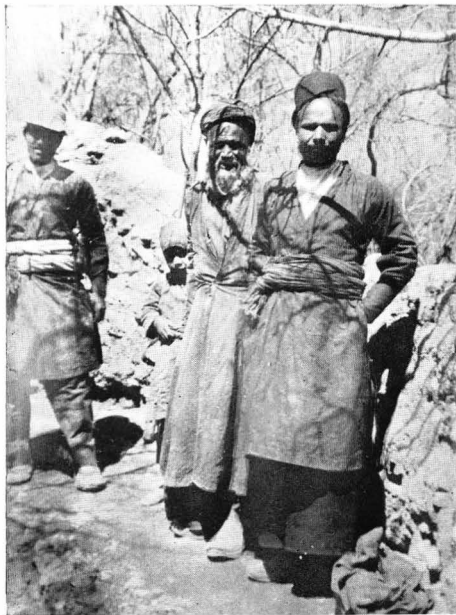
“After the usual cross questioning, he said that if I went on alone he would probably get into trouble because there were bands of robbers ahead who were sure to rob me and might shoot.

“On the following morning he said he was going to a place quite near Arjanak, the village I was aiming for, and hoped I would accompany him. He produced a horse for me and off we went with outriders galloping about with rifles.

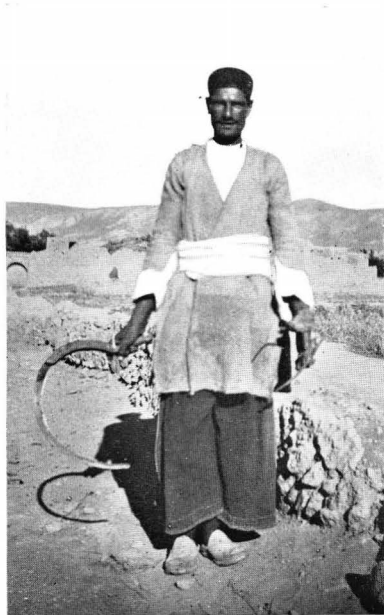
“Later in the day I thanked my host very much for his kindness and said I would now walk on alone, for I felt we were not going near Arjanak. He said : ‘Oh, no trouble—pleasure—I couldn’t dream of letting you walk on alone : I am going quite near where you wish to go, come along.’ So off we went again.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“ Before sunset we reached a big village called Alijuda, and I was soon surrounded and cross-questioned by soldiers, then by a lieutenant, and finally handed over to a major. My late host had handed me over to the military authorities and I found I was miles and miles away from Arjanak ! The major started once more from the beginning and asked all my past history. This was all recorded with great accuracy, I am sure, so that after my decease no doubt valuable and startling information may be dug up from the archives of Alijuda. The major then informed me that as I had entered the war area he was bound to detain me until he received information concerning me from the British consul. He hoped to hear news before mid-day on the morrow. The one day turned out to be a whole week : all this time I was a prisoner in one room with four soldiers to guard me ! If I stepped out of my room to wash I was followed, and at night a soldier always slept by me. This gave me a wonderful opportunity for carrying out what I had set out to do : I made great friends with the soldiers and used to read the Gospel with them and teach them all I could about Jesus Christ. They were very ready to listen and we had great talks. I also had a supply of Bible pictures which the soldiers were pleased to look at while I did my best to explain the pictures or to tell the parables they represented. I used to leave the pictures out on the floor beside me, and when other soldiers came in to visit my guards they invariably picked up a picture and asked what it was ; this gave me the opportunity I was waiting for. I made many great friends and thoroughly enjoyed living with my four soldiers sitting or



Photograph [Skipworth Harris
Peasants at Abiyani (see p. 33)



Photograph [Miss M. M. Wood
A harvester at Soh (see p. 68)



Two of Clifford's guards at Alijuda
(see p. 66)

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

lying on the floor of the small, mud room. I was able to go for short walks, with a soldier, in and around the village, but I was not allowed to go for a proper walk outside the village.

“ I was fed very well ; in fact, at first I was the guest of a *naib*, or lieutenant, who always sent my food along to me. I did not find out who my benefactor was till two or three days had passed. After the fourth day I became the guest of the Persian Government and ordered whatever food I wanted : the Government paid and one of the soldiers cooked. On the seventh evening I said that we would have a merry gathering of soldiers to supper the next night and we discussed plans. But at midnight the sentry on duty by my head shouted out his challenge and in a moment the *naib* was beside me. He informed me that I could start back to Khunsar early the next morning. He produced an old villager who was to accompany me the whole way to Khunsar in case I should lose my way.

“ I had a farewell breakfast at sunrise the next day, and then set off once more. At mid-day on the second day I reported myself to the lieutenant at Khunsar and soon found myself before the major. The major was very friendly and I had lunch with him, the Governor, and other important people. That evening I walked off homewards. I made many more friends on the return trip.”

He finally arrived back in Isfahan at 10 p.m. on August 1, adding : “ I was very glad I reached the hostel under cover of darkness, for my shirt and shorts were on their last legs and I had no reserves. When I got back home I was surprised and

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

cheered to find that Ghasim Ali had brought my baggage back safely."

Lest any one should fear that Clifford had by now become the *enfant terrible* of the European political authorities, it is well to add an entry from his diary for August 2, the day after his return home "Visited the consul. He's not worried about my stunt. Invited to supper on Sunday night."

Clifford now spent about a fortnight in Isfahan, during which the Ali pair and their troubles loom large in his letters. Ali the baker had been ill in his home for three weeks and had been unable to work. He had come into hospital.

Ali the dreamer was in domestic hot water. The father and mother of his wife were furiously angry with him for visiting Clifford, and he had not been able to stay in his home. They were trying to get him to give his wife a divorce.

The Call of the Villages again

The call of the villages was strong, and another trip was soon planned and undertaken, from August 13 to 28. Sayyed Mohammad, a Christian boy in the school, was his companion. "We stayed," Clifford writes, "three days at Soh, and Sayyed Mohammad was kept busy: he took dispensary prayers and had great talks with groups of men. There was also much sickness; about seventy children had died of smallpox. One woman had a broken arm; her brother had hurled a brick at her. There was a deep wound which had gone septic. Another day a man came up to be treated who had been kicked in the jaw several days before; his face had gone badly septic.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“ There is no doctor in the village, so the amount of suffering that goes unrelieved must be terrible. The missionary nurses staying there for their ‘ holidays ’ were kept hard at work.

“ Sayyed Mohammad is only seventeen years old, but he is always ready to share his experience of Christ with others. It was delightful to see him surrounded by mullahs and farmers, reading and preaching the Gospel boldly.

“ We left Soh before sunset one evening and owing to faulty instructions we missed a little village called Rabat, and walked on in the moonlight till we reached Mehmeh. Here we had great difficulty in getting into a house for the night ; we hammered on many doors, but the only responses we got were groans and snores. Finally an old woman who had heard our shouts afar off invited us to her little house. Her son had been conscripted and she believed that if she was kind to us others would be kind to her boy in his need ! She produced some sheep’s head soup for us, and we devoured it in the half light of the moon. The skull rattled in the pot as the odious smelling soup was poured out. During the meal I was very nervous lest a glassy eye should slide down my throat.”

They made their way over the hills to Barzuk. There they were kept busy. “ Wherever we went we found a group of friendly people ; we went into the gardens for quiet, but interested friends always appeared. We were invited to one house for lunch, another for a ‘ glass ’ of tea, and to the home of the tax gatherer for the night. There was a real spirit of inquiry among them. They need some one there to live with them for months at a time to teach them.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“On this journey, Sayyed Mohammad was a great inspiration and help to me; the Persians are the ones to win Persia for Christ. Sayyed plans to tour the villages with me in the future; we hope to go as tinkers, silvering the copper bowls of the villagers. I am sure that it is good to have a job if one is going to stay in a village for any length of time.”

September was occupied with preparations for the school swimming sports. It is evident from his diary what trouble Clifford took for many days over this branch of the school's activity. On September 20, the day of the sports, he writes: “The results were very good. Records were broken in all races.”

He still hoped for “leave off” after the sports for a tour of some seven weeks' length in the villages. But on October 4 it was definitely decided, to his keen disappointment, that he could not be spared from the college staff until Mr. Thompson returned from England in the following spring. Then perhaps he could get away in the summer term of 1930.

At this time he was engaged in making generous loans of money to the Ali pair and to several other men who were in difficulty and wanted a new start in business. It was a risky business, he knew. Some of these inquirer-borrowers might let him down. (One or two did.) “But,” he said, “I want at least to experiment.”

A Cripple Friend

From this autumn onwards Clifford was deeply influenced by a Christian woman called Rogieh. She had become severely paralysed by a fall from

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

a mulberry tree, and was (as she is now) a helpless cripple, supported by her mother after her husband had deserted her. She became a Christian by seeing in a dream Christ standing near a tree in her garden which she was watering. (She had heard of Him in the C.M.S. hospital.) Since the dream that tree has worn a pink ribbon. She lived in loneliness at Dastgird, where no Christian services were possible. So Clifford often went out of his way to see her and read and pray with her, generally after begging for her from the hospital a pinch of tea or sugar. She is a woman of radiant cheerfulness and triumphant faith in Christ, and his diary constantly makes it plain that his visits to the hovel—it was nothing more—where she lay on a bed of old rags, were a deep inspiration to him. She has now been given a room in Isfahan, nearer the hospital, where missionaries and college boys regularly visit her.

Women instinctively trusted Clifford. He once visited, with a woman missionary, a sick woman at Soh, and talked with her. When he had gone, the Persian woman said to the missionary: "Are all Englishmen like that one?" After an address which he gave to the voluntary Bible class in the C.M.S. girls' school at Isfahan, on "Love, the supreme force in the world," one Moslem girl of high birth said to the head mistress: "I was ashamed to veil my face before him when he was speaking, because his eyes were as the eyes of a little child."¹

¹ All Moslem women veil themselves before men, but not with children.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Afghanistan ?

In this October a truly quixotic idea presented itself to him. It arose from the return to Isfahan of Mirza Nasrullah, who had just been on a journey during which he entered Afghanistan. There he had done some quiet witnessing for Christ ; and, by wrapping up the packets of tea he sold in leaves torn from copies of the New Testament, he had been able to smuggle fragments of the Bible into that otherwise " closed " land.

Clifford, ever ready for adventure and risk and sacrifice, saw in this a challenge to himself, and his diary entries for October describe a keen mental debate. October 6 is headed, in red ink : " Afghanistan ? " and he writes : " Mirz. Nasr. back from Afghanistan. Challenge ! Need of Englishman or Armenian in Afghanistan to work with a Persian there. Moses had to give up wealth of Egypt. Was I prepared to give up comforts of my room and position ? Only a Persian can get into Afghanistan. Was I prepared to become a Persian subject ? "

" October 7. Told F. and E. about challenge of Afghanistan. Becoming a Persian subject might mean conscription and always chance of being ' called up ' in time of war. Once done, bridges burnt for life. Home to be thought of."

" October 8. Praying particularly about Afghanistan ; prepared to go right through with all consequences if I feel it to be right. Might have to become a Persian subject and then find I couldn't get into Afghanistan. A. thought I would get snuffed out at once as a spy ! Might snagger up marriage by being a Persian subject ; but I am prepared to face that."

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

Evidently, however, the way did not open, or the idea was for the time being abandoned as impracticable ; but he was fully prepared to face this or any other such call. " He always assumed in any decision," wrote a friend later, " that your whole desire in life was to find out and do God's will. He took it for granted that you had no ulterior motive."

Just now Clifford and others derived great inspiration from a visit of Dr. Robert Wilder, an evangelistic speaker, well known through his work for the Student Christian Movement. A letter to his mother says : " A great missionary, Dr. Wilder, has been visiting all the various stations out here. He has done a great deal to stir us all up. He spoke twice to the boys and they were much interested ; they could feel that he spoke with a great and real experience of Christ. It now rests with us to back up the work."

The inquirers' room is highly popular. In a letter he writes : " Stop press : Monday night—The inquirers' room is a great boon, I don't know what we should do without it now. Last Saturday the Sayyed came in from Seh-deh and brought a friend, then Ali the baker came along with a friend and finally Ali the dreamer came in with a friend from Tirun, so with the addition of Sayyed Moh., we were a merry supper party. As they were all unexpected it made the *khan nazir* (steward) sit up ! There is a fee now—supper 2 krs. a head, and floor and breakfast thrown in, 3 krs.¹

" Mirza Mohammad (a college servant) was

¹ Clifford himself paid the fees to the college for the visitors.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

very excited about the room, so much so that he has coated the lahaf with 'Keatings' (as a precaution against typhus).

"Ali the baker is a problem—he is out of hospital now and out of work. He has also 'eaten up' all his money [*i.e.* Clifford's loans] while he has been ill. As you used to say: 'It's good to have problems to chew over.'"

Clifford was now definitely planning to take, while in England on furlough, a course of medical instruction at Livingstone College. This would give him, he hoped, both experience and status for his work in village medical itineration on his return to Persia. He wrote home on November 17: "I received the medicines last night; it is a very neat and compact set. I must read up and learn about the various numbers. The problem is—will the Persian Government recognize the course at Livingstone College and allow me to use my medicines in the villages if I have passed through the college?"

Evidently he hoped that his base of operations, on his return, would always be the S.M.C. He writes (Dec. 1): "Whatever work I shall do in Persia, I shall always feel that my home here is in the college with Ma and Pa T."

An Attack on the Unemployment Problem

In a letter written on December 1, he unfolds a plan for the help of inquirers and Christians who are finding it difficult to get employment, suggesting a kind of "industrial mission" for men, like the depot where Miss Biggs had for many years been organizing work in embroidery for Persian women at Isfahan. He writes: "I



The Staff at the Stuart Memorial College in 1929

Reading from left to right : *Back row.*—C. L. Hawker, Clifford Harris, Skipworth Harris, P. Gaussen, J. Sleath. *Centre row.*—Mr. Marcarian, Agha Roshan, Mirza Mehdi, Mirza Nasrullah, Agha Hassan, Steward. *Front row.*—Mirza Ahmed Agha, Miss W. H. Tweedie, Mrs. Thompson, Rev. W. J. Thompson, Mirza Davad Arian, Rahnama.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

am very keen on starting, or rather getting others to start, a little carpet factory, so that we could always give work to Christians that lose their jobs through persecution. Also if we had a keen Christian running the work, we could aim at an ideal carpet factory. There is terrible suffering among little children who do carpet weaving in Isfahan now, and many work from sunrise to sunset. If others are keen to help—then I hope twenty of us will give £20 and our necessary capital of £400 will be found. It will be interesting to see what happens !”

A little later he tells of a new and quaint opening for wayside evangelism. “Last night I made a delightful friend in a queer way. I was coming back from dinner at the bishop’s about 10 p.m., and needless to say I had no light—it had gone out—and a ‘bobby’ stopped me, in a cheery way. We chatted for a good half an hour : we discussed matters and I told him the parable of the Prodigal Son and so on. He is Husein Khan Talrizi, and I am going to meet him to-morrow and give him a book, as he said he could read a little.”

Other policemen became friendly too, and his diary for December 14 says : “Riza Khan, a ‘bobby,’ came in to supper under the cours. Sayyed Mohammad joined us. Riza was very keen : we read Luke, chapters 1 to 3, and talked. Gave him aspirin, which cured his headache quickly.”

Christmas comes on apace. On December 23 he writes home : “This evening the boys are doing a Persian play¹ ; it is going to be shown

¹ A well-known modern Persian play with a nationalist message—the revival of Persia’s ancient greatness.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

four times to different audiences. The money collected is to pay for two college football teams to visit Tehran and play the American college.

“On Xmas Eve we are going to have a fancy dress show here in the hostel. I shall go as a surgeon ready to operate—overalls, cap, rubber gloves, moustache, *etc.*, or else as ‘Father Christmas.’ If I go as a surgeon, I shall carry a chunk of raw meat and a butcher’s knife and have a label ‘Sleath’s appendix’!”¹ (This fearsome disguise was actually adopted.)

Owing to difficulties of postage he could not send any Christmas presents home. But he overcame the difficulty by this letter :—

“I have made the family a Christmas present—the present is going to be used by my inquirers, in the special room I have. It consists of a low kind of table : under this a glowing fire of red charcoal is put. Over all a huge lahaf is spread. Then my pals sit round with the lahaf right up over their legs and keep beautifully warm, while we, also under the lahaf, read and talk to them. I hope you will like this present, it’s topping and warm and useful ! It’s to the family with Clifford’s love.”

Christmas Day passed quietly ; it began in the small hours, with the usual visit to the hostel boys’ dormitories, where it was “great fun, filling stockings.” Then came the early service of Holy Communion and the festivities that had been planned.

¹ Sleath had just been successfully operated on in the mission hospital.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

The last Trek

On December 26, the diary contains but one word : " Snow." But Clifford has left a vivid journal (" A Tramp in the Snow ") of his last trek to the villages, which began on that day. Something of that story has already been sketched in the opening pages of this book.¹

Of the lantern lectures and talks following them which took place on this tour Clifford writes : " These little groups always thrill me—we have so much to share and give, for their religion has not the same spiritual power in it as ours and it is not joyful. Nearly all the men we meet are afraid of death, because it is unknown and uncertain ; they have not our glorious hope and certainty."

Frost, Famine, and Wolves

He and Sayyed Mohammad reached Isfahan again on January 1, 1930. In a letter on January 11 he develops further his plans for an industrial scheme for Christians : " I know a very keen Christian who understands the carpet trade, and who is thrilled with the idea and is prepared to run the show. This Persian, Agha Khan, is a great friend of mine : he is a man who would take a very keen interest in every one working under him. Even if things did fail, and I don't think for a moment they will, I should not grudge a penny of the money I gave, because it is so well worth trying. Carpet factories have

¹ Many people thought and said that he was " mad " to go off that day into the snow. Some of his friends replied : " So he is, mad—for Christ ! "

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

been one of the worst and cruellest industries in Persia, and so just the one to choose to try and own in a true Christian way."

Meanwhile, the cold grew more and more severe, and ten inches of snow soon lay everywhere. Intense suffering among the poorer people followed. One missionary, a woman doctor, wrote home: "The snow started on Christmas night, and there have been continuous falls ever since; everything is frozen solid, and the snow is lying three feet deep on the ground. We have no coal here, and live by cooking on charcoal fires, and those who can afford it burn wood in their houses. Persia being a land of deserts, not forests, wood is very dear. You can imagine the sufferings of the many hundreds of poor in Isfahan. Many are dying in the streets, others being brought to hospital to die there of frostbites and gangrene and pneumonia. My cook told me yesterday that one of the carpet factories was closed by the Government owing to several of the children dying of cold. They say there are wolves in the town, but I have not seen any yet.

"A few days ago we heard of a man who went out with his little bowl to beg for bread for his children (he was not a beggar) and got none; he was found dead on his doorstep in the morning with the bowl in his hand. There are heart-breaking cases all round; this is only one instance.

"Charcoal is nearly unbuyable. The bishop has got up a fund to provide our Christians with food and charcoal. And two days ago, too, we opened a buffet for the starving Moslems in a poor quarter of the town, two miles off. We gave a piece of bread and a bowl of stew to 125 people

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

last night and charcoal dust tickets to thirty-six. I am off now to prepare for to-night (250 people). All the missionaries here have given most of their savings to these two funds. We are also giving out gospels, and speaking to the people at the buffet daily."

Clifford himself writes home on January 19 : "The carpet factory scheme must be held over for a few weeks, as we are busy trying to save poor people from starving or freezing to death. Last night, a poor man evidently fainted in the street and was frozen to death, and was found in the morning torn to bits by dogs and wild beasts—jackals and probably hyenas." It was even rumoured that wolves had made their appearance in the city. His diary of January 20 repeats a grim tale¹ : "Wolves in Maidan (open square) last night ; scratched in snow behind a man. He turned round to see what it was, and a wolf caught him by the throat and tore him to pieces, and this at a time when people were about. Others have suffered in the same way."

Clifford now felt the sufferings of the people so keenly that he sold his overcoat and bought a sheepskin to be like the poor Persians. Only the very poorest folk wear these ; every one who can afford it buys a European overcoat.

"The Hero within thy Soul"

The work grew daily heavier. On January 21 his diary says : "Down to 'soup canteen' and fed about 130 and increased number of charcoal tickets. Quite a scrum." He adds : "Decide

¹ In another such bitter winter, some years before, Dr. Carr identified two dead wolves in the suburb of Julfa.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

to walk out to Najafabad alone on Thursday night, if no one else goes to give help to poor Christians there."

Next day comes a characteristic entry : " People of Talvasgun are very poor and need help. Every one is scared of wolves. Some one else is going to Najafabad, so I shall not be going by night. But be ready for anything always ; if get marching orders from our Master, go, and it doesn't matter how mad it may seem or dangerous—the glory of our belief ! "

This adventurous spirit was fostered by a book which he had just now begun to read ; *The Hero Within thy Soul* (by Gossip). He read the first chapter on January 26 : " great stuff " he calls it.¹

The following week, February 2 to 8, saw him busy preparing for his next sermon in the church at Isfahan, little knowing that it was to be his last. He had been developing the line of Dr. Gossip's book out of his own experience. " I'm going to drop a bit of a bombshell on Sunday, so look out ! " he warned his friends beforehand, speaking of his sermon.

The sermon was a challenge to adventurous living. It made a deep impression on the Mission. Seen in the light of his own life and its ending, now so very near, it was to be like the last message of a prophet. But he had no idea of this himself. It came straight from the heart of his own experience ; still more, from his passionate desire to extend that experience by a bold and prodigal sharing of the risks of life with the poor Persian

¹ But earlier than this his friends knew him to pray " that we may live dangerously."

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

peasants, whose lot seemed to him so much harder than his own.

Before the sermon he used this prayer for adventurous faith: "O Thou Who art heroic Love, keep alive in our hearts that adventurous spirit, which makes men scorn the way of safety, so that Thy will be done. For so only, O Lord, shall we be worthy of those courageous souls who in every age have ventured all in obedience to Thy call, and for whom the trumpets have sounded on the other side; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here are some of the last paragraphs of the sermon, including the ending:—¹

"We must not be afraid to strike out in faith and explore the deeper reaches of our religion. Does it keep me cool and brave when others falter; enable me to look out upon life with all its hazards and its threatening possibilities? . . . 'When we are called upon to face pain or sacrifice, we are not asked to go alone, but always there are two of us, and the other is God.'²

"To Christ faith means a passion, an enthusiasm, a consuming zeal that eats up everything. Christ was sure of fewer things than that to be comfortable in material things is quite desperately dangerous for the soul. What do we more than others? Christ expects more.

"We must live our life on just His prodigal and extravagant lines if we would really enjoy it

¹ A typed copy of this sermon in full may be had by any one who would like to send a stamped addressed envelope to the Young People's Department, C.M.S., Salisbury Square, E.C.4, or to Mrs. Harris, 133, Makepeace Mansions, Highgate, N.6.

² A quotation from Gossip's book.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

and make adequate use of it. 'Fling it away!' cries Christ. 'Don't hoard!'

Writing, that same day (Feb. 9) to his mother, he speaks of his own longing for that fuller and braver experience: "... It fell to my lot to preach to-day. My theme was 'lack of experience,' and that we don't strike out enough. I feel ashamed when I sit with Persian friends round the *coursi*; for many of them give up everything, even homes and work, for Christ, while we sit with a sense of security, having a monthly salary. I feel that they teach me and not the reverse. I long to try work in the villages, earning my bread as I go along with my medicines. Then I would be able to talk from experience—that Christ provides for us even when things seem impossible."

The Last Task

His last active effort was a piece of practical work for the games of the boys in the school which had been his home for the last three and a half years. His final letter, written in hospital on February 18 to his mother and received after his death, says: "We managed to clear our football ground of twenty inches of snow, after great efforts.¹ All the snow from the centre had to be carried away in baskets or pushed off in little carts. Then after a few games down

¹ Of this incident a friend writes: "The Persians called this menial work, and the only way by which we could get the boys to do it was by joining in ourselves. Here Clifford shone, doing three men's work himself with hands frozen, and at the same time, with wonderful good cheer, doing the far more difficult work of keeping twenty others gaily, though uncomfortably, working to the top of their bent."



Photograph]

Clifford taking physical training at the S.M.C.
(The prominent peak in the background is Kuh-i-Sufi. See pages 42, 85

[Miss W. H. Tweedie

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

came buckets of rain, and of course on our mud grounds we are as badly off as before. We are sending two teams—seniors and middles—to Tehran to compete with the American college. Our boys have had no practice yet, and there are only three weeks left. In Tehran they have been lucky, with practically no snow.

“I have been pulled down to hospital, as I have fever and giddiness. But I am in the hands of J. E., whom you know. She is a wonderful person. Long before you get this I hope to be back at college.”

Two to One

He was not to return, however. The sickness was quickly diagnosed as typhus. It seems quite clear that he had caught it somehow from one of the poor people with whom he was so constantly in close contact at the soup kitchen, or under the lahaf in his entertaining room at the hostel. One missionary thinks it most likely that he caught it from a wretchedly poor and diseased old man, living in a hovel on the way to the soup kitchen. Clifford had been told of him, and visited him regularly afterwards with food.

But typhus in itself is not often fatal. His friends said hopefully: “The germ little knew what a stiff proposition it was taking on when it attacked Clifford!” It seemed that his youth should be on his side, too. He was now twenty-five years old.

He was received into hospital on Sunday, February 16. The news of his illness quickly spread to the city, and his Persian friends heard of it with dismay. “So my dear *rafiq* (companion)

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

is ill," one of them said.¹ Word was sent, too, to other missionaries, and at Isfahan and other centres daily meetings for prayer were held, and news went round to the C.M.S. mission stations by wire to say how he fared, as the sickness became more and more serious. Towards the end continuous prayer was offered, night and day, in Isfahan, by relays of his friends. For it seemed evident to those who nursed him that his danger was greatly increased by the heavy strain at which he had recently been working in the relief of the poor. But for this, he might not have fallen a victim to the attack of septic pneumonia which overcame him when the crisis had passed in the typhus and he seemed likely to turn the corner towards recovery. Several other cases of pneumonia occurred in Isfahan at the same time. Typhus and pneumonia—the odds were now too heavy ; two to one.

“ I shall not fail that Rendezvous ”²

But he made a great fight of it throughout. One of his friends who shared in the care of him in the sick room wrote : “ It is a horrible thought usually to think of one’s friends as ill, but this was in a way different ; his mind and soul so perfectly triumphed over the disease that all the paraphernalia of the sick room seemed to

¹ Sayyed Mohammad, the Persian boy who was his constant companion, said afterwards : “ If only I could have seen him just once again before he died, to tell him how real he had made Christ to me. Walking with him was like walking with Christ.”

² From the well-known war poem of Alan Seeger, who fell while serving with the foreign legion in France.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

have no connexion with him. He was out in the village, or up Kuh-i-Sufi, or along the river somewhere.

“He was incessantly delirious. In such a time all trimmings fall off, and you get right down to the inner core of a man. His was perfectly whole. Most people rave about things, and not always pleasant things, but he was making appointments with Christ or providing for the needs of the people, or preaching in Persian in a village . . . or saying the *Te Deum* or a psalm.”

One day he spoke of the police : “Nurse, do you know, they have only one lahaf, and no charcoal, and it’s *so* cold.” Once in his delirium he threw off his eiderdown, saying : “Give this to a poor man.”

The mountains he loved so well seemed round him to the end. As a friend said afterwards : “I believe every mountain was to Clifford a step nearer heaven.” One day, about a week before he died, he said, in a half-conscious moment : “I have just had an appointment to keep with John the Baptist at the foot of Kuh-i-Sufi ; and, when I got there, who should come along but Jesus ! He said, ‘I want you to myself before you go home this summer’ ; and He asked me to go up the mountain again next week. Just what I had always been wanting to do. And how I look forward to it !” And on the morning when he died, he said : “It will be great, up the mountain with Jesus !” Yet he was ready to stay on in this field of service, if needed. Some of his friends were praying, not long before the end, and in their prayer had referred to the possibility of his entering into eternal joy. He said : “Joy, joy ; but there is lots of work to do first : thousands

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

of people in Persia who cannot read and who have no joy."

This word, a keynote of his daily life, was much in his prayers now. "He often sang," says the nurse, "and very often burst into prayer with his usual beginning: 'We thank Thee, O Father, for the joy we have in Thee.' . . ."

His inquirer friends and the work in the villages were constantly on his mind all through his illness. He was often talking of "Ali the baker," "Ali the dreamer," and others.

"On the last Sunday," Bishop Linton wrote afterwards, "I went to see him and had a bit of a chat with him. I said that some of us would like to have the Holy Communion with him, and asked whether he would like it. 'Rather!' he replied. And so practically all the missionaries came into his room and we had the Holy Communion." Later on that evening, he was heard to say: "A soldier—the highest ideal—give his life—Christ."

"Trumpets on the Other Side"

"On the last morning" (Tuesday, March 4), says the one who nursed him, "at about 5 a.m. I sent for the doctor. His pulse was much weaker. Clifford quietly said to me: 'It won't be long now. Give all my love to my mother and sister. They are great souls and won't worry.' ('I shall be nearer to her than I am now,' he had said recently of his mother.)" Then he added to the nurse: "Shall I give your love to your mother? She died very suddenly, didn't she?"

He was constantly talking towards the end of Temple Gairdner of Cairo, whose biography he

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

had been reading much of late, and praying for courage to "burn himself out" as Gairdner had done.

Then he thought he was out in one of the villages and preached a sermon in Persian; after which he said: "Now we will have a spot of lunch."

Later on, that morning, he sang through the *Benedicite* ("O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord"), and then asked the nurse to "read chapter nine; no one could be afraid after reading chapter nine." The nurse could not at first guess which chapter nine he wanted; but soon she recognized that he meant St. Luke ix, with Christ's challenge to the disciples to go out preaching, taking neither bread, nor money, nor two coats, and to follow the Son of Man Who had nowhere to lay His head. He then sang, almost word for word, the hundredth Psalm. The nurse knew his time was very near now, and asked him if he would like her to read to him a little from the Bible; he said "Yes." "Anything special?" she asked. He replied: "Anything you like." So she read to him Revelation xxi. 1-7, and 22-27, and part of chapter xxii. He kept on repeating the words in verse 3 of the latter—"and his servants shall serve him."

Not long before the end, he said: "When I am gone, do not be making a fuss of me—sing hymns!" So he passed out of sight, at ten o'clock that morning, on the last climb of all

where the safe ways end,
Known and unknown divide,
God's great uncharted prairies upward tend,
Where the spirit of man undaunted is undenied,
And beyond the last camp-fire, man has faith for friend,
And beyond all guidance, the courage of God for guide.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

“ Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory ”

Mr. Hawker, who had been up on Tuesday to the hospital, told the news soon after to the boys of the school assembled in hall. “ And then,” says a member of the staff, “ we went on with the ordinary school work because we knew it was what Cliff wanted, and it would teach the non-Christian Persians a lesson which they needed.”

That afternoon a Persian service of thanksgiving was held in the church, which was crowded with Persians. The bishop preached.

Next morning, Wednesday, an English service was held at 7 a.m. But it was not the ordinary funeral service. They sang, as Clifford had requested, hymns of praise, like “ Jesus lives,” “ All hail the power,” and “ Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven.” Special sentences were read from St. John xiv and xvi, Rom. xiii, Rev. i, vii, and similar passages of triumph.

Then the college masters carried Clifford's coffin, covered with the college banner, to a three-ton lorry. All the schoolboys who could find room got in, and sat on each side of the coffin ; and, as they went up the hill of the Hazar Jereeb on the Shiraz road to the cemetery, they sang hymns and the favourite choruses which had cheered him on so many of his village expeditions.

There his body was laid to rest in the Christian cemetery at the foot of Kuh-i-Sufi. All Isfahan is seen from that hillside, and it looks down, too, on many of the villages to which he had made his expeditions.

It was at this very spot that, in his delirium, a week before, he had made the appointment to meet now with Jesus Christ.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

A strangely beautiful coincidence took place on the hillside then. "At the moment of the funeral," writes one of the masters, seeing a striking parable in Nature's setting of that unforgettable scene, "a cloud was doing a very rare thing. It was obscuring the tip of the mountain in wonderful films that were luminous but not transparent. It was exactly as if Clifford's dream of the week before was being fulfilled. . . . It seemed as though Jesus had, as it were, spread that cloud, that He might Himself greet His servant who was so absolutely committed to Him. I have never felt the Presence so near."

"The cloud rolled away as the last hymn finished," writes another who had noticed it; "it was almost as if Clifford were at his own service, and one knew that there *is* no death."

"At the end of the service," wrote the bishop just afterwards to Mrs. Harris, "when the grave was being filled in, and the crown of palms and the cross and other tokens were placed on the grave, and we were just about to leave, we sang once more his favourite chorus of praise, as we had done during the service in church. So we praise God for Clifford Harris, who gave his life for village evangelism in Persia, and for the poor of Persia. He has set us a lead in village evangelism in a new way, 'experimenting,' to use his own phrase, in the best ways to bring the Gospel to the village and rural population of the country. Some one will surely come out to carry it on?"

“ THE PERSON I MEET ”

The following are extracts from a firsthand impression of Clifford Harris by Sayyed Mohammad, the Persian Christian boy from a village near Kerman, who was his constant companion among the villages towards the end. It was written to Mrs. Harris just after Clifford's death, in the English in which it here stands unedited.

IN about three years ago the fame of S.M.C. drew me towards herself from Kerman, and did not let me choose another college to improve my low knowledge. . . .

I came to this college as a keen Moslem ; little by little I came to know my teachers, especially one of them who was a wonderful man, and showed me the way, the truth, the life.

He was a tall, strong, handsome man with merry twinkling eyes; there was a joyous smile on his face. He left his home, his family, and came to help this college as a teacher. He was a good runner and excellent swimmer.

There was a great joy in him, which made him very eager to share it with the others ; in another word he was a brave soldier of Christ, by this reason was full of love, and faith with action.

Any one who met him realized him has a power behind. He helped me in my soul's need and let me know God's love on Cross for mankind, and me, and before that I could not recognize the God's love.

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

In any opportunity he was ready to carry the message of God to the hungry souls ; he used to fill up the chinks of his time in preaching the gospels.

Many times I was hearing him say : “ If we do not share the joy that we found from Christ to others, it looks like two men go for a long walk in a hot day at midsummer, and became very thirsty, each goes in a direction for water. One finds a spring water, and drinks of its cold and fresh water ; [when he has] quenched his thirst it is not pleasant if he does not call his thirsty friend to come and drink of this cold and fresh water.

He used to think a great deal about preaching in villages; I heard him say : “ The villagers are simple, and their character have not been spoiled. They are close to God, because when they sow the seeds they have enough faith that God will give sun and water, and bring a seed into twenty seeds up. If they hear about God they would accept happily.”

He was not satisfied to spend only his holidays in preaching, but wanted to spend his whole time in preaching in the villages, and having faith that God would keep him. He told me : “ I must trust in God like apostles, and have enough faith that God will take care of me.” He wanted take the mending pots as his job in villages, and while he is working takes a chance to talk with the customers ; it was his long wish ideal to be the mender of the pots and obtain a piece of bread in order to live and preach the love of God to hungry souls.

He did not care of money and the worldly prospects, the thing that more than nine tenths

A MERRY MOUNTAINEER

of people struggle and think about. I can say if he obtained any cash from his teaching he used them in helping gladly the poor people, and giving them capitals in order to work and live on.

His happiness was obtained in working for Christ. He was not working for Him, but Christ was working within him.

Alas, it came in a winter time suddenly he felt sick, and went in the hospital. And after about twenty days with a great hope gave himself for Persia and Christ.

In conclusion Mr. Harris was a man of God, and an example of Christian ; he got love and faith with action. His memory is full of fragrance, his death too got a great effect upon his friends and myself. God took him for rest and peace. This world was very small for this man. I hope God will give his wonderful mother and sister comfort.

Mr. Harris got *hope* and was not afraid of death. He gave himself for *Christ* and *Persia*.

EPILOGUE

“IT is not only in finished undertakings that we ought to honour useful labour. A spirit goes out of the man who means execution, which outlives the most untimely ending. All who have meant good work with their whole hearts, have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it. Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind. And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall, and in mid-career, laying out vast projects, and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope . . . is there not something brave and spirited in such a termination? and does not life go down with a better grace, foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas? When the Greeks made their fine saying that those whom the gods love die young, I cannot help believing they had this sort of death also in their eye. For surely, at whatever age it overtake the man, this is to die young. Death has not been suffered to take so much as an illusion from his heart. In the hot-fit of life, a-tiptoe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on to the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets are hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land.”

R. L. STEVENSON, *Aes Triplex*