

YANKEES AT THE COURT OF KING TONG

IN a recent issue, "News Review" described the fantastic existence which one of the Allied groups in the primitive Burma jungle is leading amid the untamed head-hunting Naga tribesmen. The story was written by Preston Grover, an Associated Press war correspondent.

A BAND of 10 American soldiers led by a sergeant to-day holds an advanced scouting and listening post in the midst of one of the world's most primitive jungles, and has made friends with the untamed Naga hillmen.

Each night the Americans sit around the bonfire with the wild men, swapping jests, trading rupees and empty cigarette tins for cleaver-like knives and spears, but they keep their guns handy. Only a few hundred yards away from the American camp King Tong of the Nagas has a row of several scores of heads of his enemies. Accompanied by another journalist and two American officers, I visited the outpost after one of the toughest climbs I have ever made. We drove to the foothills, and then "legged" it up 10 miles to the top of the peak where the listening post and the Naga village were situated.

Watching for Bombers

Sergeant Meyer, who had been advised that we were coming, sent eight Nagas to the foothills to guide us. Meyer's job, with nine others, is to watch for Japanese bombers heading towards the American airfields of North-East India.

Each Naga lugged the bedding and food in baskets swung from slings and looped around his forehead. We carried



... His Majesty had us escorted to his display room

nothing but field-glasses, cameras, and a "canteen." It was quite enough. For six miles we lumbered up and down over the steep hills, along a trail deeply overgrown with 50 feet bamboos, towering trees and wall-like undergrowth.

Then there began a four-mile unbroken climb. The watch-tower mountain rose to 3,000 feet, and was so steep that we could take it only in 100-step stages at first and then 50 steps. It took three hours to make the last four miles.

"The Heady" Game

It was a story-book country. The Naga hillmen wear nothing except a string of beads and a thin strip of loincloth. With

one stroke, the warriors with a *dah* can cut off a goat's head, or a human head, for that matter. They are playful as boys, and seem always to be inviting you to play a game of "cut off heady."

Just as we reached the top, a party of 20 of King Tong's warriors with coloured goat's hair and beads raced down the path towards us. But it was not a war party. It was a funeral party. King Tong's brother's favourite wife had died, and the village was wailing as we passed on to the watch-tower.

The post is situated in "unadministered territory," which the Americans were warned not to enter, but they did not heed the advice, and found the Nagas very friendly. "That is an old trick," British authorities told them. "We have lost many heads in learning better."

But Sergeant Meyer and his party did not worry, they were merely watchful. They have rifles, pistols and tommy-guns, and pay King Tong 15 rupees a month as rental for the mountain-top.

Rent in Advance, Please!

Recently, His Majesty asked for three months' rent in advance. "I am getting married," he urged. He did not get an advance, even though it was his eleventh wife he was marrying.

Later, the king's counsellor insisted on collecting a hundred rupees for bamboo cut down for building shelters, a mess-hall, and the store-house. It was a cheap price for peace, and Meyer paid.

When we visited King Tong in his large bamboo palace, he referred to aeroplanes which he had often seen, and said he believed we came from the skies. We gave him cigarettes, and got cinnamon bark in return. He apologised for not giving us more.

I asked him to pose for his photograph, so he dressed in fresh strings of beads and lacquered bamboo bracelets.

Three weeks ago, one of the king's elder statesmen was beheaded by a rival tribe in revenge for the head one of his own tribesmen had brought into camp a year ago.

The Skull Room

His Majesty had us escorted to his display room, where his skulls were exhibited. He has about 100, and apologised because a fire a few months ago had destroyed an additional 100.

The village headman under the king wears a top-hat, which is at least 15 years old, but is highly cherished. Another proudly wears an Army cap which a soldier gave him.

Before we left Sergeant Meyer and his men were asked if they wanted a new assignment. They replied: "Hell, no! there's no fun down there!"

MAN'S HERITAGE

(Continued from previous page)

All over the earth babies start from scratch, full of distinctive and untried possibilities, which the New World will develop eagerly. Here you will find folks with a superlative sense of rhythm like the Negro; here great mechanical genius, like the Australian black fellow; here a genius for system like the French, or an obstinate unteachable originality of thought like the English. If our world educational organisation has its schools everywhere, and nothing but imaginative meanness makes that even seem impossible, instead of that small fraction of people we shall have the majority of mankind inventing, responding, contributing with honour and self-respect to the rehabilitation of our so-nearly-lost inheritance. And what our physically and mentally emancipated race will make of its collective property dazzles and blinds the imagination. I will not venture any suggestions upon the art and particularly the architecture of the possible future. About music and mathematical science I can say nothing. But I do know that there is no field in the vast realm of experimental science where there is not a crying need for multitudes of workers to go into problems for which at present men are lacking.

There are possible enlargements of individual human faculties with which I have no time to deal now. Then, great as are the achievements of chemistry, of mineralogy, of prospecting and exploration, I believe every research chemist will echo Sir Isaac Newton's saying that he is as yet merely picking up pebbles on the beach of an unfathomable ocean. Face up to your inheritance, and this ever-growing knowledge, this ever-growing power, will be among the first fruits of your estate.

And what stands in the way of these achievements? Fear. When I say fear, I mean fear of life. Great multitudes fear life more than death. Death to many people has presented itself as a form of escape from living. Apart from suicide and self-exposure, there is for most of us, after the early enterprise of healthy youth, a dread of novel problems. We have to be called up to them, forced to face them, and we crave to return to the old conditions as soon as possible. Multitudes of people have their minds deliberately crippled from birth. They are told they must not read; they must not listen. Down the ages there is a long record of book-burning and the persecution of victims who have had no right to reply. The Nazi book-burning was only the last chapter in the black record of intolerance that holds us back from our estate.

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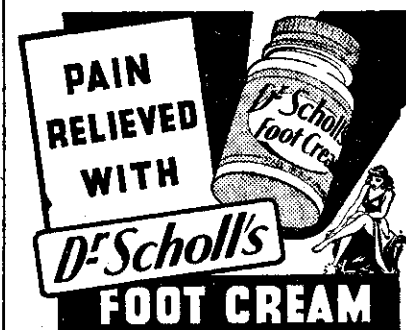
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