

BOOKS

A FASCINATING LAND

In her book on Kulu, Pamela Chetwode has referred to its ancient name — Kulanthapura, the end of the habitable world. The ancients had a valid reason for giving this name to the rich, well-watered and lush green Beas valley area of Kulu and Manali. At the head of the valley lay the barren, wind-swept Rohtang Pass, and be-

scapes, built on a scale to bring feelings of awe into human minds.

The giant mountains, bare of vegetation, with massive slopes of every colour and hue, the river Indus — father of all rivers — meandering through the valley, and the limitless distances make one conscious of God and His creation.

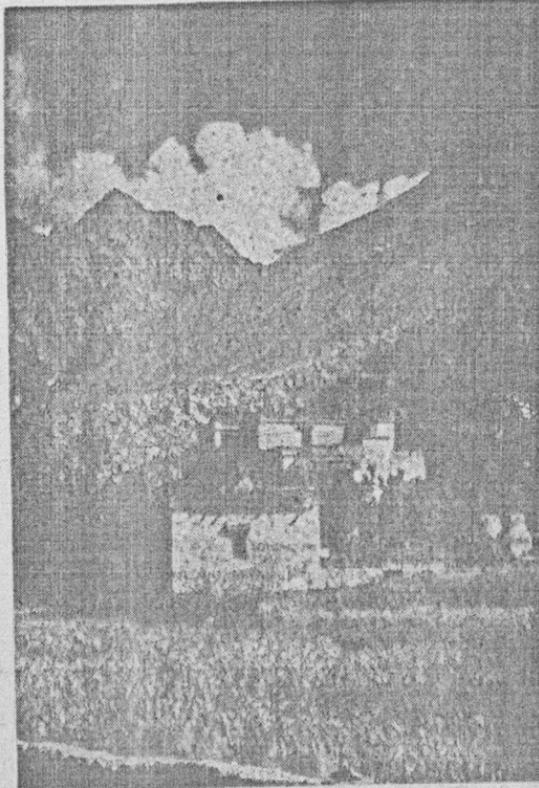
Man in this region is never far from the elements. But wherever there is water and vegetation the landscape is soft, welcoming and almost bewitching. In their homes, monasteries, paintings and arts the people have created a colourful contrast to their barren environment. Conscious of their mortality, they live happy, cheerful and philosophic lives, full of understanding of the transitoriness of things.

It is a land to fascinate any traveller, and many have come this way over the ages. Some have left superb accounts — one need mention only Moorecraft and Cunningham as examples. In recent years Ladakh has been opened to tourists, and the people of the West, with

their minds and palates jaded by a surfeit of the good things of Europe, have flocked to this strange land. In keeping with today's world, they need a worthwhile well-illustrated book to help explain the land and its people.

Major Ahluwalia has, therefore, done a timely service to the tourism industry of the country by producing this beautifully illustrated book on Ladakh. The written account is fascinating, and the photographs are superb. These are a varied collection, both in colour and black-and-white, with some rare portraits of explorers of bygone days. A better quality of paper would have done even more justice to the colour photography. All in all, the book is a worthwhile introduction for the visitors to Ladakh.

This is the second illustrated book Major Ahluwalia has brought out, the first being on Everest, which too was well received. There is a dearth of such books, particularly by Indians, in this country. Vikas



A village established by an ancient Aryan tribe, the Drogpas, in Ladakh.

have done well to make a beginning, and one hopes that more such illustrated books will be brought out in future. This land is full of fascinating and beautiful areas, such as the

Andamans, Arunachal, Rajasthan and Kerala, each one of which would lend itself to a worthwhile illustrated book.

—M. S. Gill

HERMIT KINGDOM
—LADAKH by Maj
H.P.S. Ahluwalia. Vikas,
New Delhi. Pp. 186. Rs
295.

yond it the desert-like landscape of the inner Himalayas.

The valleys of Lahaul-Spiti, and beyond them the stark moon like landscape of the vast open spaces of Ladakh, gives one the impression that no human life is possible in this region. And yet human habitation in all its rich variety and colour exists in Ladakh. It is a fascinating land of fearful land-