FROM SEA TO SEA

From Sea to Sea

Letters of Travel

By Rudyard Kipling

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

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By RUDYARD KIPLING.

PREFACE

In these two volumes I have got together the bulk of the special

correspondence and occasional articles written by me for the \_Civil and

Military Gazette\_ and the \_Pioneer\_ between 1887-1889. I have been

forced to this action by the enterprise of various publishers who, not

content with disinterring old newspaper work from the decent seclusion

of the office files, have in several instances seen fit to embellish it

with additions and interpolations.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

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PART I

LETTERS OF MARQUE

LETTERS OF MARQUE

I

OF THE BEGINNING OF THINGS. OF THE TAJ AND THE GLOBE-TROTTER. THE YOUNG

MAN FROM MANCHESTER AND CERTAIN MORAL REFLECTIONS.

NOV.-DEC., 1887

Except for those who, under compulsion of a sick certificate, are flying

Bombaywards, it is good for every man to see some little of the great

Indian Empire and the strange folk who move about it. It is good to

escape for a time from the House of Rimmon--be it office or

cutchery--and to go abroad under no more exacting master than personal

inclination, and with no more definite plan of travel than has the

horse, escaped from pasture, free upon the countryside. The first result

of such freedom is extreme bewilderment, and the second reduces the

freed to a state of mind which, for his sins, must be the normal portion

of the Globe-trotter--the man who "does" kingdoms in days and writes

books upon them in weeks. And this desperate facility is not as strange

as it seems. By the time that an Englishman has come by sea and rail

\_via\_ America, Japan, Singapur, and Ceylon, to India, he can--these eyes

have seen him do so--master in five minutes the intricacies of the

\_Indian Bradshaw\_, and tell an old resident exactly how and where the

trains run. Can we wonder that the intoxication of success in hasty

assimilation should make him overbold, and that he should try to

grasp--but a full account of the insolent Globe-trotter must be

reserved. He is worthy of a book. Given absolute freedom for a month,

the mind, as I have said, fails to take in the situation and, after much

debate, contents itself with following in old and well-beaten

ways--paths that we in India have no time to tread, but must leave to

the country cousin who wears his \_pagri\_ tail-fashion down his back, and

says "cabman" to the driver of the \_ticca-ghari\_.

Now, Jeypore from the Anglo-Indian point of view is a station on the

Rajputana-Malwa line, on the way to Bombay, where half an hour is

allowed for dinner, and where there ought to be more protection from the

sun than at present exists. Some few, more learned than the rest, know

that garnets come from Jeypore, and here the limits of our wisdom are

set. We do not, to quote the Calcutta shopkeeper, come out "for the good

of our 'ealth," and what touring we accomplish is for the most part off

the line of rail.

For these reasons, and because he wished to study our winter birds of

passage, one of the few thousand Englishmen in India on a date and in a

place which have no concern with the story, sacrificed all his

self-respect and became--at enormous personal inconvenience--a

Globe-trotter going to Jeypore, and leaving behind him for a little

while all that old and well-known life in which Commissioners and

Deputy-Commissioners, Governors and Lieutenant-Governors, Aides-de-camp,

Colonels and their wives, Majors, Captains, and Subalterns after their

kind move and rule and govern and squabble and fight and sell each

other's horses and tell wicked stories of their neighbours. But before

he had fully settled into his part or accustomed himself to saying,

"Please take out this luggage," to the coolies at the stations, he saw

from the train the Taj wrapped in the mists of the morning.

There is a story of a Frenchman who feared not God, nor regarded man,

sailing to Egypt for the express purpose of scoffing at the Pyramids

and--though this is hard to believe--at the great Napoleon who had

warred under their shadow. It is on record that that blasphemous Gaul

came to the Great Pyramid and wept through mingled reverence and

contrition; for he sprang from an emotional race. To understand his

feelings it is necessary to have read a great deal too much about the

Taj, its design and proportions; to have seen execrable pictures of it

at the Simla Fine Arts Exhibition, to have had its praises sung by

superior and travelled friends till the brain loathed the repetition of

the word; and then, sulky with want of sleep, heavy-eyed, unwashed, and

chilled, to come upon it suddenly. Under these circumstances everything,

you will concede, is in favour of a cold, critical, and not too

impartial verdict. As the Englishman leaned out of the carriage he saw

first an opal-tinted cloud on the horizon, and, later, certain towers.

The mists lay on the ground, so that the Splendour seemed to be floating

free of the earth; and the mists rose in the background, so that at no

time could everything be seen clearly. Then as the train sped forward,

and the mists shifted, and the sun shone upon the mists, the Taj took a

hundred new shapes, each perfect and each beyond description. It was

the Ivory Gate through which all good dreams come; it was the

realization of "the gleaming halls of dawn" that Tennyson sings of; it

was veritably the "aspiration fixed," the "sigh made stone" of a lesser

poet; and, over and above concrete comparisons, it seemed the embodiment

of all things pure, all things holy, and all things unhappy. That was

the mystery of the building! It may be that the mists wrought the

witchery, and that the Taj seen in the dry sunlight is only, as

guide-books say, a noble structure. The Englishman could not tell, and

has made a vow that he will never go nearer the spot, for fear of

breaking the charm of the unearthly pavilions.

It may be, too, that each must view the Taj for himself with his own

eyes, working out his own interpretation of the sight. It is certain

that no man can in cold blood and colder ink set down his impressions if

he has been in the least moved.

To the one who watched and wondered that November morning the thing

seemed full of sorrow--the sorrow of the man who built it for the woman

he loved, and the sorrow of the workmen who died in the building--used

up like cattle. And in the face of this sorrow the Taj flushed in the

sunlight and was beautiful, after the beauty of a woman who has done no

wrong.

Here the train ran in under the walls of Agra Fort, and another

train--of thought incoherent as that written above--came to an end. Let

those who scoff at overmuch enthusiasm look at the Taj and thenceforward

be dumb. It is well on the threshold of a journey to be taught reverence

and awe.

But there is no reverence in the Globe-trotter: he is brazen. A Young

Man from Manchester was travelling to Bombay in order--how the words

hurt!--to be home by Christmas. He had come through America, New

Zealand, and Australia, and finding that he had ten days to spare at

Bombay, conceived the modest idea of "doing India." "I don't say that

I've done it all; but you may say that I've seen a good deal." Then he

explained that he had been "much pleased" at Agra; "much pleased" at

Delhi; and, last profanation, "very much pleased" at the Taj. Indeed, he

seemed to be going through life just then "much pleased" at everything.

With rare and sparkling originality he remarked that India was a "big

place," and that there were many things to buy. Verily, this Young Man

must have been a delight to the Delhi boxwallahs. He had purchased

shawls and embroidery "to the tune of" a certain number of rupees duly

set forth, and he had purchased jewellery to another tune. These were

gifts for friends at home, and he considered them "very Eastern." If

silver filigree work modelled on Palais Royal patterns, or aniline blue

scarves be Eastern, he had succeeded in his heart's desire. For some

inscrutable end it had been decreed that man shall take a delight in

making his fellow-man miserable. The Englishman began to point out

gravely the probable extent to which the Young Man from Manchester had

been swindled, and the Young Man said: "By Jove! You don't say so? I

hate being done. If there's anything I hate, it's being done!"

He had been so happy in the thought of "getting home by Christmas," and

so charmingly communicative as to the members of his family for whom

such and such gifts were intended, that the Englishman cut short the

record of fraud and soothed him by saying that he had not been so very

badly "done," after all. This consideration was misplaced, for, his

peace of mind restored, the Young Man from Manchester looked out of the

window and, waving his hand over the Empire generally, said: "I say.

Look here. All those wells are wrong, you know!" The wells were on the

wheel and inclined plane system; but he objected to the incline, and

said that it would be much better for the bullocks if they walked on

level ground. Then light dawned upon him, and he said: "I suppose it's

to exercise all their muscles. Y' know a canal horse is no use after he

has been on the tow-path for some time. He can't walk anywhere but on

the flat, y' know, and I suppose it's just the same with bullocks." The

spurs of the Aravalis, under which the train was running, had evidently

suggested this brilliant idea which passed uncontradicted, for the

Englishman was looking out of the window.

If one were bold enough to generalise after the manner of

Globe-trotters, it would be easy to build up a theory on the well

incident to account for the apparent insanity of some of our cold

weather visitors. Even the Young Man from Manchester could evolve a

complete idea for the training of well-bullocks in the East at thirty

seconds' notice. How much the more could a cultivated observer from, let

us say, an English constituency, blunder and pervert and mangle? We in

this country have no time to work out the notion, which is worthy of the

consideration of some leisurely Teuton intellect.

Envy may have prompted a too bitter judgment of the Young Man from

Manchester; for, as the train bore him from Jeypore to Ahmedabad, happy

in his "getting home by Christmas," pleased as a child with his Delhi

atrocities, pink-cheeked, whiskered, and superbly self-confident, the

Englishman whose home for the time was a dark bungaloathsome hotel,

watched his departure regretfully; for he knew exactly to what sort of

genial, cheery British household, rich in untravelled kin, that Young

Man was speeding. It is pleasant to play at Globe-trotting; but to enter

fully into the spirit of the piece, one must also be "going home for

Christmas."

II

SHOWS THE CHARM OF RAJPUTANA AND OF JEYPORE, THE CITY OF THE

GLOBE-TROTTER. OF ITS FOUNDER AND ITS EMBELLISHMENT. EXPLAINS THE USE

AND DESTINY OF THE STUD-BRED, AND FAILS TO EXPLAIN MANY MORE IMPORTANT

MATTERS.

If any part of a land strewn with dead men's bones have a special claim

to distinction, Rajputana, as the cock-pit of India, stands first. East

of Suez men do not build towers on the tops of hills for the sake of the

view, nor do they stripe the mountain sides with bastioned stone walls

to keep in cattle. Since the beginning of time, if we are to credit the

legends, there was fighting--heroic fighting--at the foot of the

Aravalis and beyond, in the great deserts of sand penned by those kindly

mountains from spreading over the heart of India. The "Thirty-six Royal

Races" fought as royal races know how to do, Chohan with Rahtor, brother

against brother, son against father. Later--but excerpts from the

tangled tale of force, fraud, cunning, desperate love and more desperate

revenge, crime worthy of demons and virtues fit for gods, may be found,

by all who care to look, in the book of the man who loved the Rajputs

and gave a life's labours in their behalf. From Delhi to Abu, and from

the Indus to the Chambul, each yard of ground has witnessed slaughter,

pillage, and rapine. But, to-day, the capital of the State, that Dhola

Rae, son of Soora Singh, hacked out more than nine hundred years ago

with the sword from some weaker ruler's realm, is lighted with gas, and

possesses many striking and English peculiarities.

Dhola Rae was killed in due time, and for nine hundred years Jeypore,

torn by the intrigues of unruly princes and princelings, fought

Asiatically.

When and how Jeypore became a feudatory of British power and in what

manner we put a slur upon Rajput honour--punctilious as the honour of

the Pathan--are matters of which the Globe-trotter knows more than we

do. He "reads up"--to quote his own words--a city before he comes to us,

and, straightway going to another city, forgets, or, worse still, mixes

what he has learnt--so that in the end he writes down the Rajput a

Mahratta, says that Lahore is in the Northwest Provinces, and was once

the capital of Sivaji, and piteously demands a "guide-book on all India,

a thing that you can carry in your trunk y' know--that gives you plain

descriptions of things without mixing you up." Here is a chance for a

writer of discrimination and void of conscience!

But to return to Jeypore--a pink city set on the border of a blue lake,

and surrounded by the low, red spurs of the Aravalis--a city to see and

to puzzle over. There was once a ruler of the State, called Jey Singh,

who lived in the days of Aurungzeb, and did him service with foot and

horse. He must have been the Solomon of Rajputana, for through the

forty-four years of his reign his "wisdom remained with him." He led

armies, and when fighting was over, turned to literature; he intrigued

desperately and successfully, but found time to gain a deep insight

into astronomy, and, by what remains above ground now, we can tell that

whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept not from him. Knowing his own

worth, he deserted the city of Amber founded by Dhola Rae among the

hills, and, six miles further, in the open plain, bade one Vedyadhar,

his architect, build a new city, as seldom Indian city was built

before--with huge streets straight as an arrow, sixty yards broad, and

cross-streets broad and straight. Many years afterward the good people

of America builded their towns after this pattern, but knowing nothing

of Jey Singh, they took all the credit to themselves.

He built himself everything that pleased him, palaces and gardens and

temples, and then died, and was buried under a white marble tomb on a

hill overlooking the city. He was a traitor, if history speak truth, to

his own kin, and he was an accomplished murderer; but he did his best to

check infanticide, he reformed the Mahometan calendar; he piled up a

superb library and he made Jeypore a marvel.

Later on came a successor, educated and enlightened by all the lamps of

British Progress, and converted the city of Jey Singh into a surprise--a

big, bewildering, practical joke. He laid down sumptuous \_trottoirs\_ of

hewn stone, and central carriage drives, also of hewn stone, in the main

street, he, that is to say, Colonel Jacob, the Superintending Engineer

of the State, devised a water supply for the city and studded the ways

with standpipes. He built gas works, set afoot a School of Art, a

Museum--all the things in fact which are necessary to Western municipal

welfare and comfort, and saw that they were the best of their kind. How

much Colonel Jacob has done, not only for the good of Jeypore city but

for the good of the State at large, will never be known, because the

officer in question is one of the not small class who resolutely refuse

to talk about their own work. The result of the good work is that the

old and the new, the rampantly raw and the sullenly old, stand

cheek-by-jowl in startling contrast. Thus, the Sacred Bull of Shira

trips over the rails of a steel tramway which brings out the city

rubbish; the lacquered and painted cart behind the two little stag-like

trotting bullocks catches its primitive wheels in the cast-iron gas-lamp

post with the brass nozzle atop, and all Rajputana, gayly clad,

small-turbaned swaggering Rajputana, circulates along the magnificent

pavements.

The fortress-crowned hills look down upon the strange medley. One of

them bears on its flank in huge white letters the cheery inscription,

"Welcome!" This was made when the Prince of Wales visited Jeypore to

shoot his first tiger; but the average traveller of to-day may

appropriate the message to himself, for Jeypore takes great care of

strangers and shows them all courtesy. This, by the way, demoralises the

Globe-trotter, whose first cry is, "Where can we get horses? Where can

we get elephants? Who is the man to write to for all these things?"

Thanks to the courtesy of the Maharaja, it is possible to see

everything, but for the incurious who object to being driven through

their sights, a journey down any one of the great main streets is a

day's delightful occupation. The view is as unobstructed as that of the

Champs ÃlysÃ©es; but in place of the white-stone fronts of Paris, rises a

long line of open-work screen-wall, the prevailing tone of which is

pink, caramel-pink, but house-owners have unlimited license to decorate

their tenements as they please. Jeypore, broadly considered, is Hindu,

and her architecture of the riotous, many-arched type which even the

Globe-trotter after a short time learns to call Hindu. It is neither

temperate nor noble, but it satisfies the general desire for something

that "really looks Indian."

A perverse taste for low company drew the Englishman from the

pavement--to walk upon a real stone pavement is in itself a

privilege--up a side-street, where he assisted at a quail fight and

found the low-caste Rajput a cheery and affable soul. The owner of the

losing quail was a trooper in the Maharaja's army. He explained that his

pay was six rupees a month paid bimonthly. He had to pay the cost of his

khaki blouse, brown-leather accoutrements, and jack-boots; lance,

saddle, sword, and horse were given free. He refused to tell for how

many months in the year he was drilled, and said vaguely that his duties

were mainly escort ones, and he had no fault to find with them. The

defeat of his quail had vexed him, and he desired the Sahib to

understand that the sowars of His Highness's army could ride. A clumsy

attempt at a compliment so fired his martial blood that he climbed into

his saddle, and then and there insisted on showing off his horsemanship.

The road was narrow, the lance was long, and the horse was a big one,

but no one objected, and the Englishman sat him down on a doorstep and

watched the fun. The horse seemed in some shadowy way familiar. His head

was not the lean head of the Kathiawar, nor his crest the crest of the

Marwarri, and his forelegs did not belong to these stony districts.

"Where did he come from?" The sowar pointed northward and said, "from

Amritsar," but he pronounced it "Armtzar." Many horses had been bought

at the spring fairs in the Punjab; they cost about two hundred rupees

each--perhaps more, the sowar could not say. Some came from Hissar and

some from other places beyond Delhi. They were very good horses. "That

horse there," he pointed to one a little distance down the street, "is

the son of a big Government horse--the kind that the Sirkar make for

breeding horses--so high!" The owner of "that horse" swaggered up, jaw

bandaged and cat-moustached, and bade the Englishman look at his mount;

bought, of course, when a colt. Both men together said that the Sahib

had better examine the Maharaja Sahib's stable, where there were

hundreds of horses, huge as elephants or tiny as sheep.

To the stables the Englishman accordingly went, knowing beforehand what

he would find, and wondering whether the Sirkar's "big horses" were

meant to get mounts for Rajput sowars. The Maharaja's stables are royal

in size and appointments. The enclosure round which they stand must be

about half a mile long--it allows ample space for exercising, besides

paddocks for the colts. The horses, about two hundred and fifty, are

bedded in pure white sand--bad for the coat if they roll, but good for

the feet--the pickets are of white marble, the heel-ropes in every case

of good sound rope, and in every case the stables are exquisitely clean.

Each stall contains above the manger, a curious little bunk for the syce

who, if he uses the accommodation, must assuredly die once each hot

weather.

A journey round the stables is saddening, for the attendants are very

anxious to strip their charges, and the stripping shows so much. A few

men in India are credited with the faculty of never forgetting a horse

they have once seen, and of knowing the produce of every stallion they

have met. The Englishman would have given something for their company at

that hour. His knowledge of horse-flesh was very limited; but he felt

certain that more than one or two of the sleek, perfectly groomed

country-breds should have been justifying their existence in the ranks

of the British cavalry, instead of eating their heads off on six

seers[1] of gram and one of sugar per diem. But they had all been

honestly bought and honestly paid for; and there was nothing in the wide

world to prevent His Highness, if he wished to do so, from sweeping up

the pick and pride of all the stud-bred horses in the Punjab. The

attendants appeared to take a wicked delight in saying "eshtud-bred"[2]

very loudly and with unnecessary emphasis as they threw back the

loin-cloth. Sometimes they were wrong, but in too many cases they were

right.

[1] A seer is about two pounds.

[2] Stud-bred, \_i.e.\_ bred at the Indian Government studs.

The Englishman left the stables and the great central maidan, where a

nervous Biluchi was being taught, by a perfect network of ropes, to

"monkey-jump," and went out into the streets reflecting on the working

of horse-breeding operations under the Government of India, and the

advantages of having unlimited money wherewith to profit by other

people's mistakes.

Then, as happened to the great Tartarin of Tarescon, wild beasts began

to roar, and a crowd of little boys laughed. The lions of Jeypore are

tigers, caged in a public place for the sport of the people, who hiss at

them and disturb their royal feelings. Two or three of the six great

brutes are magnificent. All of them are short-tempered, and the bars of

their captivity not too strong. A pariah-dog was furtively trying to

scratch out a fragment of meat from between the bars of one of the

cages, and the occupant tolerated him. Growing bolder, the starveling

growled; the tiger struck at him with his paw, and the dog fled howling

with fear. When he returned, he brought two friends with him, and the

three mocked the captive from a distance.

It was not a pleasant sight and suggested Globe-trotters--gentlemen who

imagine that "more curricles" should come at their bidding, and on being

undeceived become abusive.

III

DOES NOT IN ANY SORT DESCRIBE THE DEAD CITY OF AMBER, BUT GIVES DETAILED

INFORMATION ABOUT A COTTON-PRESS.

And what shall be said of Amber, Queen of the Pass--the city that Jey

Singh bade his people slough as snakes cast their skins? The

Globe-trotter will assure you that it must be "done" before anything

else, and the Globe-trotter is, for once, perfectly correct. Amber lies

between six and seven miles from Jeypore among the "tumbled fragments of

the hills," and is reachable by so prosaic a conveyance as a

\_ticca-ghari\_, and so uncomfortable a one as an elephant. \_He\_ is

provided by the Maharaja, and the people who make India their prey, are

apt to accept his services as a matter of course.

Rise very early in the morning, before the stars have gone out, and

drive through the sleeping city till the pavement gives place to cactus

and sand, and educational and enlightened institutions to mile upon mile

of semi-decayed Hindu temples--brown and weather-beaten--running down to

the shores of the great Man Sagar Lake, wherein are more ruined temples,

palaces, and fragments of causeways. The water-birds have their home in

the half-submerged arcades and the crocodile nuzzles the shafts of the

pillars. It is a fitting prelude to the desolation of Amber. Beyond the

Man Sagar the road of to-day climbs up-hill, and by its side runs the

huge stone causeway of yesterday--blocks sunk in concrete. Down this

path the swords of Amber went out to kill. A triple wall rings the city,

and, at the third gate, the road drops into the valley of Amber. In the

half light of dawn, a great city sunk between hills and built round

three sides of a lake is dimly visible, and one waits to catch the hum

that should arise from it as the day breaks. The air in the valley is

bitterly chill. With the growing light, Amber stands revealed, and the

traveller sees that it is a city that will never wake. A few beggars

live in huts at the end of the valley, but the temples, the shrines, the

palaces, and the tiers-on-tiers of houses are desolate. Trees grow upon

and split the walls, the windows are filled with brushwood, and the

cactus chokes the street. The Englishman made his way up the side of the

hill to the great palace that overlooks everything except the red fort

of Jeighur, guardian of Amber. As the elephant swung up the steep roads

paved with stone and built out on the sides of the hill, he looked into

empty houses where the little grey squirrel sat and scratched its ears.

The peacock walked on the house-tops, and the blue pigeon roosted

within. He passed under iron-studded gates whose hinges were eaten out

with rust, and by walls plumed and crowned with grass, and under more

gate-ways, till, at last, he reached the palace and came suddenly into a

great quadrangle where two blinded, arrogant stallions, covered with red

and gold trappings, screamed and neighed at each other from opposite

ends of the vast space. For a little time these were the only visible

living beings, and they were in perfect accord with the spirit of the

spot. Afterwards certain workmen appeared; for it seems that the

Maharaja keeps the old palace of his forefathers in good repair, but

they were modern and mercenary, and with great difficulty were detached

from the skirts of the traveller. A somewhat extensive experience of

palace-seeing had taught him that it is best to see palaces alone, for

the Oriental as a guide is undiscriminating and sets too great a store

on corrugated iron roofs and glazed drain-pipes.

So the Englishman went into this palace built of stone, bedded on stone,

springing out of scarped rock, and reached by stone ways--nothing but

stone. Presently, he stumbled across a little temple of Kali, a gem of

marble tracery and inlay, very dark and, at that hour of the morning,

very cold.

If, as Viollet-le-Duc tells us to believe, a building reflects the

character of its inhabitants, it must be impossible for one reared in an

Eastern palace to think straightly or speak freely or--but here the

annals of Rajputana contradict the theory--to act openly. The cramped

and darkened rooms, the narrow smooth-walled passages with recesses

where a man might wait for his enemy unseen, the maze of ascending and

descending stairs leading nowhither, the ever-present screens of marble

tracery that may hide or reveal so much,--all these things breathe of

plot and counter-plot, league and intrigue. In a living palace where the

sightseer knows and feels that there are human beings everywhere, and

that he is followed by scores of unseen eyes, the impression is almost

unendurable. In a dead palace--a cemetery of loves and hatreds done with

hundreds of years ago, and of plottings that had for their end, though

the greybeards who plotted knew it not, the coming of the British

tourist with guide-book and sun-hat--oppression gives place to simply

impertinent curiosity. The Englishman wandered into all parts of the

palace, for there was no one to stop him--not even the ghosts of the

dead Queens--through ivory-studded doors, into the women's quarters,

where a stream of water once flowed over a chiselled marble channel. A

creeper had set its hands upon the lattice there, and there was dust of

old nests in one of the niches in the wall. Did the lady of light virtue

who managed to become possessed of so great a portion of Jey Singh's

library ever set her dainty feet in the trim garden of the Hall of

Pleasure beyond the screen-work? Was it in the forty-pillared Hall of

Audience that the order went forth that the Chief of Birjooghar was to

be slain, and from what wall did the King look out when the horsemen

clattered up the steep stone path to the palace, bearing on their

saddle-bows the heads of the bravest of Rajore? There were questions

innumerable to be asked in each court and keep and cell; but the only

answer was the cooing of the pigeons.

If a man desired beauty, there was enough and to spare in the palace;

and of strength more than enough. With inlay and carved marble, with

glass and colour, the Kings who took their pleasure in that now desolate

pile, made all that their eyes rested upon royal and superb. But any

description of the artistic side of the palace, if it were not

impossible, would be wearisome. The wise man will visit it when time and

occasion serve, and will then, in some small measure, understand what

must have been the riotous, sumptuous, murderous life to which our

Governors and Lieutenant-Governors, Commissioners and Deputy

Commissioners, Colonels and Captains and the Subalterns, have put an

end.

From the top of the palace you may read if you please the Book of

Ezekiel written in stone upon the hillside. Coming up, the Englishman

had seen the city from below or on a level. He now looked into its very

heart--the heart that had ceased to beat. There was no sound of men or

cattle, or grind-stones in those pitiful streets--nothing but the cooing

of the pigeons. At first it seemed that the palace was not ruined at

all--that soon the women would come up on the house-tops and the bells

would ring in the temples. But as he attempted to follow with his eye

the turns of the streets, the Englishman saw that they died out in wood

tangle and blocks of fallen stone, that some of the houses were rent

with great cracks, and pierced from roof to road with holes that let in

the morning sun. The drip-stones of the eaves were gap-toothed, and the

tracery of the screens had fallen out so that zenana-rooms lay

shamelessly open to the day. On the outskirts of the city, the

strong-walled houses dwindled and sank down to mere stone-heaps and

faint indications of plinth and wall, hard to trace against the

background of stony soil. The shadow of the palace lay over two-thirds

of the city and the trees deepened the shadow. "He who has bent him o'er

the dead" \_after\_ the hour of which Byron sings, knows that the features

of the man become blunted as it were--the face begins to fade. The same

hideous look lies on the face of the Queen of the Pass, and when once

this is realised, the eye wonders that it could have ever believed in

the life of her. She is the city "whose graves are set in the side of

the pit, and her company is round about her graves," sister of Pathros,

Zoan, and No.

Moved by a thoroughly insular instinct, the Englishman took up a piece

of plaster and heaved it from the palace wall into the dark streets. It

bounded from a house-top to a window-ledge, and thence into a little

square, and the sound of its fall was hollow and echoing, as the sound

of a stone in a well. Then the silence closed up upon the sound, till in

the far-away courtyard below the roped stallions began screaming afresh.

There may be desolation in the great Indian Desert to the westward, and

there is desolation on the open seas; but the desolation of Amber is

beyond the loneliness either of land or sea. Men by the hundred thousand

must have toiled at the walls that bound it, the temples and bastions

that stud the walls, the fort that overlooks all, the canals that once

lifted water to the palace, and the garden in the lake of the valley.

Renan could describe it as it stands to-day, and Verestchaguin could

paint it.

Arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, the Englishman went down

through the palace and the scores of venomous and suggestive little

rooms, to the elephant in the courtyard, and was taken back in due time

to the Nineteenth Century in the shape of His Highness, the Maharaja's

Cotton-Press, returning a profit of twenty-seven per cent, and fitted

with two engines, of fifty horse-power each, an hydraulic press, capable

of exerting a pressure of three tons per square inch, and everything

else to correspond. It stood under a neat corrugated iron roof close to

the Jeypore Railway Station, and was in most perfect order, but somehow

it did not taste well after Amber. There was aggressiveness about the

engines and the smell of the raw cotton.

The modern side of Jeypore must not be mixed with the ancient.

IV

THE TEMPLE OF MAHADEO AND THE MANNERS OF SUCH AS SEE INDIA. THE MAN BY

THE WATER-TROUGHS AND HIS KNOWLEDGE. THE VOICE OF THE CITY AND WHAT IT

SAID. PERSONALITIES AND THE HOSPITAL. THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL OF JEYPORE AND

ITS BUILDERS.

From the Cotton-Press the Englishman wandered through the wide streets

till he came into an Hindu temple--rich in marble stone and inlay, and a

deep and tranquil silence, close to the Public Library of the State. The

brazen bull was hung with flowers, and men were burning the evening

incense before Mahadeo; while those who had prayed their prayer beat

upon the bells hanging from the roof and passed out, secure in the

knowledge that the God had heard them. If there be much religion, there

is little reverence, as Westerns understand the term, at the services of

the Gods of the East. A tiny little maiden, child of a monstrously ugly,

wall-eyed priest, staggered across the marble pavement to the shrine and

threw, with a gust of childish laughter, the blossoms she was carrying

into the lap of the Great Mahadeo himself. Then she made as though she

would leap up to the bell and ran away, still laughing, into the shadow

of the cells behind the shrine, while her father explained that she was

but a baby and that Mahadeo would take no notice. The temple, he said,

was specially favoured by the Maharaja, and drew from lands an income of

twenty thousand rupees a year. Thakoors and great men also gave gifts

out of their benevolence; and there was nothing in the wide world to

prevent an Englishman from following their example.

By this time--for Amber and the Cotton-Press had filled the hours--night

was falling, and the priests unhooked the swinging jets and began to

light up the impassive face of Mahadeo with gas. They used Swedish

matches!

Full night brought the hotel and its curiously composed human menagerie.

There is, if a work-a-day world will believe, a society entirely

outside, and unconnected with, that of the Station--a planet within a

planet, where nobody knows anything about the Collector's wife, the

Colonel's dinner-party, or what was really the matter with the Engineer.

It is a curious, an insatiably curious, thing, and its literature is

Newman's \_Bradshaw\_. Wandering "old arms-sellers" and others live upon

it, and so do the garnetmen and the makers of ancient Rajput shields.

The world of the innocents abroad is a touching and unsophisticated

place, and its very atmosphere urges the Anglo-Indian unconsciously to

an extravagant mendacity. Can you wonder, then, that a guide of

long-standing should in time grow to be an accomplished liar?

Into this world sometimes breaks the Anglo-Indian returned from leave,

or a fugitive to the sea, and his presence is like that of a well-known

land-mark in the desert. The old arms-seller knows and avoids him, and

he is detested by the jobber of gharis who calls every one "my lord" in

English, and panders to the "glaring race anomaly" by saying that every

carriage not under his control is "rotten, my lord, having been used by

natives." One of the privileges of playing at tourist is the brevet-rank

of "Lord."

There are many, and some very curious, methods of seeing India. One of

these is buying English translations of the more Zolaistic of Zola's

novels and reading them from breakfast to dinner-time in the verandah.

Yet another, even simpler, is American in its conception. Take a

Newman's \_Bradshaw\_ and a blue pencil, and race up and down the length

of the Empire, ticking off the names of the stations "done." To do this

thoroughly, keep strictly to the railway buildings and form your

conclusions through the carriage-windows. These eyes have seen both ways

of working in full blast; and, on the whole, the first is the most

commendable.

Let us consider now with due reverence the modern side of Jeypore. It is

difficult to write of a nickel-plated civilisation set down under the

immemorial Aravalis in the first state of Rajputana. The red-grey hills

seem to laugh at it, and the ever-shifting sand-dunes under the hills

take no account of it, for they advance upon the bases of the

monogrammed, coronet-crowned lamp-posts, and fill up the points of the

natty tramways near the Waterworks, which are the outposts of the

civilisation of Jeypore.

Escape from the city by the Railway Station till you meet the cactus and

the mud-bank and the Maharaja's Cotton-Press. Pass between a tramway and

a trough for wayfaring camels till your foot sinks ankle-deep in soft

sand, and you come upon what seems to be the fringe of illimitable

desert--mound upon mound of tussocks overgrown with plumed grass where

the parrots sit and swing. Here, if you have kept to the road, you shall

find a dam faced with stone, a great tank, and pumping machinery fine as

the heart of a municipal engineer can desire--pure water, sound pipes,

and well-kept engines. If you belong to what is sarcastically styled an

"able and intelligent municipality" under the British Rule, go down to

the level of the tank, scoop up the water in your hands and drink,

thinking meanwhile of the defects of the town whence you came. The

experience will be a profitable one. There are statistics in connection

with the Waterworks figures relating to "three-throw-plungers," delivery

and supply, which should be known to the professional reader. They would

not interest the unprofessional who would learn his lesson among the

thronged standpipes of the city.

While the Englishman was preparing in his mind a scathing rebuke for an

erring municipality that he knew of, a camel swung across the sands, its

driver's jaw and brow bound mummy-fashion to guard against the dust. The

man was evidently a stranger to the place, for he pulled up and asked

the Englishman where the drinking-troughs were. He was a gentleman and

bore very patiently with the Englishman's absurd ignorance of his

dialect. He had come from some village, with an unpronounceable name,

thirty \_kos\_ away, to see his brother's son, who was sick in the big

Hospital. While the camel was drinking the man talked, lying back along

his mount. He knew nothing of Jeypore, except the names of certain

Englishmen in it, the men who, he said, had made the Waterworks and

built the Hospital for his brother's son's comfort.

And this is the curious feature of Jeypore; though happily the city is

not unique in its peculiarity. When the late Maharaja ascended the

throne, more than fifty years ago, it was his royal will and pleasure

that Jeypore should advance. Whether he was prompted by love for his

subjects, desire for praise, or the magnificent vanity with which Jey

Singh must have been so largely dowered, are questions that concern

nobody. In the latter years of his reign, he was supplied with

Englishmen who made the State their fatherland, and identified

themselves with its progress as only Englishmen can. Behind them stood

the Maharaja ready to spend money with a lavishness that no Supreme

Government would dream of; and it would not be too much to say that they

together made the State what it is. When Ram Singh died, Madho Singh,

his successor, a conservative Hindu, forbore to interfere in any way

with the work that was going forward. It is said in the city that he

does not overburden himself with the cares of State, the driving power

being mainly in the hands of a Bengali, who has everything but the name

of Minister. Nor do the Englishmen, it is said in the city, mix

themselves with the business of government; their business being wholly

executive.

They can, according to the voice of the city, do what they please, and

the voice of the city--not in the main roads, but in the little

side-alleys where the stall-less bull blocks the path--attests how well

their pleasure has suited the pleasure of the people. In truth, to men

of action few things could be more delightful than having a State of

fifteen thousand square miles placed at their disposal, as it were, to

leave their mark on. Unfortunately for the vagrant traveller, those who

work hard for practical ends prefer not to talk about their doings, and

he must, therefore, pick up what information he can at second-hand or in

the city. The men at the standpipes explain that the Maharaja Sahib's

father gave the order for the Waterworks and that Yakub (Jacob) Sahib

made them--not only in the city, but out away in the district. "Did the

people grow more crops thereby?" "Of course they did. Were canals made

only to wash in?" "How much more crops?" "Who knows? The Sahib had

better go and ask some official." Increased irrigation means increase of

revenue for the State somewhere, but the man who brought about the

increase does not say so.

After a few days of amateur Globe-trotting, a shamelessness great as

that of the other loafer--the red-nosed man who hangs about one garden

and is always on the eve of starting for Calcutta--possesses the

masquerader; so that he feels equal to asking a Resident for a

parcel-gilt howdah, or dropping into dinner with a Lieutenant-Governor.

No man has a right to keep anything back from a Globe-trotter, who is a

mild, temperate, gentlemanly, and unobtrusive seeker after truth.

Therefore he who, without a word of enlightenment, sends the visitor

into a city which he himself has beautified and adorned and made clean

and wholesome, deserves unsparing exposure. And the city may be trusted

to betray him. The \_malli\_ in the Ram Newas Gardens--Gardens which are

finer than any in India and fit to rank with the best in Paris--says

that the Maharaja gave the order and Yakub Sahib made the Gardens. He

also says that the Hospital just outside the Gardens was built by Yakub

Sahib, and if the Sahib will go to the centre of the Gardens, he will

find another big building, a Museum by the same hand.

But the Englishman went first to the Hospital, and found the

out-patients beginning to arrive. A Hospital cannot tell lies about its

own progress as a municipality can. Sick folk either come or lie in

their own villages. In the case of the Mayo Hospital, they came, and the

operation book showed that they had been in the habit of coming. Doctors

at issue with provincial and local administrations, Civil Surgeons who

cannot get their indents complied with, ground-down and mutinous

practitioners all India over, would do well to visit the Mayo Hospital,

Jeypore. They might, in the exceeding bitterness of their envy, be able

to point out some defects in its supplies, or its beds, or its splints,

or in the absolute isolation of the women's quarters from the men's.

From the Hospital the Englishman went to the Museum in the centre of the

Gardens, and was eaten up by it, for Museums appealed to him. The casing

of the jewel was in the first place superb--a wonder of carven white

stone of the Indo-Saracenic style. It stood on a stone plinth, and was

rich in stone-tracery, green marble columns from Ajmir, red marble,

white marble colonnades, courts with fountains, richly carved wooden

doors, frescoes, inlay, and colour. The ornamentation of the tombs of

Delhi, the palaces of Agra, and the walls of Amber have been laid under

contribution to supply the designs in bracket, arch, and soffit; and

stone-masons from the Jeypore School of Art have woven into the work the

best that their hands could produce. The building in essence if not in

the fact of to-day, is the work of Freemasons. The men were allowed a

certain scope in their choice of detail and the result--but it should be

seen to be understood, as it stands in those Imperial Gardens. And,

observe, the man who had designed it, who had superintended its

erection, had said no word to indicate that there were such a thing in

the place, or that every foot of it, from the domes of the roof to the

cool green chunam dadoes and the carving of the rims of the fountains in

the courtyard, was worth studying! Round the arches of the great centre

court are written in Sanskrit and Hindi, texts from the great Hindu

writers of old, bearing on the beauty of wisdom and the sanctity of true

knowledge.

In the central corridor are six great frescoes, each about nine feet by

five, copies of illustrations in the Royal Folio of the \_Razmnameh\_, the

\_Mahabharata\_, which Abkar caused to be done by the best artists of his

day. The original is in the Museum, and he who can steal it will find a

purchaser at any price up to fifty thousand pounds.

V

OF THE SORDIDNESS OF THE SUPREME GOVERNMENT ON THE REVENUE SIDE; AND OF

THE PALACE OF JEYPORE. A GREAT KING'S PLEASURE-HOUSE, AND THE WORK OF

THE SERVANTS OF STATE.

Internally, there is, in all honesty, no limit to the luxury of the

Jeypore Museum. It revels in "South Kensington" cases--of the approved

pattern--that turn the beholder homesick, and South Kensington labels,

whereon the description, measurements, and price of each object are

fairly printed. These make savage one who knows how labelling is bungled

in some of the Government Museums--our starved barns that are supposed

to hold the economic exhibits, not of little States, but of great

Provinces.

The floors are of dark red chunam, overlaid with a discreet and silent

matting; the doors, where they are not plate glass, are of carved wood,

no two alike, hinged by sumptuous brass hinges on to marble jambs and

opening without noise. On the carved marble pillars of each hall are

fixed revolving cases of the South Kensington pattern to show textile

fabrics, gold lace, and the like. In the recesses of the walls are more

cases, and on the railing of the gallery that runs round each of the

three great central rooms, are fixed low cases to hold natural history

specimens and wax models of fruits and vegetables.

Hear this, Governments of India from the Punjab to Madras! The doors

come true to the jamb, the cases, which have been through a hot weather,

are neither warped nor cracked, nor are there unseemly tallow-drops and

flaws in the glasses. The maroon cloth, on or against which the exhibits

are placed, is of close texture, untouched by the moth, neither stained

nor meagre nor sunfaded; the revolving cases revolve freely without

rattling; there is not a speck of dust from one end of the building to

the other, because the menial staff are numerous enough to keep

everything clean, and the Curator's office is a veritable office--not a

shed or a bath-room, or a loose-box partitioned from the main building.

These things are so because money has been spent on the Museum, and it

is now a rebuke to all other Museums in India from Calcutta downwards.

Whether it is not too good to be buried away in a native State is a

question which envious men may raise and answer as they choose. Not long

ago, the editor of a Bombay paper passed through it, but having the

interests of the Egocentric Presidency before his eyes, dwelt more upon

the idea of the building than its structural beauties; saying that

Bombay, who professed a weakness for technical education, should be

ashamed of herself. And he was quite right.

The system of the Museum is complete in intention, as are its

appointments in design. At present there are some fifteen thousand

objects of art, covering a complete exposition of the arts, from enamels

to pottery and from brass-ware to stone-carving, of the State of

Jeypore. They are compared with similar arts of other lands. Thus a

Damio's sword--a gem of lacquer-plated silk and stud-work--flanks the

\_tulwars\_ of Marwar and the \_jezails\_ of Tonk; and reproductions of

Persian and Russian brass-work stand side by side with the handicrafts

of the pupils of the Jeypore School of Art. A photograph of His Highness

the present Maharaja is set among the arms, which are the most prominent

features of the first or metal-room. As the villagers enter, they salaam

reverently to the photo, and then move on slowly, with an evidently

intelligent interest in what they see. Ruskin could describe the scene

admirably--pointing out how reverence must precede the study of art, and

how it is good for Englishmen and Rajputs alike to bow on occasion

before Geisler's cap. They thumb the revolving cases of cloths do those

rustics, and artlessly try to feel the texture through the protecting

glass. The main object of the Museum is avowedly provincial--to show the

craftsman of Jeypore the best that his predecessors could do, and what

foreign artists have done. In time--but the Curator of the Museum has

many schemes which will assuredly bear fruit in time, and it would be

unfair to divulge them. Let those who doubt the thoroughness of a Museum

under one man's control, built, filled, and endowed with royal

generosity--an institution perfectly independent of the Government of

India--go and exhaustively visit Dr. Hendley's charge at Jeypore. Like

the man who made the building, he refuses to talk, and so the greater

part of the work that he has in hand must be guessed at.

At one point, indeed, the Curator was taken off his guard. A huge map of

the kingdom showed in green the portions that had been brought under

irrigation, while blue circles marked the towns that owned

dispensaries. "I want to bring every man in the State within twenty

miles of a dispensary--and I've nearly done it," said he. Then he

checked himself, and went off to food-grains in little bottles as being

neutral and colourless things. Envy is forced to admit that the

arrangement of the Museum--far too important a matter to be explained

off-hand--is Continental in its character, and has a definite end and

bearing--a trifle omitted by many institutions other than Museums.

But--in fine, what can one say of a collection whose very labels are

gilt-edged! Shameful extravagance? Nothing of the kind--only finish,

perfectly in keeping with the rest of the fittings--a finish that we in

\_kutcha\_[3] India have failed to catch.

[3] casual: half-finished.

From the Museum go out through the city to the Maharaja's

Palace--skilfully avoiding the man who would show you the Maharaja's

European billiard-room,--and wander through a wilderness of sunlit,

sleepy courts, gay with paint and frescoes, till you reach an inner

square, where smiling grey-bearded men squat at ease and play

\_chaupur\_[4]--just such a game as cost the Pandavs the fair

Draupadi--with inlaid dice and gayly lacquered pieces. These ancients

are very polite and will press you to play, but give no heed to them,

for \_chaupur\_ is an expensive game--expensive as quail-fighting, when

you have backed the wrong bird and the people are laughing at your

inexperience. The Maharaja's Palace is gay, overwhelmingly rich in

candelabra, painted ceilings, gilt mirrors, and other evidences of a too

hastily assimilated civilisation; but, if the evidence of the ear can be

trusted, the old, old game of intrigue goes on as merrily as of yore. A

figure in saffron came out of a dark arch into the sunlight, almost

falling into the arms of one in pink. "Where have you come from?" "I

have been to see ----" the name was unintelligible. "That is a lie; you

have \_not\_!" Then, across the court, some one laughed a low, croaking

laugh. The pink and saffron figures separated as though they had been

shot, and disappeared into separate bolt-holes. It was a curious little

incident, and might have meant a great deal or just nothing at all. It

distracted the attention of the ancients bowed above the \_chaupur\_

cloth.

[4] something like \_parchesi\_.

In the Palace-gardens there is even a greater stillness than that about

the courts, and here nothing of the West, unless a critical soul might

take exception to the lamp-posts. At the extreme end lies a lake-like

tank swarming with \_muggers\_.[5] It is reached through an opening under

a block of zenana buildings. Remembering that all beasts by the palaces

of Kings or the temples of priests in this country would answer to the

name of "Brother," the Englishman cried with the voice of faith across

the water. And the mysterious freemasonry did not fail. At the far end

of the tank rose a ripple that grew and grew and grew like a thing in a

nightmare, and became presently an aged \_mugger\_. As he neared the

shore, there emerged, the green slime thick upon his eyelids, another

beast, and the two together snapped at a cigar-butt--the only reward for

their courtesy. Then, disgusted, they sank stern first with a gentle

sigh. Now a \_mugger's\_ sigh is the most suggestive sound in animal

speech. It suggested first the zenana buildings overhead, the walled

passes through the purple hills beyond, a horse that might clatter

through the passes till he reached the Man Sagar Lake below the passes,

and a boat that might row across the Man Sagar till it nosed the wall

of the Palace-tank, and then--then uprose the \_mugger\_ with the filth

upon his forehead and winked one horny eyelid--in truth he did!--and so

supplied a fitting end to a foolish fiction of old days and things that

might have been. But it must be unpleasant to live in a house whose base

is washed by such a tank.

[5] crocodiles.

And so back through the chunamed courts, and among the gentle sloping

paths between the orange trees, up to an entrance of the palace, guarded

by two rusty brown dogs from Kabul, each big as a man, and each

requiring a man's charpoy to sleep upon. Very gay was the front of the

palace, very brilliant were the glimpses of the damask-couched, gilded

rooms within, and very, very civilised were the lamp-posts with Ram

Singh's monogram, devised to look like V. R., at the bottom, and a

coronet at the top. An unseen brass band among the orange bushes struck

up the overture of the \_Bronze Horse\_. Those who know the music will see

at once that that was the only tune which exactly and perfectly fitted

the scene and its surroundings. It was a coincidence and a revelation.

In his time and when he was not fighting, Jey Singh, the second, who

built the city, was a great astronomer--a royal Omar Khayyam, for he,

like the tent-maker of Nishapur, reformed a calendar, and strove to

wring their mysteries from the stars with instruments worthy of a king.

But in the end he wrote that the goodness of the Almighty was above

everything, and died, leaving his observatory to decay without the

palace-grounds.

From the \_Bronze Horse\_ to the grass-grown enclosure that holds the

Yantr Samrat, or Prince of Dials, is rather an abrupt passage. Jey

Singh built him a dial with a gnomon some ninety feet high, to throw a

shadow against the sun, and the gnomon stands to-day, though there is

grass in the kiosque at the top and the flight of steps up the

hypotenuse is worn. He built also a zodiacal dial--twelve dials upon one

platform--to find the moment of true noon at any time of the year, and

hollowed out of the earth place for two hemispherical cups, cut by belts

of stone, for comparative observations.

He made cups for calculating eclipses, and a mural quadrant and many

other strange things of stone and mortar, of which people hardly know

the names and but very little of the uses. Once, said a man in charge of

two tiny elephants, \_Indur\_ and \_Har\_, a Sahib came with the Viceroy,

and spent eight days in the enclosure of the great neglected

observatory, seeing and writing things in a book. But \_he\_ understood

\_Sanskrit\_--the Sanskrit upon the faces of the dials, and the meaning of

the gnoma and pointers. Nowadays no one understands Sanskrit--not even

the Pundits; but without doubt Jey Singh was a great man.

The hearer echoed the statement, though he knew nothing of astronomy,

and of all the wonders in the observatory was only struck by the fact

that the shadow of the Prince of Dials moved over its vast plate so

quickly that it seemed as though Time, wroth at the insolence of Jey

Singh, had loosed the Horses of the Sun and were sweeping

everything--dainty Palace-gardens and ruinous instruments--into the

darkness of eternal night. So he went away chased by the shadow on the

dial, and returned to the hotel, where he found men who said--this must

be a catch-word of Globe-trotters--that they were "much pleased at"

Amber. They further thought that "house-rent would be cheap in those

parts," and sniggered over the witticism. There is a class of tourists,

and a strangely large one, who individually never get farther than the

"much pleased" state under any circumstances. This same class of

tourists, it has also been observed, are usually free with hackneyed

puns, vapid phrases, and alleged or bygone jokes. Jey Singh, in spite of

a few discreditable \_laches\_, was a temperate and tolerant man; but he

would have hanged those Globe-trotters in their trunk-straps as high as

the Yantr Samrat.

Next morning, in the grey dawn, the Englishman rose up and shook the

sand of Jeypore from his feet, and went with Master Coryatt and Sir

Thomas Roe to "Adsmir," wondering whether a year in Jeypore would be

sufficient to exhaust its interest, and why he had not gone out to the

tombs of the dead Kings and the passes of Gulta and the fort of Motee

Dungri. But what he wondered at most--knowing how many men who have in

any way been connected with the birth of an institution, do, to the end

of their days, continue to drag forward and exhume their labours and the

honours that did \_not\_ come to them--was the work of the two men who,

together for years past, have been pushing Jeypore along the

stone-dressed paths of civilisation, peace, and comfort. "Servants of

the Raj" they called themselves, and surely they have served the Raj

past all praise. The people in the city and the camel-driver from the

sand-hills told of their work. They themselves held their peace as to

what they had done, and, when pressed, referred--crowning baseness--to

reports. Printed ones!

VI

SHOWING HOW HER MAJESTY'S MAILS WENT TO UDAIPUR AND FELL OUT BY THE WAY.

Arrived at Ajmir, the Englishman fell among tents pitched under the

shadow of a huge banian tree, and in them was a Punjabi. Now there is no

brotherhood like the brotherhood of the Pauper Province; for it is even

greater than the genial and unquestioning hospitality which, in spite of

the loafer and the Globe-trotter, seems to exist throughout India. Ajmir

being British territory, though the inhabitants are allowed to carry

arms, is the headquarters of many of the banking firms who lend to the

Native States. The complaint of the Setts[6] to-day is that their trade

is bad, because an unsympathetic Government induces Native States to

make railways and become prosperous. "Look at Jodhpur!" said a gentleman

whose possessions might be roughly estimated at anything between thirty

and forty-five lakhs. "Time was when Jodhpur was always in debt--and not

so long ago, either. Now, they've got a railroad and are carrying salt

over it, and, as sure as I stand here, they have a \_surplus\_! What can

we do?" Poor pauper! However, he makes a little profit on the

fluctuations in the coinage of the States round him, for every small

king seems to have the privilege of striking his own image and

inflicting the Great Exchange Question on his subjects. It is a poor

State that has not two seers and five different rupees.

[6] native bankers.

From a criminal point of view, Ajmir is not a pleasant place. The Native

States lie all round and about it, and portions of the district are ten

miles off, Native State-locked on every side. Thus the criminal, who may

be a burglarious Meena lusting for the money bags of the Setts, or a

Peshawari down south on a cold weather tour, has his plan of campaign

much simplified.

The Englishman made only a short stay in the town, hearing that there

was to be a ceremony--\_tamasha\_ covers a multitude of things--at the

capital of His Highness the Maharana of Udaipur--a town some hundred and

eighty miles south of Ajmir, not known to many people beyond Viceroys

and their Staffs and the officials of the Rajputana Agency. So he took a

Neemuch train in the very early morning and, with the Punjabi, went due

south to Chitor, the point of departure for Udaipur. In time the

Aravalis gave place to a dead, flat, stone-strewn plain, thick with

dhak-jungle. Later the date-palm fraternised with the dhak, and low

hills stood on either side of the line. To this succeeded a tract rich

in pure white stone--the line was ballasted with it. Then came more low

hills, each with a cock's comb of splintered rock, overlooking

dhak-jungle and villages fenced with thorns--places that at once

declared themselves tigerish. Last, the huge bulk of Chitor showed

itself on the horizon. The train crossed the Gumber River and halted

almost in the shadow of the hills on which the old pride of Udaipur was

set.

It is difficult to give an idea of the Chitor fortress; but the long

line of brown wall springing out of bush-covered hill suggested at once

those pictures, such as the \_Graphic\_ publishes, of the \_Inflexible\_ or

the \_Devastation\_--gigantic men-of-war with a very low free-board

ploughing through green sea. The hill on which the fort stands is

ship-shaped and some miles long, and, from a distance, every inch

appears to be scarped and guarded. But there was no time to see Chitor.

The business of the day was to get, if possible, to Udaipur from Chitor

Station, which was composed of one platform, one telegraph-room, a

bench, and several vicious dogs.

The State of Udaipur is as backward as Jeypore is advanced--if we judge

it by the standard of civilisation. It does not approve of the

incursions of Englishmen, and, to do it justice, it thoroughly succeeds

in conveying its silent sulkiness. Still, where there is one English

Resident, one Doctor, one Engineer, one Settlement Officer, and one

Missionary, there must be a mail at least once a day. There was a mail.

The Englishman, men said, might go by it if he liked, or he might not.

Then, with a great sinking of the heart, he began to realise that his

caste was of no value in the stony pastures of Mewar, among the

swaggering gentlemen, who were so lavishly adorned with arms. There was

a mail, the ghost of a tonga, with tattered side-cloths and patched

roof, inconceivably filthy within and without, and it was Her Majesty's.

There was another tonga,--an \_aram\_ tonga, a carriage of ease--but the

Englishman was not to have it. It was reserved for a Rajput Thakur who

was going to Udaipur with his "tail." The Thakur, in claret-coloured

velvet with a blue turban, a revolver--Army pattern--a sword, and five

or six friends, also with swords, came by and indorsed the statement.

Now, the mail tonga had a wheel which was destined to become the Wheel

of Fate, and to lead to many curious things. Two diseased yellow ponies

were extracted from a dung-hill and yoked to the tonga; and after due

deliberation Her Majesty's mail started, the Thakur following.

In twelve hours, or thereabouts, the seventy miles between Chitor and

Udaipur would be accomplished. Behind the tonga cantered an armed sowar.

He was the guard. The Thakur's tonga came up with a rush, ran

deliberately across the bows of the Englishman, chipped a pony, and

passed on. One lives and learns. The Thakur seems to object to following

the foreigner.

At the halting-stages, once in every six miles, that is to say, the

ponies were carefully undressed and all their accoutrements fitted more

or less accurately on to the backs of any ponies that might happen to be

near; the released animals finding their way back to their stables alone

and unguided. There were no grooms, and the harness hung on by special

dispensation of Providence. Still the ride over a good road, driven

through a pitilessly stony country, had its charms for a while. At

sunset the low hills turned to opal and wine-red and the brown dust flew

up pure gold; for the tonga was running straight into the sinking sun.

Now and again would pass a traveller on a camel, or a gang of

\_Bunjarras\_[7] with their pack-bullocks and their women; and the sun

touched the brasses of their swords and guns till the poor wretches

seemed rich merchants come back from travelling with Sindbad.

[7] Gipsy traders.

On a rock on the right-hand side, thirty-four great vultures were

gathered over the carcass of a steer. And this was an evil omen. They

made unseemly noises as the tonga passed, and a raven came out of a

bush on the right and answered them. To crown all, one of the hide and

skin castes sat on the left-hand side of the road, cutting up some of

the flesh that he had stolen from the vultures. Could a man desire three

more inauspicious signs for a night's travel? Twilight came, and the

hills were alive with strange noises, as the red moon, nearly at her

full, rose over Chitor. To the low hills of the mad geological

formation, the tumbled strata that seem to obey no law, succeeded level

ground, the pasture lands of Mewar, cut by the Beruch and Wyan, streams

running over smooth water-worn rock, and, as the heavy embankments and

ample waterways showed, very lively in the rainy season.

In this region occurred the last and most inauspicious omen of all.

Something had gone wrong with a crupper, a piece of blue and white

punkah-cord. The Englishman pointed it out, and the driver, descending,

danced on that lonely road an unholy dance, singing the while: "The

\_dumchi\_![8] The \_dumchi\_! The \_dumchi\_!" in a shrill voice. Then he

returned and drove on, while the Englishman wondered into what land of

lunatics he was heading. At an average speed of six miles an hour, it is

possible to see a great deal of the country; and, under brilliant

moonlight, Mewar was desolately beautiful. There was no night traffic on

the road, no one except the patient sowar, his shadow an inky blot on

white, cantering twenty yards behind. Once the tonga strayed into a

company of date trees that fringed the path, and once rattled through a

little town, and once the ponies shied at what the driver said was a

rock. But It jumped up in the moonlight and went away.

[8] The crupper.

Then came a great blasted heath whereon nothing was more than six inches

high--a wilderness covered with grass and low thorn; and here, as nearly

as might be midway between Chitor and Udaipur, the Wheel of Fate, which

had been for some time beating against the side of the tonga, came off,

and Her Majesty's mails, two bags including parcels, collapsed on the

wayside: while the Englishman repented him that he had neglected the

omens of the vultures and the raven, the low-caste man and the mad

driver.

There was a consultation and an examination of the wheel, but the whole

tonga was rotten, and the axle was smashed and the axle pins were bent

and nearly red-hot. "It is nothing," said the driver, "the mail often

does this. What is a wheel?" He took a big stone and began hammering

proudly on the tire, to show that that at least was sound. A hasty

court-martial revealed that there was absolutely not one single relief

vehicle on the whole road between Chitor and Udaipur.

Now this wilderness was so utterly waste that not even the barking of a

dog or the sound of a night-fowl could be heard. Luckily the Thakur had,

some twenty miles back, stepped out to smoke by the roadside, and his

tonga had been passed meanwhile. The sowar was sent back to find that

tonga and bring it on. He cantered into the haze of the moonlight and

disappeared. Then said the driver: "Had there been no tonga behind us, I

should have put the mails on a horse, because the Sirkar's mail cannot

stop." The Englishman sat down upon the parcels-bag, for he felt that

there was trouble coming. The driver looked East and West and said: "I,

too, will go and see if the tonga can be found, for the Sirkar's dak

cannot stop. Meantime, oh, Sahib, do you take care of the mails--one bag

and one bag of parcels." So he ran swiftly into the haze of the

moonlight and was lost, and the Englishman was left alone in charge of

Her Majesty's mails, two unhappy ponies, and a lop-sided tonga. He lit a

fire, for the night was bitterly cold, and only mourned that he could

not destroy the whole of the territories of His Highness, the Maharana

of Udaipur. But he managed to raise a very fine blaze, before he

reflected that all this trouble was his own fault for wandering into

Native States undesirous of Englishmen.

The ponies coughed dolorously from time to time, but they could not lift

the weight of a dead silence that seemed to be crushing the earth. After

an interval measurable by centuries, sowar, driver, and Thakur's tonga

reappeared; the latter full to the brim and bubbling over with humanity

and bedding. "We will now," said the driver, not deigning to notice the

Englishman who had been on guard over the mails, "put the Sirkar's mail

into this tonga and go forward." Amiable heathen! He was going--he said

so--to leave the Englishman to wait in the Sahara, for certainly thirty

hours and perhaps forty-eight. Tongas are scarce on the Udaipur road.

There are a few occasions in life when it is justifiable to delay Her

Majesty's Mail. This was one of them. Seating himself upon the

parcels-bag, the Englishman cried in what was intended to be a very

terrible voice, but the silence soaked it up and left only a thin

trickle of sound, that any one who touched the bags would be hit with a

stick, several times, over the head. The bags were the only link between

him and the civilisation he had so rashly foregone. And there was a

pause.

The Thakur put his head out of the tonga and spoke shrilly in Mewari.

The Englishman replied in English-Urdu. The Thakur withdrew his head,

and from certain grunts that followed seemed to be wakening his

retainers. Then two men fell sleepily out of the tonga and walked into

the night. "Come in," said the Thakur, "you and your baggage. My pistol

is in that corner; be careful." The Englishman, taking a mail-bag in one

hand for safety's sake,--the wilderness inspires an Anglo-Indian

Cockney, with unreasoning fear,--climbed into the tonga, which was then

loaded far beyond Plimsoll mark, and the procession resumed its journey.

Every one in the vehicle--it seemed as full as the railway carriage that

held Alice through the Looking-Glass--was \_Sahib\_ and \_Hazur\_. Except

the Englishman. He was simple \_tum\_ (thou), and a revolver, Army

pattern, was printing every diamond in the chequer-work of its handle,

on his right hip. When men desired him to move, they prodded him with

the handles of \_tulwars\_ till they had coiled him into an uneasy lump.

Then they slept upon him, or cannoned against him as the tonga bumped.

It was an \_aram\_ tonga, a tonga for ease. That was the bitterest thought

of all!

In due season the harness began to break once every five minutes, and

the driver vowed that the wheels would give way also.

After eight hours in one position, it is excessively difficult to walk,

still more difficult to climb up an unknown road into a dak-bungalow;

but he who has sought sleep on an arsenal and under the bodies of burly

Rajputs can do it. The grey dawn brought Udaipur and a French bedstead.

As the tonga jingled away, the Englishman heard the familiar crack of

broken harness. So he was not the Jonah he had been taught to consider

himself all through that night of penance!

A jackal sat in the verandah and howled him to sleep, and he dreamed

that he caught a Viceroy under the walls of Chitor and beat him with a

\_tulwar\_ till he turned into a dak-pony whose near foreleg was

perpetually coming off and who would say nothing but \_tum\_ when he was

asked why he had not built a railway from Chitor to Udaipur.

VII

TOUCHING THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN AND THEIR CITY, AND THE HAT-MARKED

CASTE AND THEIR MERITS, AND A GOOD MAN'S WORKS IN THE WILDERNESS.

It was worth a night's discomfort and revolver-beds to sleep upon--this

city of the Suryavansi, hidden among the hills that encompass the great

Pichola lake. Truly, the King who governs to-day is wise in his

determination to have no railroad to his capital. His predecessor was

more or less enlightened, and had he lived a few years longer, would

have brought the iron horse through the Dobarri--the green gate which is

the entrance of the Girwa or girdle of hills around Udaipur; and, with

the train, would have come the tourist who would have scratched his name

upon the Temple of Garuda and laughed horse-laughs upon the lake. Let

us, therefore, be thankful that the capital of Mewar is hard to reach.

Each man in this land who has any claims to respectability walks armed,

carrying his tulwar sheathed in his hand, or hung by a short sling of

cotton passing over the shoulder, under his left armpit. His matchlock,

or smooth-bore, if he has one, is borne naked on the shoulder.

Now it is possible to carry any number of lethal weapons without being

actually dangerous. An unhandy revolver, for instance, may be worn for

years, and, at the end, accomplish nothing more noteworthy than the

murder of its owner. But the Rajput's weapons are not meant for display.

The Englishman caught a camel-driver who talked to him in Mewari, which

is a heathenish dialect, something like Multani to listen to; and the

man, very gracefully and courteously, handed him his sword and

matchlock, the latter a heavy stump-stock arrangement without pretence

of sights. The blade was as sharp as a razor, and the gun in perfect

working order. The coiled fuse on the stock was charred at the end, and

the curled ram's-horn powder-horn opened as readily as a much-handled

whisky-flask. Unfortunately, ignorance of Mewari prevented conversation;

so the camel-driver resumed his accoutrements and jogged forward on his

beast--a superb black one, with the short curled \_hubshee\_ hair--while

the Englishman went to the city, which is built on hills on the borders

of the lake. By the way, everything in Udaipur is built on a hill. There

is no level ground in the place, except the Durbar Gardens, of which

more hereafter. Because colour holds the eye more than form, the first

thing noticeable was neither temple nor fort, but an ever-recurring

picture, painted in the rudest form of native art, of a man on horseback

armed with a lance, charging an elephant-of-war. As a rule, the elephant

was depicted on one side the house-door and the rider on the other.

There was no representation of an army behind. The figures stood alone

upon the whitewash on house and wall and gate, again and again and

again. A highly intelligent priest grunted that it was a picture; a

private of the Maharana's regular army suggested that it was an

elephant; while a wheat-seller, his sword at his side, was equally

certain that it was a Raja. Beyond that point, his knowledge did not go.

The explanation of the picture is this. In the days when Raja Maun of

Amber put his sword at Akbar's service and won for him great kingdoms,

Akbar sent an army against Mewar, whose then ruler was Pertap Singh,

most famous of all the princes of Mewar. Selim, Akbar's son, led the

army of the Toork; the Rajputs met them at the pass of Huldighat and

fought till one-half of their band was slain. Once, in the press of

battle, Pertap on his great horse, Chytak, came within striking distance

of Selim's elephant, and slew the mahout, but Selim escaped, to become

Jehangir afterwards, and the Rajputs were broken. That was three hundred

years ago, and men have reduced the picture to a sort of diagram that

the painter dashes in, in a few minutes, without, it would seem, knowing

what he is commemorating.

Thinking of these things, the Englishman made shift to get to the city,

and presently came to a tall gate, the gate of the Sun, on which the

elephant-spikes, that he had seen rotted with rust at Amber, were new

and pointed and effective. The City gates are said to be shut at night,

and there is a story of a Viceroy's Guard-of-Honour which arrived before

daybreak, being compelled to crawl ignominiously man by man through a

little wicket-gate, while the horses had to wait without till sunrise.

But a civilised yearning for the utmost advantages of octroi, and not a

fierce fear of robbery and wrong, is at the bottom of the continuance of

this custom. The walls of the City are loopholed for musketry, but there

seem to be no mounting for guns, and the moat without the walls is dry

and gives cattle pasture. Coarse rubble in concrete faced with stone

makes the walls moderately strong.

Internally, the City is surprisingly clean, though with the exception of

the main street, paved after the fashion of Jullundur, of which, men

say, the pavement was put down in the time of Alexander and worn by

myriads of naked feet into deep barrels and grooves. In the case of

Udaipur, the feet of the passengers have worn the rock veins that crop

out everywhere, smooth and shiny; and in the rains the narrow gullies

must spout like fire-hoses. The people have been untouched by cholera

for four years, proof that Providence looks after those who do not look

after themselves, for Neemuch Cantonment, a hundred miles away, suffered

grievously last summer. "And what do you make in Udaipur?" "Swords,"

said the man in the shop, throwing down an armful of \_tulwars\_,

\_kuttars\_, and \_khandas\_ on the stones. "Do you want any? Look here!"

Hereat, he took up one of the commoner swords and flourished it in the

sunshine. Then he bent it double, and, as it sprang straight, began to

make it "speak." Arm-venders in Udaipur are a sincere race, for they

sell to people who really use their wares. The man in the shop was

rude--distinctly so. His first flush of professional enthusiasm abated,

he took stock of the Englishman and said calmly: "What do \_you\_ want

with a sword?" Then he picked up his goods and retreated, while certain

small boys, who deserved a smacking, laughed riotously from the coping

of a little temple hard by. Swords seem to be the sole manufacture of

the place. At least, none of the inhabitants the Englishman spoke to

could think of any other.

There is a certain amount of personal violence in and about the State,

or else where would be the good of the weapons? There are occasionally

dacoities more or less important; but these are not often heard of, and,

indeed, there is no special reason why they should be dragged into the

light of an unholy publicity, for the land governs itself in its own

way, and is always in its own way, which is by no means ours, very

happy. The Thakurs live, each in his own castle on some rock-faced hill,

much as they lived in the days of Tod; though their chances of

distinguishing themselves, except in the school, and dispensary line,

are strictly limited. Nominally, they pay \_chutoond\_, or a sixth of

their revenues to the State, and are under feudal obligations to supply

their Head with so many horsemen per thousand rupees; but whether the

\_chutoond\_ justifies its name and what is the exact extent of the "tail"

leviable, they, and perhaps the Rajputana Agency, alone know. They are

quiet, give no trouble except to the wild boar, and personally are

magnificent men to look at. The Rajput shows his breeding in his hands

and feet, which are almost disproportionately small, and as well shaped

as those of a woman. His stirrups and sword-handles are even more

unusable by Westerns than those elsewhere in India, whereas the Bhil's

knife-handle gives as large a grip as an English one. Now the little

Bhil is an aborigine, which is humiliating to think of. His tongue,

which may frequently be heard in the City, seems to possess some variant

of the Zulu click, which gives it a weird and unearthly character. From

the main gate of the City the Englishman climbed uphill towards the

Palace and the Jugdesh Temple built by one Juggat Singh at the

beginning of the last century. This building must be--but ignorance is a

bad guide--Jain in character. From basement to the stone socket of the

temple flagstaff, it is carved in high relief with elephants, men, gods,

and monsters in friezes of wearying profusion.

The management of the temple have daubed a large portion of the building

with whitewash, for which their revenues should be "cut" for a year or

two. The main shrine holds a large brazen image of Garuda, and, in the

corners of the courtyard of the main pile, are shrines to Mahadeo, and

the jovial, pot-bellied Ganesh. There is no repose in this architecture,

and the entire effect is one of repulsion; for the clustered figures of

man and brute seem always on the point of bursting into unclean,

wriggling life. But it may be that the builders of this form of house

desired to put the fear of all their many gods into the hearts of the

worshippers.

From the temple whose steps are worn smooth by the feet of men, and

whose courts are full of the faint smell of stale flowers and old

incense, the Englishman went to the Palaces which crown the highest hill

overlooking the City. Here, too, whitewash had been unsparingly applied,

but the excuse was that the stately fronts and the pierced screens were

built of a perishable stone which needed protection against the weather.

One projecting window in the faÃ§ade of the main palace had been treated

with Minton tiles. Luckily it was too far up the wall for anything more

than the colour to be visible, and the pale blue against the pure white

was effective.

A picture of Ganesh looks out over the main courtyard, which is entered

by a triple gate, and hard by is the place where the King's elephants

fight over a low masonry wall. In the side of the hill on which the

Palaces stand is built stabling for horses and elephants--proof that the

architects of old must have understood their business thoroughly. The

Palace is not a "show place," and, consequently, the Englishman did not

see much of the interior. But he passed through open gardens with tanks

and pavilions, very cool and restful, till he came suddenly upon the

Pichola lake, and forgot altogether about the Palace. He found a sheet

of steel-blue water, set in purple and grey hills, bound in, on one

side, by marble bunds, the fair white walls of the Palace, and the grey,

time-worn ones of the city; and, on the other, fading away through the

white of shallow water, and the soft green of weed, marsh, and

rank-pastured river-field, into the land.

To enjoy open water thoroughly, live for a certain number of years

barred from anything better than the yearly swell and shrinkage of one

of the Five Rivers, and then come upon two and a half miles of solid,

restful lake, with a cool wind blowing off it and little waves spitting

against the piers of a veritable, albeit hideously ugly, boat-house. On

the faith of an exile from the Sea, you will not stay long among

Palaces, be they never so lovely, or in little rooms panelled with Dutch

tiles.

And here follows a digression. There is no life so good as the life of a

loafer who travels by rail and road; for all things and all people are

kind to him. From the chill miseries of a dak-bungalow where they slew

one hen with as much parade as the French guillotined Pranzini, to the

well-ordered sumptuousness of the Residency, was a step bridged over by

kindly and unquestioning hospitality. So it happened that the Englishman

was not only able to go upon the lake in a soft-cushioned boat, with

everything handsome about him, but might, had he chosen, have killed

wild-duck with which the lake swarms.

The mutter of water under a boat's nose was a pleasant thing to hear

once more. Starting at the head of the lake, he found himself shut out

from sight of the main sheet of water in a loch bounded by a sunk,

broken bund to steer across which was a matter of some nicety. Beyond

that lay a second pool, spanned by a narrow-arched bridge built, men

said, long before the City of the Rising Sun, which is little more than

three hundred years old. The bridge connects the City with Brahmapura--a

whiter walled enclosure filled with many Brahmins and ringing with the

noise of their conches. Beyond the bridge, the body of the lake, with

the City running down to it, comes into full view; and Providence has

arranged for the benefit of such as delight in colours, that the

Rajputni shall wear the most striking tints that she can buy in the

bazaars, in order that she may beautify the ghÃ¢ts where she comes to

bathe.

The bathing-ledge at the foot of the City wall was lighted with women

clad in raw vermilion, dull red, indigo and sky-blue, saffron and pink

and turquoise; the water faithfully doubling everything. But the first

impression was of the unreality of the sight, for the Englishman found

himself thinking of the Simla Fine Arts Exhibition and the overdaring

amateurs who had striven to reproduce scenes such as these. Then a

woman rose up, and clasping her hands behind her head, looked at the

passing boat, and the ripples spread out from her waist, in blinding

white silver, far across the water. As a picture, a daringly insolent

picture, it was superb.

The boat turned aside to shores where huge turtles were lying, and a

stork had built her a nest, big as a haycock, in a withered tree, and a

bevy of coots were flapping and gabbling in the weeds or between great

leaves of the \_Victoria regia\_--an "escape" from the State Gardens. Here

were divers and waders, kingfishers and snaky-necked birds of the

cormorant family, but no duck. They had seen the guns in the boat and

were flying to and fro in companies across the lake, or settling--wise

things!--in the glare of the sun on the water. The lake was swarming

with them, but they seemed to know exactly how far a twelve-bore would

carry. Perhaps their knowledge had been gained from the Englishman at

the Residency. Later, as the sun left the lake, and the hills began to

glow like opals, the boat made her way to the shallow side of the lake,

through fields of watergrass and dead lotus-raffle that rose as high as

the bows, and clung lovingly about the rudder, and parted with the noise

of silk when it is torn. There she waited for the fall of twilight when

the duck would come home to bed, and the Englishman sprawled upon the

cushions in deep content and laziness, as he looked across to where two

marble Palaces floated upon the waters, and saw all the glory and beauty

of the City, and wondered whether Tod, in cocked hat and stiff stock,

had ever come shooting among the reeds, and, if so, how in the world he

had ever managed to bowl over....

"Duck and drake, by Jove! Confiding beasts, weren't they. Hi! Lalla,

jump out and get them!" It was a brutal thing, this double-barrelled

murder perpetrated in the silence of the marsh when the kingly wild-duck

came back from his wanderings with his mate at his side, but--but--the

birds were very good to eat.

If the Venetian owned the Pichola Sagar he might say with justice: "See

it and die." But it is better to live and go to dinner, and strike into

a new life--that of the men who bear the hat-mark on their brow as

plainly as the well-born native carries the \_trisul\_ of Shiva.

They are of the same caste as the toilers on the Frontier--tough,

bronzed men, with wrinkles at the corners of the eyes, gotten by looking

across much sun-glare. When they would speak of horses they mention Arab

ponies, and their talk, for the most part, drifts Bombaywards, or to

Abu, which is their Simla. By these things the traveller may see that he

is far away from the Presidency; and will presently learn that he is in

a land where the railway is an incident and not an indispensable luxury.

Folk tell strange stories of drives in bullock-carts in the rains, of

breakdowns in nullahs fifty miles from everywhere, and of elephants that

used to sink for rest and refreshment half-way across swollen streams.

Every place here seems fifty miles from everywhere, and the legs of a

horse are regarded as the only natural means of locomotion. Also, and

this to the Indian Cockney, who is accustomed to the bleached or office

man, is curious, there are to be found many veritable "tiger-men"--not

story-spinners, but such as have, in their wanderings from Bikaneer to

Indore, dropped their tiger in the way of business. They are

enthusiastic over princelings of little known fiefs, lords of austere

estates perched on the tops of unthrifty hills, hard riders, and good

sportsmen. And five, six, yes fully nine hundred miles to the northward,

lives the sister branch of the same caste--the men who swear by Pathan,

Biluch, and Brahui, with whom they have shot or broken bread.

There is a saying in Upper India that the more desolate the country, the

greater the certainty of finding a Padre-Sahib. The proverb seems to

hold good in Udaipur, where the Scotch Presbyterian Mission have a post,

and others at Todgarh to the north and elsewhere. To arrive, under

Providence, at the cure of souls through the curing of bodies certainly

seems the rational method of conversion; and this is exactly what the

Missions are doing. Their Padre in Udaipur is also an M.D., and of him a

rather striking tale is told. Conceiving that the City could bear

another hospital in addition to the State one, he took furlough, went

home, and there, by crusade and preaching, raised sufficient money for

the scheme, so that none might say that he was beholden to the State.

Returning, he built his hospital, a very model of neatness and comfort,

and, opening the operation-book, announced his readiness to see any one

and every one who was sick. How the call was and is now responded to,

the dry records of that book will show; and the name of the Padre-Sahib

is honoured, as these ears have heard, throughout Udaipur and far

around. The faith that sends a man into the wilderness, and the secular

energy which enables him to cope with an ever-growing demand for medical

aid, must, in time, find their reward. If patience and unwearying

self-sacrifice carry any merit, they should do so soon. To-day the

people are willing enough to be healed, and the general influence of the

Padre-Sahib is very great. But beyond that.... Still it was impossible

to judge aright.

VIII

DIVERS PASSAGES OF SPEECH AND ACTION WHENCE THE NATURE, ARTS, AND

DISPOSITION OF THE KING AND HIS SUBJECTS MAY BE OBSERVED.

In this land men tell "sad stories of the death of Kings" not easily

found elsewhere; and also speak of \_sati\_, which is generally supposed

to be out of date in a manner which makes it seem very near and vivid.

Be pleased to listen to some of the tales, but with all the names cut

out, because a King has just as much right to have his family affairs

respected as has a British householder paying income tax.

Once upon a time, that is to say when the British power was well

established in the land and there were railways, was a King who lay

dying for many days, and all, including the Englishmen about him, knew

that his end was certain. But he had chosen to lie in an outer court or

pleasure-house of his Palace; and with him were some twenty of his

favourite wives. The place in which he lay was very near to the City;

and there was a fear that his womankind should, on his death, going mad

with grief, cast off their veils and run out into the streets, uncovered

before all men. In which case nothing, not even the power of the Press,

and the locomotive, and the telegraph, and cheap education and

enlightened municipal councils, could have saved them from the

burning-pyre, for they were the wives of a King. So the Political did

his best to induce the dying man to go to the Fort of the City, a safe

place close to the regular zenana, where all the women could be kept

within walls. He said that the air was better in the Fort, but the King

refused; and that he would recover in the Fort; but the King refused.

After some days, the latter turned and said: "\_Why\_ are you so keen,

Sahib, upon getting my old bones up to the Fort?" Driven to his last

defences, the Political said simply: "Well, Maharana Sahib, the place is

close to the road, you see, and ..." The King saw and said: "Oh,

\_that's\_ it? I've been puzzling my brain for four days to find out what

on earth you were driving at. I'll go to-night." "But there may be some

difficulty," began the Political. "You think so," said the King. "If I

only hold up my little finger, the women will obey me. Go now, and come

back in five minutes, and all will be ready for departure." As a matter

of fact, the Political withdrew for the space of fifteen minutes, and

gave orders that the conveyances which he had kept in readiness day and

night should be got ready. In fifteen minutes those twenty women, with

their handmaidens, were packed and ready for departure; and the King

died later at the Fort, and nothing happened. Here the Englishman asked

why a frantic woman must of necessity become a \_sati\_, and felt properly

abashed when he was told that she \_must\_. There was nothing else for her

if she went out unveiled.

The rush-out forces the matter. And, indeed, if you consider the matter

from the Rajput point of view it does.

Then followed a very grim tale of the death of another King; of the

long vigil by his bedside, before he was taken off the bed to die upon

the ground; of the shutting of a certain mysterious door behind the

bed-head, which shutting was followed by a rustle of women's dress; of a

walk on the top of the palace, to escape the heated air of the sick

room; and then, in the grey dawn, the wail upon wail breaking from the

zenana as the news of the King's death went in. "I never wish to hear

anything more horrible and awful in my life. You could see nothing. You

could only hear the poor wretches," said the Political, with a shiver.

The last resting-place of the Maharanas of Udaipur is at Ahar, a little

village two miles east of the City. Here they go down in their robes of

state, their horse following behind, and here the Political saw, after

the death of a Maharana, the dancing-girls dancing before the poor white

ashes, the musicians playing among the cenotaphs, and the golden hookah,

sword, and water-vessel laid out for the naked soul doomed to hover

twelve days round the funeral pyre, before it could depart on its

journey toward a fresh birth. Once, in a neighbouring State it is said,

one of the dancing-girls stole a march in the next world's precedence

and her lord's affections, upon the legitimate queens. The affair

happened, by the way, after the Mutiny, and was accomplished with great

pomp in the light of day. Subsequently those who might have stopped it

but did not, were severely punished. The girl said that she had no one

to look to but the dead man, and followed him, to use Tod's formula,

"through the flames." It would be curious to know whether \_sati\_ is

altogether abolished among these lonely hills in the walled holds of the

Thakurs.

But to return from the burning-ground to modern Udaipur, as at present

worked under the Maharana and his Prime Minister Rae Punna Lal, \_C. I.

E.\_ To begin with, His Highness is a racial anomaly in that, judged by

the strictest European standard, he is a man of temperate life, the

husband of one wife whom he married before he was chosen to the throne

after the death of the Maharana Sujjun Singh in 1884. Sujjun Singh died

childless and gave no hint of his desires as to succession and--omitting

all the genealogical and political reasons which would drive a man

mad--Futteh Singh was chosen, by the Thakurs, from the Seorati Branch of

the family which Sangram Singh II. founded. He is thus a younger son of

a younger branch of a younger family, which lucid statement should

suffice to explain everything. The man who could deliberately unravel

the succession of any one of the Rajput States would be perfectly

capable of explaining the politics of all the Frontier tribes from

Jumrood to Quetta.

Roughly speaking, the Maharana and the Prime Minister--in whose family

the office has been hereditary for many generations--divide the power of

the State. They control, more or less, the Mahand Raj Sabha or Council

of Direction and Revision. This is composed of many of the Rawats and

Thakurs of the State, \_and\_ the Poet Laureate who, under a less genial

administration, would be presumably the Registrar. There are also

District Officers, Officers of Customs, Superintendents of the Mint,

Masters of the Horses, and Supervisor of Doles, which last is pretty and

touching. The State officers itself, and the Englishman's investigations

failed to unearth any Bengalis. The Commandant of the State Army, about

five thousand men of all arms, is a retired non-commissioned officer, a

Mr. Lonergan; who, as the medals on his breast attest, has done the

State some service, and now in his old age rejoices in the local rank of

Major-General, and teaches the Maharaja's guns to make uncommonly good

practice. The Infantry are smart and well set up, while the

Cavalry--rare thing in Native States--have a distinct notion of keeping

their accoutrements clean. They are, further, well mounted on light,

wiry Mewar and Kathiawar horses. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that

the Pathan comes down with his pickings from the Punjab to Udaipur, and

finds a market there for animals that were much better employed in Our

service--but the complaint is a stale one. Let us see, later on, what

the Jodhpur stables hold; and then formulate an indictment against the

Government. So much for the indigenous administration of Udaipur. The

one drawback in the present Maharaja, from the official point of view,

is his want of education. He is a thoroughly good man, but was not

brought up with the kingship before his eyes, consequently he is not an

English-speaking man.

There is a story told of him which is worth the repeating. An Englishman

who flattered himself that he could speak the vernacular fairly well,

paid him a visit and discoursed with a round mouth. The Maharana heard

him politely, and turning to a satellite, demanded a translation; which

was given. Then said the Maharana:--"Speak to him in \_Angrezi\_." The

\_Angrezi\_ spoken by the interpreter was Urdu as the Sahibs speak it, and

the Englishman, having ended his conference, departed abashed. But this

backwardness is eminently suited to a place like Udaipur, and a

European prince is not always a desirable thing. The curious and even

startling simplicity of his life is worth preserving. Here is a specimen

of one of his days. Rising at four--and the dawn can be bitterly

chill--he bathes and prays after the custom of his race, and at six is

ready to take in hand the first instalment of the day's work which comes

before him through his Prime Minister, and occupies him for three or

four hours till the first meal of the day is ready. At two o'clock he

attends the Mahand Raj Sabha, and works till five, retiring at a

healthily primitive hour. He is said to have his hand fairly, firmly

upon the reins of rule, and to know as much as most monarchs know of the

way in which his revenues--some thirty lakhs--are disposed of. The Prime

Minister's career has been a chequered and interesting one, including a

dismissal from power (this was worked by the Queens from behind the

screen), an arrest, and an attack with swords which all but ended in his

murder. He has not so much power as his predecessors had, for the reason

that the present Maharaja allows little but tiger-shooting to distract

him from the supervision of the State. His Highness, by the way, is a

first-class shot and has bagged eighteen tigers already. He preserves

his game carefully, and permission to kill tigers is not readily

obtainable.

A curious instance of the old order giving place to the new is in

process of evolution and deserves notice. The Prime Minister's son,

Futteh Lal, a boy of twenty years old, has been educated at the Mayo

College, Ajmir, and speaks and writes English. There are few native

officials in the State who do this; and the consequence is that the lad

has won a very fair insight into State affairs, and knows generally what

is going forward both in the Eastern and Western spheres of the little

Court. In time he may qualify for direct administrative powers, and

Udaipur will be added to the list of the States that are governed

English fashion. What the end will be, after three generations of

Princes and Dewans have been put through the mill of the Rajkumar

Colleges, those who live will learn.

More interesting is the question, For how long can the vitality of a

people whose life was arms be suspended? Men in the North say that, by

the favour of the Government which brings peace, the Sikh Sirdars are

rotting on their lands; and the Rajput Thakurs say of themselves that

they are growing rusty. The old, old problem forces itself on the most

unreflective mind at every turn in the gay streets of Udaipur. A

Frenchman might write: "Behold there the horse of the Rajput--foaming,

panting, caracoling, but always fettered with his head so majestic upon

his bosom so amply filled with a generous heart. He rages, but he does

not advance. See there the destiny of the Rajput who bestrides him, and

upon whose left flank bounds the sabre useless--the haberdashery of the

ironmonger only! Pity the horse in reason, for that life there is his

\_raison d'Ãªtre\_. Pity ten thousand times more the Rajput, for he has no

\_raison d'Ãªtre\_. He is an anachronism in a blue turban."

The Gaul might be wrong, but Tod wrote things which seem to support this

view, in the days when he wished to make "buffer-states" of the land he

loved so well.

Let us visit the Durbar Gardens, where little naked Cupids are trampling

upon fountains of fatted fish, all in bronze, where there are cypresses

and red paths, and a deer-park full of all varieties of deer, besides

two growling, fluffy little panther cubs, a black panther who is the

Prince of Darkness and a gentleman, and a terrace-full of tigers, bears,

and Guzerat lions brought from the King of Oudh's sale.

IX

OF THE PIG-DRIVE WHICH WAS A PANTHER-KILLING, AND OF THE DEPARTURE TO

CHITOR.

Above the Durbar Gardens lie low hills, in which the Maharana keeps,

very strictly guarded, his pig and his deer, and anything else that may

find shelter in the low scrub or under the scattered boulders. These

preserves are scientifically parcelled out with high, red-stone walls;

and here and there are dotted tiny shooting-stands--masonry

sentry-boxes, in which five or six men may sit at ease and shoot. It had

been arranged to entertain the Englishmen who were gathered at the

Residency to witness the investiture of the King with the G. C. S.

I.--that there should be a little pig-drive in front of the Kala Odey or

black shooting-box. The Rajput is a man and a brother, in respect that

he will ride, shoot, eat pig, and drink strong waters like an

Englishman. Of the pig-hunting he makes almost a religious duty, and of

the wine-drinking no less. Read how desperately they used to ride in

Udaipur at the beginning of the century when Tod, always in his cocked

hat to be sure, counted up the tale of accidents at the end of the day's

sport.

There is something unfair in shooting pig; but each man who went out

consoled himself with the thought that it was utterly impossible to ride

the brutes up the almost perpendicular hillsides, or down rocky

ravines, and that he individually would only go "just for the fun of

the thing." Those who stayed behind made rude remarks on the subject of

"pork butchers," and the dangers that attended shooting from a balcony.

There are ways and ways of slaying pig--from the orthodox method which

begins with "\_The Boar--the Boar--the mighty Boar!\_" overnight, and ends

with a shaky bridle-hand next morn, to the sober and solitary pot-shot

at dawn, from a railway embankment running through river marsh; but the

perfect way is this. Get a large, four-horse break, and drive till you

meet an unlimited quantity of pad-elephants waiting at the foot of rich

hill-preserves. Mount slowly and with dignity, and go in swinging

procession, by the marble-faced border of one of the most lovely lakes

on earth. Strike off on a semi-road, semi-hill-torrent path through

unthrifty, thorny jungle, and so climb up and up and up, till you see,

spread like a map below, the lake and the Palace and the City, hemmed in

by the sea of hills that lies between Udaipur and Mount Abu a hundred

miles away. Then take your seat in a comfortable chair, in a fine

two-storied Grand Stand, with an awning spread atop to keep off the sun,

while the Rawat of Amet and the Prime Minister's heir--no less--invite

you to take your choice of the many rifles spread on a ledge at the

front of the building. This, gentlemen who screw your pet ponies at

early dawn after the sounder that vanishes into cover soon as sighted,

or painfully follow the tiger through the burning heats of Mewar in May,

this is shooting after the fashion of Ouida--in musk and ambergris and

patchouli.

It is demoralising. One of the best and hardest riders of the Lahore

Tent Club in the old days, as the boars of Bouli Lena Singh knew well,

said openly: "This is a first-class scheme," and fell to testing his

triggers as though he had been a pot-hunter from his birth. Derision and

threats of exposure moved him not. "Give me an arm-chair!" said he.

"This is the proper way to deal with pig!" And he put up his feet on the

ledge and stretched himself.

There were many weapons to choose from the double-barrelled '500

Express, whose bullet is a tearing, rending shell, to the Rawat of

Amet's regulation military Martini-Henri. A profane public at the

Residency had suggested clubs and saws as amply sufficient for the work

in hand. Here they were moved by envy, which passion was ten-fold

increased when--but this comes later on. The beat was along a deep gorge

in the hills, flanked on either crest by stone walls, manned with

beaters. Immediately opposite the shooting-box, the wall on the upper or

higher hill made a sharp turn downhill, contracting the space through

which the pig would have to pass to a gut which was variously said to be

from one hundred and fifty to four hundred yards across. Most of the

shooting was up or down hill.

A philanthropic desire not to murder more Bhils than were absolutely

necessary to maintain a healthy current of human life in the Hilly

Tracts, coupled with a well-founded dread of the hinder, or horse, end

of a double-barrelled '500 Express which would be sure to go off both

barrels together, led the Englishman to take a gunless seat in the

background. Then a silence fell upon the party, and very far away up the

gorge the heated afternoon air was cut by the shrill tremolo squeal of

the Bhil beaters. Now a man may be in no sort or fashion a

\_shikari\_--may hold Buddhistic objections to the slaughter of living

things--but there is something in the extraordinary noise of an agitated

Bhil, which makes even the most peaceful mortals get up and yearn, like

Tartarin of Tarescon for "lions," always at a safe distance be it

understood. As the beat drew nearer, under the squealing--the

"\_ul-al-lu-lu-lu\_"--was heard a long-drawn bittern-like boom of

"\_So-oor!\_" "\_So-oor!\_" (Pig! Pig!) and the crashing of boulders. The

guns rose in their places, forgetting that each and all had merely come

"to see the fun," and began to fumble among the little mounds of

cartridges under the chairs. Presently, tripping delicately over the

rocks, a pig stepped out of a cactus-bush, and the fusillade began. The

dust flew and the branches chipped, but the pig went on--a blue-grey

shadow almost undistinguishable against the rocks, and took no harm.

"Sighting shots," said the guns, sulkily. The beat came nearer, and then

the listener discovered what the bubbling scream was like; for he forgot

straightway about the beat and went back to the dusk of an Easter Monday

in the Gardens of the Crystal Palace before the bombardment of Kars,

"set piece ten thousand feet square" had been illuminated, and about

five hundred 'Arries were tickling a thousand 'Arriets. Their giggling

and nothing else was the noise of the Bhil. So curiously does Sydenham

and Western Rajputana meet. Then came another pig, who was smitten to

the death and rolled down among the bushes, drawing his last breath in a

human and horrible manner.

But full on the crest of the hill, blown along--there is no other word

to describe it--like a ball of thistle-down, passed a brown shadow, and

men cried: "\_Bagheera\_," or "Panther!" according to their nationalities,

and blazed. The shadow leaped the wall that had turned the pig downhill,

and vanished among the cactus. "Never mind," said the Prime Minister's

son, consolingly, "we'll beat the other side of the hill afterwards and

get him yet." "Oh, he's a mile off by this time," said the guns; but the

Rawat of Amet, a magnificent young man, smiled a sweet smile and said

nothing. More pig passed and were slain, and many more broke back

through the beaters who presently came through the cover in scores. They

were in russet green and red uniform, each man bearing a long spear, and

the hillside was turned on the instant to a camp of Robin Hood's

foresters. Then they brought up the dead from behind bushes and under

rocks--among others a twenty-seven-inch brute who bore on his flank (all

pigs shot in a beat are \_ex-officio\_ boars) a hideous, half-healed scar,

big as a man's hand, of a bullet wound. Express bullets are ghastly

things in their effects, for, as the \_shikari\_ is never tired of

demonstrating, they knock the inside of animals into pulp.

The second beat, of the reverse side of the hill, had barely begun when

the panther returned--uneasily as if something were keeping her

back--much lower down the hill. Then the face of the Rawat of Amet

changed, as he brought his gun up to his shoulder. Looking at him as he

fired, one forgot all about the Mayo College at which he had been

educated, and remembered only some trivial and out-of-date affairs, in

which his forefathers had been concerned, when a bridegroom, with his

bride at his side, charged down the slope of the Chitor road and died

among Akbar's men. There are stories connected with the House of Amet,

which are told in Mewar to-day. The young man's face, for as short a

time as it takes to pull trigger and see where the bullet falls, was a

white light upon all these tales.

Then the mask shut down, as he clicked out the cartridge, and, very

sweetly, gave it as his opinion that some other gun, not his own, had

bagged the panther who lay shot through the spine, feebly trying to drag

herself downhill into cover. It is an awful thing to see a big beast

die, when the soul is wrenched out of the struggling body in ten

seconds. Wild horses shall not make the Englishman disclose the exact

number of shots that were fired. It is enough to say that four

Englishmen, now scattered to the four winds of heaven, are each morally

certain that he and he alone shot that panther. In time, when distance

and the mirage of the sands of Uodhpur shall have softened the harsh

outlines of truth, the Englishman who did \_not\_ fire a shot will come to

believe that he was the real slayer, and will carefully elaborate that

lie.

A few minutes after the murder, a two-year-old cub came trotting along

the hillside, and was bowled over by a very pretty shot behind the left

ear and through the palate. Then the beaters' lances showed through the

bushes, and the guns began to realise that they had allowed to escape,

or had driven back by their fire, a multitude of pig.

This ended the beat, and the procession returned to the Residency to

heap dead panthers upon those who had called them "pork butchers," and

to stir up the lake of envy with the torpedo of brilliant description.

The Englishman's attempt to compare the fusillade which greeted the

panther to the continuous drumming of a ten-barrelled Nordenfeldt was,

however, coldly received. Thus harshly is truth treated all the world

over.

And then, after a little time, came the end, and a return to the road in

search of new countries. But shortly before the departure, the

Padre-Sahib, who knows every one in Udaipur, read a sermon in a

sentence. The Maharana's investiture, which has already been described

in the Indian papers, had taken place, and the carriages, duly escorted

by the Erinpura Horse, were returning to the Residency. In a niche of

waste land, under the shadow of the main gate, a place strewn with

rubbish and shards of pottery, a dilapidated old man was trying to

control his horse and a \_hookah\_ on the saddle-bow. The blundering

garron had been made restive by the rush past, and the \_hookah\_ all but

fell from the hampered hands. "See that man," said the Padre, tersely.

"That's ---- Singh. He intrigued for the throne not so very long ago."

It was a pitiful little picture, and needed no further comment.

For the benefit of the loafer it should be noted that Udaipur will never

be pleasant or accessible until the present Mail Contractors have been

hanged. They are extortionate and untruthful, and their one set of

harness and one tonga are as rotten as pears. However, the weariness of

the flesh must be great indeed, to make the wanderer blind to the

beauties of a journey by clear starlight and in biting cold to Chitor.

About six miles from Udaipur, the granite hills close in upon the road,

and the air grows warmer until, with a rush and a rattle, the tonga

swings through the great Dobarra, the gate in the double circle of hills

round Udaipur on to the pastures of Mewar. More than once the Girwa has

been a death-trap to those who rashly entered it; and an army has been

cut up on the borders of the Pichola Lake. Even now the genius of the

place is strong upon the hills, and as he felt the cold air from the

open ground without the barrier, the Englishman found himself repeating

the words of one of the Hat-marked tribe whose destiny kept him within

the Dobarra. "You must have a hobby of some kind in these parts or

you'll die." Very lovely is Udaipur, and thrice pleasant are a few days

spent within her gates, but ... read what Tod said who stayed two years

behind the Dobarra, and accepted the deserts of Marwar as a delightful

change.

It is good to be free, a wanderer upon the highways, knowing not what

to-morrow will bring forth--whether the walled-in niceties of an English

household, rich in all that makes life fair and desirable, or a

sleepless night in the society of a

goods-\_cum\_-booking-office-\_cum\_-parcels-clerk, on fifteen rupees a

month, who tells in stilted English the story of his official life,

while the telegraph gibbers like a maniac once in an hour and then is

dumb, and the pariah-dogs fight and howl over the cotton-bales on the

platform.

Verily, there is no life like life on the road--when the skies are cool

and all men are kind.

X

A LITTLE OF THE HISTORY OF CHITOR, AND THE MALPRACTICES OF A

SHE-ELEPHANT.

There is a certain want of taste, an almost actual indecency, in seeing

the sun rise on the earth. Until the heat-haze begins and the distances

thicken, Nature is so very naked that the ActÃ¦on who has surprised her

dressing, blushes. Sunrise on the plains of Mewar is an especially

brutal affair.

The moon was burnt out and the air was bitterly cold, when the

Englishman headed due east in his tonga, and the patient sowar behind

nodded and yawned in the saddle. There was no warning of the day's

advent. The horses were unharnessed, at one halting-stage, in the thick,

soft shadows of night, and ere their successors had limped under the

bar, a raw and cruel light was upon all things, so that the Englishman

could see every rent seam in the rocks around. A little further, and he

came upon the black bulk of Chitor between him and the morning sun. It

has already been said that the Fort resembles a man-of-war. Every

distant view heightens this impression, for the swell of the sides

follows the form of a ship, and the bastions on the south wall make the

sponsons in which the machine-guns are mounted. From bow to stern, the

thing more than three miles long, is between three and five hundred feet

high, and from one-half to one-quarter of a mile broad. Have patience,

now, to listen to a rough history of Chitor.

In the beginning, no one knows clearly who scraped the hillsides of the

hill rising out of the bare plain, and made of it a place of strength.

It is written that, eleven and a half centuries ago, Bappa Rawul, the

demi-god whose stature was twenty cubits, whose loin-cloth was five

hundred feet long, and whose spear was beyond the power of mortal man to

lift, took Chitor from "Man Singh, the Mori Prince," and wrote the first

chapter of the history of Mewar, which he received ready-made from Man

Singh who, if the chronicles speak sooth, was his uncle. Many and very

marvellous legends cluster round the name of Bappa Rawul; and he is said

to have ended his days far away from India, in Khorasan, where he

married an unlimited number of the Daughters of Heth, and was the father

of all the Nowshera Pathans. Some who have wandered, by the sign-posts

of inscription, into the fogs of old time, aver that, two centuries

before Bappa Rawul took Chitor the Mori division of the Pramar Rajputs,

who are the ruling family of Mewar, had found a hold in Bhilwara, and

for four centuries before that time had ruled in Kathiawar; and had

royally sacked and slain, and been sacked and slain in turn. But these

things are for the curious and the scholar, and not for the reader who

reads lightly. Nine princes succeeded Bappa, between 728 and 1068 A.D.,

and among these was one Alluji, who built a Jain tower upon the brow of

the hill, for in those days, though the Sun was worshipped, men were all

Jains.

And here they lived and sallied into the plains, and fought and

increased the borders of their kingdom, or were suddenly and stealthily

murdered, or stood shoulder to shoulder against the incursions of the

"Devil men" from the north. In 1150 A.D. was born Samar Singh, and he

married into the family of Prithi Raj, the last Hindu Emperor of Delhi,

who was at feud, in regard to a succession question, with the Prince of

Kanauj. In the war that followed, Kanauj, being hard pressed by Prithi

Raj, and Samar Singh, called Shahabuddin Ghori to his aid. At first,

Samar Singh and Prithi Raj broke the army of the Northern somewhere in

the lower Punjab, but two years later Shahabuddin came again, and, after

three days' fighting on the banks of the Kaggar, slew Samar Singh,

captured and murdered Prithi Raj, and sacked Delhi and Amber, while

Samar Singh's favourite queen became \_sati\_ at Chitor. But another wife,

a princess of Patun, kept her life, and when Shahabuddin sent down

Kutbuddin to waste her lands, led the Rajput army, in person, from

Chitor, and defeated Kutbuddin.

Then followed confusion, through eleven turbulent reigns that the

annalist has failed to unravel. Once in the years between 1193 and the

opening of the fourteenth century, Chitor must have been taken by the

Mussulman, for it is written that one prince "recovered Chitor and made

the name of Rana to be recognised by all." Six princes were slain in

battles against the Mussulman, in vain attempts to clear the land from

the presence of the infidel.

Then Ala-ud-din Khilji, the Pathan Emperor, swept the country to the

Dekkan. In those days, and these things are confusedly set down as

having happened at the end of the thirteenth century, a relative of Rana

Lakhsman Singh, the then Rana of Chitor, had married a Rajput princess

of Ceylon--Pudmini, "And she was fairest of all flesh on earth." Her

fame was sung through the land by the poets, and she became, in some

sort, the Helen of Chitor. Ala-ud-din heard of her beauty and promptly

besieged the Fort. When he found his enterprise too difficult, he prayed

that he might be permitted to see Pudmini's face in a mirror, and this

wish, so says the tale, was granted. Knowing that the Rajput was a

gentleman, he entered Chitor almost unarmed, saw the face in the mirror,

and was well treated; the husband of the fair Pudmini accompanying him,

in return, to the camp at the foot of the hill. Like Raja Runjeet in the

ballad the Rajput he--

"... trusted a Mussulman's word

Wah! Wah! Trust a liar to lie.

Out of his eyrie they tempted my bird,

Fettered his wings that he could not fly."

Pudmini's husband was caught by a trick, and Ala-ud-din demanded Pudmini

as the price of his return. The Rajputs here showed that they too could

scheme, and sent, in great state, Pudmini's litter to the besiegers'

intrenchments. But there was no Pudmini in the litter, and her following

of handmaidens was a band of seven hundred armed men. Thus, in the

confusion of a camp-fight, Pudmini's husband was rescued, and

Ala-ud-din's soldiery followed hard on his heels to the gates of Chitor,

where the best and bravest on the rock were killed before Ala-ud-din

withdrew, only to return soon after and, with a doubled army, besiege in

earnest. His first attack men called the half-sack of Chitor, for,

though he failed to win within the walls, he killed the flower of the

Rajputs. The second attack ended in the first sack and the awful \_sati\_

of the women on the rock.

When everything was hopeless and the very terrible Goddess, who lives in

the bowels of Chitor, had spoken and claimed for death eleven out of the

twelve of the Rana's sons, all who were young or fair women betook

themselves to a great underground chamber, and the fires were lit and

the entrance was walled up and they died. The Rajputs opened the gates

and fought till they could fight no more, and Ala-ud-din the victorious

entered a wasted and desolated city. He wrecked everything except only

the palace of Pudmini and the old Jain tower before mentioned. That was

all he could do, for there were few men alive of the defenders of Chitor

when the day was won, and the women were ashes underground.

Ajai Singh, the one surviving son of Lakshman Singh, had at his father's

insistence, escaped from Chitor to "carry on the line" when better days

should come. He brought up Hamir, son of one of his elder brothers, to

be a thorn in the side of the invader, and Hamir overthrew Maldeo, chief

of Jhalore and vassal of Ala-ud-din, into whose hands Ala-ud-din had,

not too generously, given what was left of Chitor. So the Sesodias came

to their own again, and the successors of Hamir extended their kingdoms

and rebuilt Chitor, as kings know how to rebuild cities in a land where

human labour and life are cheaper than bread and water. For two

centuries, saith Tod, Mewar flourished exceedingly and was the paramount

kingdom of all Rajasthan. Greatest of all the successors of Hamir, was

Kumbha Rana who, when the Ghilzai dynasty was rotting away and Viceroys

declared themselves kings, met, defeated, took captive, and released

without ransom, Mahmoud of Malwa. Kumbha Rana built a Tower of Victory,

nine stories high, to commemorate this and the other successes of his

reign, and the tower stands to-day a mark for miles across the plains.

But the well-established kingdom weakened, and the rulers took

favourites and disgusted their best supporters--after the immemorial

custom of too prosperous rulers. Also they murdered one another. In 1535

A.D. Bahadur Shah, King of Gujarat, seeing the decay, and remembering

how one of his predecessors, together with Mahmoud of Malwa, had been

humbled by Mewar in years gone by, set out to take his revenge of Time

and Mewar then ruled by Rana Bikrmajit, who had made a new capital at

Deola. Bikrmajit did not stay to give battle in that place. His chiefs

were out of hand, and Chitor was the heart and brain of Mewar; so he

marched thither, and the Gods were against him. Bahadur Shah mined one

of the Chitor bastions, and wiped out in the explosion the Hara Prince

of Boondee, with five hundred followers. Jowahir Bae, Bikrmajit's

mother, headed a sally from the walls, and was slain. There were Frank

gunners among Bahadur Shah's forces, and they hastened the end. The

Rajputs made a second \_johur\_, a sacrifice greater than the sacrifice of

Pudmini; and thirteen thousand were blown up in the magazines, or

stabbed or poisoned, before the gates were opened and the defenders

rushed down.

Out of the carnage was saved Udai Singh, a babe of the Blood Royal, who

grew up to be a coward, and a shame to his line. The story of his

preservation is written large in Tod, and Edwin Arnold sings it. Read

it, who are interested. But, when Udai Singh came to the throne of

Chitor, through blood and misrule, after Bahadur Shah had withdrawn from

the wreck of the Fort, Akbar sat on the throne of Delhi, and it was

written that few people should withstand the "Guardian of Mankind."

Moreover, Udai Singh was the slave of a woman. It was Akbar's destiny to

subdue the Rajputs, and to win many of them to his own service; sending

a Rajput Prince of Amber to get him far-away Arrakan. Akbar marched

against Chitor once, and was repulsed; the woman who ruled Udai Singh

heading a charge against the besiegers because of the love she bore to

her lover. Something of this sort had happened in Ala-ud-din's time,

and, like Ala-ud-din, Akbar returned and sat down, in a huge camp,

before Chitor in 1568 A.D. Udai Singh fled what was coming; and because

the Goddess of Chitor demands always that a crowned head must fall if

the defence of her home is to be successful, Chitor fell as it had

fallen before--in a \_johur\_ of thousands, a last rush of the men, and

the entry of the conqueror into a reeking, ruined slaughter-pen. Akbar's

sack was the most terrible of the three, for he killed everything that

had life upon the rock, and wrecked and overturned and spoiled. The

wonder, the lasting wonder, is that he did not destroy Kumbha Rana's

Tower of Victory, the memorial of the defeat of a Mahometan prince. With

the third sack the glory of Chitor departed, and Udai Singh founded

himself a new capital, the city of Udaipur. Though Chitor was recovered

in Jehangir's time by Udai Singh's grandson, it was never again made the

capital of Mewar. It stood, and rotted where it stood, till enlightened

and loyal feudatories, in the present years of grace, made attempts,

with the help of Executive Engineers, to sweep it up and keep it in

repair. The above is roughly, very roughly indeed, the tale of the sacks

of Chitor.

Follows an interlude, for the study even of inaccurate history is

indigestible to many. There was an elephant at Chitor, to take birds of

passage up the hill, and she--she was fifty-one years old, and her name

was Gerowlia--came to the dak-bungalow for the Englishman. Let not the

word dak-bungalow deceive any man into believing that there is even

moderate comfort at Chitor. Gerowlia waited in the sunshine, and

chuckled to herself like a female pauper when she receives snuff. Her

\_mahout\_ said that he would go away for a drink of water. So he walked,

and walked, and walked, till he disappeared on the stone-strewn plains,

and the Englishman was left alone with Gerowlia, aged fifty-one. She had

been tied by the chain on her near hind leg to a pillar of the verandah;

but the string was coir, and more an emblem of authority than a means of

restraint. When she had thoroughly exhausted all the resources of the

country within range of her trunk, she ate up the string and began to

investigate the verandah. There was more coir string, and she ate it

all, while the carpenter, who was repairing the dak-bungalow, cursed her

and her ancestry from afar. About this time the Englishman was roused to

a knowledge of the business, for Gerowlia, having exhausted the string,

tried to come into the verandah. She had, most unwisely, been pampered

with biscuits an hour before. The carpenter stood on an outcrop of rock,

and said angrily: "See what damage your \_hathi\_ has done, Sahib."

"'Tisn't my \_hathi\_," said the Sahib, plaintively. "You ordered it,"

quoth he, "and it has been here ever so long, eating up everything." He

threw pieces of stone at Gerowlia, and went away. It is a terrible thing

to be left alone with an unshackled elephant, even though she be a

venerable spinster. Gerowlia moved round the dak-bungalow, blowing her

nose in a nervous and undecided manner, and presently found some more

string and thatch, which she ate. This was too much. The Englishman went

out and spoke to her. She opened her mouth and salaamed; meaning thereby

"biscuits." So long as she remained in this position she could do no

harm.

Imagine a boundless rock-strewn plain, broken here and there by low

hills, dominated by the rock of Chitor, and bisected by a single

metre-gauge railway track running into the Infinite, and unrelieved by

even a way-inspector's trolly. In the foreground put a brand-new

dak-bungalow, furnished with a French bedstead, and nothing else; in the

verandah place an embarrassed Englishman, smiling into the open mouth of

an idiotic female elephant. But Gerowlia could not live on smiles alone.

Finding that no food was forthcoming, she shut her mouth, and renewed

her attempts to get into the verandah, and ate more thatch. To say "Hi!"

to an elephant is a misdirected courtesy. It quickens the pace, and if

you flick her on the trunk with a wet towel, she curls the trunk out of

harm's way. Special education is necessary. A little breechless boy

passed, carrying a lump of stone. "Hit her on the feet, Sahib," said he;

"hit her on the feet." Gerowlia had by this time nearly scraped off her

pad, and there were no signs of the \_mahout\_. The Englishman went out

and found a tent-peg, and returning, in the extremity of his wrath

smote her bitterly on the nails of the near forefoot.

Gerowlia held up her foot to be beaten, and made the most absurd

noises--squawked in fact, exactly like an old lady who has narrowly

escaped being run over. She backed out of the verandah, still squawking,

on three feet and in the open held up near and off forefoot alternately

to be beaten. It was very pitiful, for one swing of her trunk could have

knocked the Englishman flat. He ceased whacking her, but she squawked

for some minutes and then fell placidly asleep in the sunshine. When the

\_mahout\_ returned, he beat her for breaking her tether exactly as the

Englishman had done, but much more severely, and the ridiculous old

thing hopped on three legs for fully five minutes. "Come along, Sahib,"

said the \_mahout\_. "I will show this mother of bastards who is the

driver. Fat daughter of the Devil, sit down. You would eat thatch, would

you? How does the iron taste?" And he gave Gerowlia a headache, which

affected her temper all through the afternoon. She set off, across the

railway line which runs below the rock of Chitor, into broken ground cut

up with \_nullahs\_ and covered with low scrub, over which it would have

been difficult to have taken a sure-footed horse, so fragmentary and

disconnected was its nature.

XI.

PROVES CONCLUSIVELY THE EXISTENCE OF THE DARK TOWER VISITED BY CHILDE

ROLANDE, AND OF "BOGEY" WHO FRIGHTENS CHILDREN.

The Gamberi River--clear as a trout-stream--runs through the waste round

Chitor, and is spanned by an old bridge, very solid and massive, said to

have been built before the sack of Ala-ud-din. The bridge is in the

middle of the stream--the floods have raced round either end of it--and

is reached by a steeply sloping stone causeway. From the bridge to the

new town of Chitor, which lies at the foot of the hill, runs a straight

and well-kept road, flanked on either side by the scattered remnants of

old houses, and, here and there, fallen temples. The road, like the

bridge, is no new thing, and is wide enough for twenty horsemen to ride

abreast.

New Chitor is a very dirty, and apparently thriving, little town, full

of grain-merchants and sellers of arms. The ways are barely wide enough

for the elephant of dignity and the little brown babies of impudence.

The Englishman went through, always on a slope painfully accentuated by

Gerowlia who, with all possible respect to her years, must have been a

baggage-animal and no true \_Sahib's\_ mount. Let the local Baedeker speak

for a moment: "The ascent to Chitor, which begins from within the

southeast angle of the town, is nearly a mile to the upper gate, with a

slope of about 1 in 15. There are two zig-zag bends, and on the three

portions thus formed, are seven gates, of which one, however, has only

the basement left." This is the language of fact, which, very properly,

leaves out of all account the Genius of the Place who sits at the gate

nearest the new city and is with the sightseer throughout. The first

impression of repulsion and awe is given by a fragment of tumbled

sculpture close to a red daubed \_lingam\_, near the Padal Pol or lowest

gate. It is a piece of frieze, and the figures of the men are worn

nearly smooth by time. What is visible is finely and frankly obscene to

an English mind.

The road is protected on the cliff side by a thick stone wall, loopholed

for musketry, one aperture to every two feet, between fifteen and twenty

feet high. This wall is being repaired throughout its length by the

Maharana of Udaipur. On the hillside, among the boulders, loose stones,

and \_dhak\_-scrub, lips stone wreckage that must have come down from the

brown bastions above.

As Gerowlia laboured up the stone-shod slope, the Englishman wondered

how much life had flowed down this sluice of battles, and been lost at

the Padal Pol--the last and lowest gate--where, in the old days, the

besieging armies put their best and bravest battalions. Once at the head

of the lower slope, there is a clear run-down of a thousand yards with

no chance of turning aside either to the right or left. Even as he

wondered, he was brought abreast of two stone chhatris, each carrying a

red daubed stone. They were the graves of two very brave men, Jeemal of

Bedmore, and Kalla, who fell in Akbar's sack fighting like Rajputs. Read

the story of their deaths, and learn what manner of warriors they were.

Their graves were all that spoke openly of the hundreds of struggles on

the lower slope where the fight was always fiercest.

At last, after half an hour's climb, the main gate, the Ram Pol, was

gained, and the Englishman passed into the City of Chitor and--then and

there formed a resolution, since broken, not to write one word about it

for fear that he should be set down as a babbling and a gushing

enthusiast. Objects of archÃ¦ological interest are duly described in an

admirable little book of Chitor which, after one look, the Englishman

abandoned. One cannot "do" Chitor with a guide-book. The Chaplain of the

English Mission to Jehangir said the best that was to be said, when he

described the place three hundred years ago, writing quaintly: "Chitor,

an ancient great kingdom, the chief city so called which standeth on a

mighty high hill, flat on the top, walled about at the least ten English

miles. There appear to this day above a hundred churches ruined and

divers fair palaces which are lodged in like manner among their ruins,

as many Englishmen by the observation have guessed. Its chief

inhabitants to-day are Zum and Ohim, birds and wild beasts, but the

stately ruins thereof give a shadow of its beauty while it flourished in

its pride." Gerowlia struck into a narrow pathway, forcing herself

through garden-trees and disturbing the peacocks. An evil guide-man on

the ground waved his hand, and began to speak; but was silenced. The

death of Amber was as nothing to the death of Chitor--a body whence the

life had been driven by riot and the sword. Men had parcelled the

gardens of her palaces and the courtyards of her temples into fields;

and cattle grazed among the remnants of the shattered tombs. But over

all--over rent and bastion, split temple-wall, pierced roof, and prone

pillar--lay the "shadow of its beauty while it flourished in its pride."

The Englishman walked into a stately palace of many rooms, where the

sunlight streamed in through wall and roof, and up crazy stone

stairways, held together, it seemed, by the marauding trees. In one

bastion, a wind-sown peepul had wrenched a thick slab clear of the wall,

but held it tight pressed in a crook of a branch, as a man holds down a

fallen enemy under his elbow, shoulder, and forearm. In another place, a

strange, uncanny wind sprung from nowhere, was singing all alone among

the pillars of what may have been a Hall of Audience. The Englishman

wandered so far in one palace that he came to an almost black-dark room,

high up in a wall, and said proudly to himself: "I must be the first man

who has been here;" meaning no harm or insult to any one. But he tripped

and fell, and as he put out his hands, he felt that the stairs had been

worn hollow and smooth by the thread of innumerable naked feet. Then he

was afraid, and came away very quickly, stepping delicately over fallen

friezes and bits of sculptured men, so as not to offend the Dead; and

was mightily relieved when he recovered his elephant and allowed the

guide to take him to Kumbha Rana's Tower of Victory.

This stands, like all things in Chitor, among ruins, but time and the

other enemies have been good to it. It is a Jain edifice, nine storeys

high, crowned atop--was this designed insult or undesigned repair?--with

a purely Mahometan dome, where the pigeons and the bats live. Excepting

this blemish, the Tower of Victory is nearly as fair as when it left

the hands of the builder whose name has not been handed down to us. It

is to be observed here that the first, or more ruined, Tower of Victory,

built in Alluji's days, when Chitor was comparatively young, was raised

by some pious Jain as proof of conquest over things spiritual. The

second tower is more worldly in intent.

Those who care to look, may find elsewhere a definition of its

architecture and its more striking peculiarities. It was in kind, but

not in degree, like the Jugdesh Temple at Udaipur, and, as it exceeded

it in magnificence, so its effect upon the mind was more intense. The

confusing intricacy of the figures with which it was wreathed from top

to bottom, the recurrence of the one calm face, the God enthroned,

holding the Wheel of the Law, and the appalling lavishness of

decoration, all worked toward the instilment of fear and aversion.

Surely this must have been one of the objects of the architect. The

tower, in the arrangement of its stairways, is like the interior of a

Chinese carved ivory puzzle-ball. The idea given is that, even while you

are ascending, you are wrapping yourself deeper and deeper in the tangle

of a mighty maze. Add to this the half-light, the thronging armies of

sculptured figures, the mad profusion of design splashed as impartially

upon the undersides of the stone window-slabs as upon the door-beam of

the threshold--add, most abhorrent of all, the slippery sliminess of the

walls always worn smooth by naked men, and you will understand that the

tower is not a soothing place to visit. The Englishman fancied

presumptuously that he had, in a way, grasped the builder's idea; and

when he came to the top storey and sat among the pigeons his theory was

this: To attain power, wrote the builder of old, in sentences of fine

stone, it is necessary to pass through all sorts of close-packed

horrors, treacheries, battles, and insults, in darkness and without

knowledge whether the road leads upward or into a hopeless \_cul-de-sac\_.

Kumbha Rana must many times have climbed to the top storey, and looked

out toward the uplands of Malwa on the one side and his own great Mewar

on the other, in the days when all the rock hummed with life and the

clatter of hooves upon the stony ways, and Mahmoud of Malwa was safe in

hold. How he must have swelled with pride--fine insolent pride of life

and rule and power--power not only to break things but to compel such

builders as those who piled the tower to his royal will! There was no

decoration in the top storey to bewilder or amaze--nothing but

well-grooved stone-slabs, and a boundless view fit for kings who traced

their ancestry--

"From times when forth from the sunlight, the first of our Kings

came down,

And had the earth for his footstool, and wore the stars for his

crown."

The builder had left no mark behind him--not even a mark on the

threshold of the door, or a sign in the head of the topmost step. The

Englishman looked in both places, believing that those were the places

generally chosen for mark-cutting. So he sat and meditated on the

beauties of kingship and the unholiness of Hindu art, and what power a

shadowland of lewd monstrosities had upon those who believed in it, and

what Lord Dufferin, who is the nearest approach to a king in this India,

must have thought when aide-de-camps clanked after him up the narrow

steps. But the day was wearing, and he came down--in both senses--and,

in his descent, the carven things on every side of the tower, and above

and below, once more took hold of and perverted his fancy, so that he

arrived at the bottom in a frame of mind eminently fitted for a descent

into the Gau-Mukh, which is nothing more terrible than a little spring,

falling into a reservoir, in the side of the hill.

He stumbled across more ruins and passed between tombs of dead Ranis,

till he came to a flight of steps, built out and cut out from rock,

going down as far as he could see into a growth of trees on a terrace

below him. The stone of the steps had been worn and polished by the

terrible naked feet till it showed its markings clearly as agate; and

where the steps ended in a rock-slope, there was a visible glair, a

great snail-track, upon the rocks. It was hard to keep safe footing upon

the sliminess. The air was thick with the sick smell of stale incense,

and grains of rice were scattered upon the steps. But there was no one

to be seen. Now this in itself was not specially alarming; but the

Genius of the Place must be responsible for making it so. The Englishman

slipped and bumped on the rocks, and arrived, more suddenly than he

desired, upon the edge of a dull blue tank, sunk between walls of

timeless masonry. In a slabbed-in recess, water was pouring through a

shapeless stone gargoyle, into a trough; which trough again dripped into

the tank. Almost under the little trickle of water, was the loathsome

Emblem of Creation, and there were flowers and rice around it. Water was

trickling from a score of places in the cut face of the hill; oozing

between the edges of the steps and welling up between the stone slabs

of the terrace. Trees sprouted in the sides of the tank and hid its

surroundings. It seemed as though the descent had led the Englishman,

firstly, two thousand years away from his own century, and secondly,

into a trap, and that he would fall off the polished stones into the

stinking tank, or that the Gau-Mukh would continue to pour water until

the tank rose up and swamped him, or that some of the stone slabs would

fall forward and crush him flat.

Then he was conscious of remembering, with peculiar and unnecessary

distinctness, that, from the Gau-Mukh, a passage led to the subterranean

chambers in which the fair Pudmini and her handmaids had slain

themselves. And, that Tod had written and the Station-master at Chitor

had said, that some sort of devil, or ghoul, or Something, stood at the

entrance of that approach. All of which was a nightmare bred in full day

and folly to boot; but it was the fault of the Genius of the Place, who

made the Englishman feel that he had done a great wrong in trespassing

into the very heart and soul of all Chitor. And, behind him, the

Gau-Mukh guggled and choked like a man in his death-throe. The

Englishman endured as long as he could--about two minutes. Then it came

upon him that he must go quickly out of this place of years and

blood--must get back to the afternoon sunshine, and Gerowlia, and the

dak-bungalow with the French bedstead. He desired no archÃ¦ological

information, he wished to take no notes, and, above all, he did not care

to look behind him, where stood the reminder that he was no better than

the beasts that perish. But he had to cross the smooth, worn rocks, and

he felt their sliminess through his bootsoles. It was as though he were

treading on the soft, oiled skin of a Hindu. As soon as the steps gave

refuge, he floundered up them, and so came out of the Gau-Mukh, bedewed

with that perspiration which follows alike on honest toil or--childish

fear.

"This," said he to himself, "is absurd!" and sat down on the fallen top

of a temple to review the situation. But the Gau-Mukh had disappeared.

He could see the dip in the ground and the beginning of the steps, but

nothing more.

Perhaps it was absurd. It undoubtedly appeared so, later. Yet there was

something uncanny about it all. It was not exactly a feeling of danger

or pain, but an apprehension of great evil.

In defence, it may be urged that there is moral, just as much as there

is mine, choke-damp. If you get into a place laden with the latter you

die, and if into the home of the former you ... behave unwisely, as

constitution and temperament prompt. If any man doubt this, let him sit

for two hours in a hot sun on an elephant, stay half an hour in the

Tower of Victory, and then go down into the Gau-Mukh, which, it must

never be forgotten, is merely a set of springs "three or four in number,

issuing from the cliff face at cow-mouth carvings, now mutilated. The

water, evidently percolating from the Hathi Kund above, falls first in

an old pillared hall and thence into the masonry reservoir below,

eventually, when abundant enough, supplying a little waterfall lower

down." That, Gentlemen and Ladies, on the honour of one who has been

frightened of the dark in broad daylight, is the Gau-Mukh, as though

photographed.

The Englishman regained Gerowlia and demanded to be taken away, but

Gerowlia's driver went forward instead and showed him a new Mahal just

built by the present Maharana. Carriage drives, however, do not consort

well with Chitor and the "shadow of her ancient beauty." The return

journey, past temple after temple and palace upon palace, began in the

failing light, and Gerowlia was still blundering up and down narrow

by-paths--for she possessed all an old woman's delusion as to the

slimness of her waist when the twilight fell, and the smoke from the

town below began to creep up the brown flanks of Chitor, and the jackals

howled. Then the sense of desolation, which had been strong enough in

all conscience in the sunshine, began to grow and grow.

Near the Ram Pol there was some semblance of a town with living people

in it, and a priest sat in the middle of the road and howled aloud upon

his gods, until a little boy came and laughed in his face and he went

away grumbling. This touch was deeply refreshing; in the contemplation

of it, the Englishman clean forgot that he had overlooked the gathering

in of materials for an elaborate statistical, historical, geographical

account of Chitor. All that remained to him was a shuddering

reminiscence of the Gau-Mukh and two lines of the "Holy Grail,"

"And up into the sounding halls he passed,

But nothing in the sounding halls he saw."

\_Post Scriptum.\_--There was something very uncanny about the Genius of

the Place. He dragged an ease-loving egotist out of the French bedstead

with the gilt knobs at head and foot, into a more than usually big

folly--nothing less than a seeing of Chitor by moonlight. There was no

possibility of getting Gerowlia out of \_her\_ bed, and a mistrust of the

Maharana's soldiery who in the day-time guarded the gates, prompted the

Englishman to avoid the public way, and scramble straight up the

hillside, along an attempt at a path which he had noted from Gerowlia's

back. There was no one to interfere, and nothing but an infinity of

pestilent nullahs and loose stones to check. Owls came out and hooted at

him, and animals ran about in the dark and made uncouth noises. It was

an idiotic journey, and it ended--Oh, horror! in that unspeakable

Gau-Mukh--this time entered from the opposite or brushwooded side, as

far as could be made out in the dusk and from the chuckle of the water

which, by night, was peculiarly malevolent.

Escaping from this place, crab-fashion, the Englishman crawled into

Chitor and sat upon a flat tomb till the moon, a very inferior and

second-hand one, rose, and turned the city of the dead into a city of

scurrying ghouls--in sobriety, jackals. The ruins took strange shapes

and shifted in the half light and cast objectionable shadows.

It was easy enough to fill the rock with the people of old times, and a

very beautiful account of Chitor restored, made out by the help of Tod,

and bristling with the names of the illustrious dead, would undoubtedly

have been written, had not a woman, a living breathing woman, stolen out

of a temple--what was she doing in that galley?--and screamed in

piercing and public-spirited fashion. The Englishman got off the tomb

and departed rather more noisily than a jackal; feeling for the moment

that he was not much better. Somebody opened a door with a crash, and a

man cried out: "Who is there?" But the cause of the disturbance was, for

his sins, being most horribly scratched by some thorny scrub over the

edge of the hill--there are no bastions worth speaking of near the

Gau-Mukh--and the rest was partly rolling, partly scrambling, and mainly

bad language.

When you are too lucky sacrifice something, a beloved pipe for choice,

to Ganesh. The Englishman has seen Chitor by moonlight--not the best

moonlight truly, but the watery glare of a nearly spent moon--and his

sacrifice to Luck is this. He will never try to describe what he has

seen--but will keep it as a love-letter, a thing for one pair of eyes

only--a memory that few men to-day can be sharers in. And does he,

through this fiction, evade insulting, by pen and ink, a scene as

lovely, wild, and unmatchable as any that mortal eyes have been

privileged to rest upon?

An intelligent and discriminating public are perfectly at liberty to

form their own opinions.

XII

CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE BHUMIA OF JHASWARA, AND THE RECORD OF A

VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF STRANGE STORIES. DEMONSTRATES THE FELICITY OF

LOAFERDOM, WHICH IS THE VERITABLE COMPANIONSHIP OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE,

AND PROPOSES A SCHEME FOR THE BETTER OFFICERING OF TWO DEPARTMENTS.

Come away from the monstrous gloom of Chitor and escape northwards. The

place is unclean and terrifying. Let us catch To-day by both hands and

return to the Station-master who is also booking-parcels and

telegraph-clerk, and who never seems to go to bed--and to the

comfortably wadded bunks of the Rajputana-Malwa line.

While the train is running, be pleased to listen to the perfectly true

story of the \_bhumia\_ of Jhaswara, which is a story the sequel whereof

has yet to be written. Once upon a time, a Rajput landholder; a

\_bhumia\_, and a Mahometan \_jaghirdar\_, were next-door neighbours in

Ajmir territory. They hated each other thoroughly for many reasons, all

connected with land; and the \_jaghirdar\_ was the bigger man of the two.

In those days, it was the law that the victims of robbery or dacoity

should be reimbursed by the owner of the lands on which the affair had

taken place. The ordinance is now swept away as impracticable. There was

a highway robbery on the \_bhumia's\_ holding; and he vowed that it had

been "put up" by the Mahometan who, he said, was an Ahab. The reive-gelt

payable nearly ruined the Rajput, and he, labouring under a galling

grievance or a groundless suspicion, fired the \_jaghirdar's\_ crops, was

detected and brought up before the English Judge who gave him four

years' imprisonment. To the sentence was appended a recommendation that,

on release, the Rajput should be put on heavy securities for good

behaviour. "Otherwise," wrote the Judge, who seems to have known the

people he was dealing with, "he will certainly kill the \_jaghirdar\_."

Four years passed, and the \_jaghirdar\_ obtained wealth and

consideration, and was made, let us say, a Khan Bahadur, and an Honorary

Magistrate; but the \_bhumia\_ remained in gaol and thought over the

highway robbery. When the day of release came, a new Judge hunted up his

predecessor's finding and recommendation, and would have put the

\_bhumia\_ on security. "Sahib," said the \_bhumia\_, "I have no people. I

have been in gaol. What am I now? And who will find security for me? If

you will send me back to gaol again I can do nothing, and I have no

friends." So they released him, and he went away into an outlying

village and borrowed a sword from one house, and had it sharpened in

another, for love. Two days later fell the birthday of the Khan Bahadur

and the Honorary Magistrate, and his friends and servants and dependants

made a little levee and did him honour after the native custom. The

\_bhumia\_ also attended the levee, but no one knew him, and he was

stopped at the door of the courtyard by the servant. "Say that the

\_bhumia\_ of Jhaswara has come to pay his salaams," said he. They let him

in, and in the heart of Ajmir City, in broad daylight, and before all

the \_jaghirdar's\_ household, he smote off his enemy's head so that it

rolled upon the ground. Then he fled, and though they raised the

countryside against him he was never caught, and went into Bikanir.

Five years later, word came to Ajmir that Chimbo Singh, the \_bhumia\_ of

Jhaswara, had taken service under the Thakur Sahib of Palitana. The case

was an old one, and the chances of identification misty, but the

suspected was caught and brought in, and one of the leading native

barristers of the Bombay Bar was retained to defend him. He said nothing

and continued to say nothing, and the case fell through. He is believed

to be "wanted" now for a fresh murder committed within the last few

months, out Bikanir way.

And now that the train has reached Ajmir, the Crewe of Rajputana,

whither shall a tramp turn his feet? The Englishman set his stick on

end, and it fell with its point Northwest as nearly as might be. This

being translated, meant Jodhpur, which is the city of the Houyhnhnms. If

you would enjoy Jodhpur thoroughly, quit at Ajmir the decent

conventionalities of "station" life, and make it your business to move

among gentlemen--gentlemen in the Ordnance or the Commissariat, or,

better still, gentlemen on the Railway. At Ajmir, gentlemen will tell

you what manner of place Jodhpur is, and their accounts, though

flavoured with oaths, are amusing. In their eyes the desert that rings

the city has no charms, and they discuss affairs of the State, as they

understand them, in a manner that would curl the hair on a Political's

august head. Jodhpur has been, but things are rather better now, a

much-favoured camping ground for the light-cavalry of the Road--the

loafers with a certain amount of brain and great assurance. The

explanation is simple. There are more than four hundred horses in His

Highness's city stables alone; and where the Houyhnhnm is, there also

will be the Yahoo. This is sad but true.

Besides the Uhlans who come and go on Heaven knows what mysterious

errands, there are bag-men travelling for the big English firms. Jodhpur

is a good customer, and purchases all sorts of things, more or less

useful, for the State or its friends. These are the gentlemen to know,

if you would understand something of matters which are not written in

reports.

The Englishman took a train from Ajmir to Marwar Junction, which is on

the road to Mount Abu, westward from Ajmir, and at five in the morning,

under pale moonlight, was uncarted at the beginning of the Jodhpur State

Railway--one of the quaintest little lines that ever ran a locomotive.

It is the Maharaja's very own, and pays about ten per cent; but its

quaintness does not lie in these things. It is worked with rude economy,

and started life by singularly and completely falsifying the Government

estimates for its construction. An intelligent bureau asserted that it

could not be laid down for less than--but the error shall be glossed

over. It was laid down for a little more than seventeen thousand rupees

a mile, with the help of second-hand rails and sleepers; and it is

currently asserted that the Station-masters are flagmen, pointsmen,

ticket-collectors, and everything else, except platforms, and

lamp-rooms. As only two trains are run in the twenty-four hours, this

economy of staff does not matter. The State line, with the

comparatively new branch to the Pachpadra salt-pits, pays handsomely and

is exactly suited to the needs of its users. True, there is a certain

haziness as to the hour of starting, but this allows laggards more time,

and fills the packed carriages to overflowing.

From Marwar Junction to Jodhpur, the train leaves the Aravalis and goes

northwards into the region of death that lies beyond the Luni River.

Sand, \_ak\_ bushes, and sand-hills, varied with occasional patches of

unthrifty cultivation, make up the scenery. Rain has been very scarce in

Marwar this year, and the country, consequently, shows at its worst, for

almost every square mile of a kingdom nearly as large as Scotland is

dependent on the sky for its crops. In a good season, a large village

can pay from seven to nine thousand rupees revenue without blenching. In

a bad one, "all the king's horses and all the king's men" may think

themselves lucky if they raise fifteen rupees from the same place. The

fluctuation is startling.

From a countryside, which to the uninitiated seems about as valuable as

a stretch of West African beach, the State gets a revenue of nearly

forty lakhs; and men who know the country vow that it has not been one

tithe exploited, and that there is more to be made from salt marble

and--curious thing in this wilderness--good forest conservancy, than an

open-handed Durbar dreams of. An amiable weakness for unthinkingly

giving away villages where ready cash failed, has somewhat hampered the

revenue in past years; but now--and for this the Maharaja deserves great

credit--Jodhpur has a large and genuine surplus and a very compact

little scheme of railway extension. Before turning to a consideration

of the City of Jodhpur, hear a true story in connection with the

Hyderabad-Pachpadra project which those interested in the scheme may lay

to heart.

His State line, his "ownest own," as has been said, very much delighted

the Maharaja who, in one or two points, is not unlike Sir Theodore Hope

of sainted memory. Pleased with the toy, he said effusively, in words

which may or may not have reached the ears of the Hyderabad-Pachpadra

people: "This is a good business. If the Government will give me

independent jurisdiction, I'll make and open the line straight away from

Pachpadra to the end of my dominions, \_i.e.\_, all but to Hyderabad."

Then "up and spake an elder knight, sat at the King's right knee," who

knew something about the railway map of India and the Controlling Power

of strategical lines: "Maharaja Sahib--here is the Indus Valley State

line and here is the Bombay-Baroda line. Where would \_you\_ be?" "By

Jove," quoth the Maharaja, though he swore by quite another god: "I

see!" and thus he abandoned the idea of a Hyderabad line, and turned his

attention to an extension to Nagore, with a branch to the Makrana marble

quarries which are close to the Sambhar salt lake near Jeypore. And, in

the fulness of time, that extension will be made and perhaps extended to

Bahawalpur.

The Englishman came to Jodhpur at midday, in a hot, fierce sunshine that

struck back from the sands and the ledges of red rock, as though it were

May instead of December. The line scorned such a thing as a regular

ordained terminus. The single track gradually melted away into the

sands. Close to the station was a grim stone dak-bungalow, and in the

verandah stood a brisk, bag-and-flask-begirdled individual, cracking his

joints with excess of irritation.

\_Nota Bene.\_--When one is on the Road it is above all things necessary

to "pass the time o' day" to fellow-wanderers. Failure to comply with

this law implies that the offender is "too good for his company"; and

this, on the Road, is the unpardonable sin. The Englishman "passed the

time o' day" in due and ample form. "Ha! Ha!" said the gentleman with

the bag. "Isn't this a sweet place? There ain't no \_ticca-gharies\_, and

there ain't nothing to eat, if you haven't brought your vittles, an'

they charge you three-eight for a bottle of whisky. Oh! it's a sweet

place." Here he skipped about the verandah and puffed. Then turning upon

the Englishman, he said fiercely: "What have you come here for?" Now

this was rude, because the ordinary form of salutation on the Road is

usually "And what are you for?" meaning "what house do you represent?"

The Englishman answered dolefully that he was travelling for pleasure,

which simple explanation offended the little man with the courier-bag.

He snapped his joints more excruciatingly than ever: "For pleasure? My

God! For pleasure? Come here an' wait five weeks for your money, an',

mark what I'm tellin' you now, you don't get it then! But per'aps your

ideas of pleasure is different from most people's. For pleasure! Yah!"

He skipped across the sands toward the station, for he was going back

with the down train, and vanished in a whirlwind of luggage and the

fluttering of female skirts: in Jodhpur the women are baggage coolies. A

level, drawling voice spoke from an inner room: "'E's a bit upset.

That's what 'e is! I remember when I was at Gworlior"--the rest of the

story was lost, and the Englishman set to work to discover the nakedness

of the dak-bungalow. For reasons which do not concern the public, it is

made as bitterly uncomfortable as possible. The food is infamous, and

the charges seem to be wilfully pitched about eighty per cent above the

tariff, so that some portion of the bill, at least, may be paid without

bloodshed, or the unseemly defilement of walls with the contents of

drinking glasses. This is short-sighted policy, and it would, perhaps,

be better to lower the prices and hide the tariff, and put a guard about

the house to prevent jackal-molested donkeys from stampeding into the

verandahs. But these be details. Jodhpur dak-bungalow is a merry, merry

place, and any writer in search of new ground to locate a madly

improbable story in, could not do better than study it diligently. In

front lies sand, riddled with innumerable ant-holes, and beyond the sand

the red sandstone wall of the city, and the Mahometan burying-ground

that fringes it. Fragments of sandstone set on end mark the resting

places of the Faithful, who are of no great account here. Above

everything, a mark for miles around, towers the dun-red pile of the Fort

which is also a Palace. This is set upon sandstone rock whose sharper

features have been worn smooth by the wash of the windblown sand. It is

as monstrous as anything in Dore's illustrations of the \_Contes

Drolatiques\_ and, wherever it wanders, the eye comes back at last to its

fantastic bulk. There is no greenery on the rock, nothing but fierce

sunlight or black shadow. A line of red hills forms the background of

the city, and this is as bare as the picked bones of camels that lie

bleaching on the sand below.

Wherever the eye falls, it sees a camel or a string of camels--lean,

racer-built \_sowarri\_ camels, or heavy, black, shag-haired trading ships

bent on their way to the Railway Station. Through the night the air is

alive with the bubbling and howling of the brutes, who assuredly must

suffer from nightmare. In the morning the chorus round the station is

deafening.

Knowing what these camels meant, but trusting nevertheless that the road

would not be \_very\_ bad, the Englishman went into the city, left a

well-kunkered road, turned through a sand-worn, red sandstone gate, and

sank ankle-deep in fine reddish white sand. This was the main

thoroughfare of the city. Two tame lynxes shared it with a donkey; and

the rest of the population seemed to have gone to bed. In the hot

weather, between ten in the morning and four in the afternoon all

Jodhpur stays at home for fear of death by sun-stroke, and it is

possible that the habit extends far into what is officially called the

"cold weather"; or, perhaps, being brought up among sands, men do not

care to tramp them for pleasure. The city internally is a walled and

secret place; each courtyard being hidden from view by a red sandstone

wall except in a few streets where the shops are poor and mean.

In an old house now used for the storing of tents, Akbar's mother lay

two months, before the "Guardian of Mankind" was born, drawing breath

for her flight to Umarkot across the desert. Seeing this place, the

Englishman thought of many things not worth the putting down on paper,

and went on till the sand grew deeper and deeper, and a great camel,

heavily laden with stone, came round a corner and nearly stepped on him.

As the evening fell, the city woke up, and the goats and the camels and

the kine came in by hundreds, and men said that wild pig, which are

strictly preserved by the Princes for their own sport, were in the habit

of wandering about the roads. Now if they do this in the capital, what

damage must they not do to the crops in the district? Men said that they

did a very great deal of damage, and it was hard to keep their noses out

of anything they took a fancy to. On the evening of the Englishman's

visit, the Maharaja went out, as is his laudable custom, alone and

unattended, to a road actually \_in\_ the city along which one specially

big pig was in the habit of passing. His Highness got his game with a

single shot behind the shoulder, and in a few days it was pickled and

sent off to the Maharana of Udaipur, as a love-gift. There is great

friendship between Jodhpur and Udaipur, and the idea of one King going

abroad to shoot game for another has something very pretty and quaint in

it.

Night fell and the Englishman became aware that the conservancy of

Jodhpur might be vastly improved. Strong stenches, say the doctors, are

of no importance; but there came upon every breath of heated air--and in

Jodhpur City the air is warm in mid-winter--the faint, sweet, sickly

reek that one has always been taught to consider specially deadly. A few

months ago there was an impressive outbreak of cholera in Jodhpur, and

the Residency Doctor, who really hoped that the people would be brought

to see sense, did his best to bring forward a general cleansing-scheme.

But the city fathers would have none of it. Their fathers had been

trying to poison themselves in well-defined ways for an indefinite

number of years; and they were not going to have any of the Sahib's

"sweeper-nonsense."

To clinch everything, one travelled member of the community rose in his

place and said: "Why, I've been to Simla. Yes, to Simla! And even \_I\_

don't want it!"

When the black dusk had shut down, the Englishman climbed up a little

hill and saw the stars come out and shine over the desert. Very far

away, some camel-drivers had lighted a fire and were singing as they sat

by the side of their beasts. Sound travels as far over sand as over

water, and their voices came into the city wall and beat against it in

multiplied echoes.

Then he returned to the House of Strange Stories--the Dak-bungalow--and

passed the time o' day with a light-hearted bagman--a Cockney, in whose

heart there was no thought of India, though he had travelled for years

throughout the length and breadth of the Empire and over New Burma as

well. There was a fort in Jodhpur, but you see that was not in his line

of business exactly, and there were stables, but "you may take my word

for it, them who has much to do with horses is a bad lot. You get hold

of the Maharaja's coachman and he'll drive you all round the shop. I'm

only waiting here collecting money." Jodhpur dak-bungalow seems to be

full of men "waiting here." They lie in long chairs in the verandah and

tell each other interminable stories, or stare citywards and express

their opinion of some dilatory debtor. They are all waiting for

something; and they vary the monotony of a life they make wilfully dull

beyond words, by waging war with the dak-bungalow khansama. Then they

return to their long chairs or their couches, and sleep. Some of them,

in old days, used to wait as long as six weeks--six weeks in May, when

the sixty miles from Marwar Junction to Jodhpur was covered in three

days by slow-pacing bullock carts! Some of them are bagmen, able to

describe the demerits of every dak-bungalow from the Peshin to Pagan,

and southward to Hyderabad--men of substance who have "The Trades" at

their back. It is a terrible thing to be in "The Trades," that great

Doomsday Book of Calcutta, in whose pages are written the names of

doubtful clients. Let light-hearted purchasers take note.

And the others, who wait and swear and spit and exchange anecdotes--what

are they? Bummers, land-sharks, skirmishers for their bread. It would be

cruel in a fellow-tramp to call them loafers. Their lien upon the State

may have its origin in horses, or anything else; for the State buys

anything vendible, from Abdul Rahman's most promising importations to a

patent, self-acting corkscrew. They are a mixed crew, but amusing and

full of strange stories of adventure by land and sea. And their ends are

as curiously brutal as their lives. A wanderer was once swept into the

great, still back-water that divides the loaferdom of Upper India--that

is to say, Calcutta and Bombay--from the north-going current of Madras,

where Nym and Pistol are highly finished articles with certificates of

education. This back-water is a dangerous place to break down in, as the

men on the Road know well. "You can run Rajputana in a pair o' sack

breeches an' an old hat, but go to Central Injia with money," says the

wisdom of the Road. So the waif died in the bazaar, and the

Barrack-master Sahib gave orders for his burial. It might have been the

bazaar sergeant, or it might have been an hireling who was charged with

the disposal of the body. At any rate, it was an Irishman who said to

the Barrack-master Sahib: "Fwhat about that loafer?" "Well, what's the

matter?" "I'm considtherin whether I'm to mash in his thick head, or to

break his long legs. He won't fit the store-coffin anyways."

Here the story ends. It may be an old one; but it struck the Englishman

as being rather unsympathetic in its nature; and he has preserved it for

this reason. Were the Englishman a mere Secretary of State instead of an

enviable and unshackled vagabond, he would remodel that Philanthropic

Institution of Teaching Young Subalterns how to Spell--variously called

the Intelligence and the Political Department--and giving each boy the

pair of sack breeches and old hat, above prescribed, would send him out

for a twelvemonth on the Road. Not that he might learn to swear

Australian oaths (which are superior to any ones in the market) or to

drink bazaar-drinks (which are very bad indeed), but in order that he

might gain an insight into the tertiary politics of States--things less

imposing than succession-cases and less wearisome than boundary

disputes, but very well worth knowing.

A small volume might be written of the ways and the tales of Indian

loafers of the more brilliant order--such Chevaliers of the Order of

Industry as would throw their glasses in your face did you call them

loafers. They are a genial, blasphemous, blustering crew, and preÃ«minent

even in a land of liars.

XIII

A KING'S HOUSE AND COUNTRY. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE HAT-MARKED

CASTE.

The hospitality that spreads tables in the wilderness, and shifts the

stranger from the back of the hired camel into a two-horse victoria,

must be experienced to be appreciated.

To those unacquainted with the peculiarities of the native-trained

horse, this advice may be worth something. Sit as far back as ever you

can, and, if Oriental courtesy have put an English bit and bridoon in a

mouth by education intended for a spiked curb, leave the whole

contraption alone. Once acquainted with the comparative smoothness of

English iron-mongery, your mount will grow frivolous. In which event a

four-pound steeplechase saddle, accepted through sheer shame, offers the

very smallest amount of purchase to untrained legs.

The Englishman rode up to the Fort, and by the way learnt all these

things and many more. He was provided with a racking, female horse who

swept the gullies of the city by dancing sideways.

The road to the Fort, which stands on the Hill of Strife, wound in and

out of sixty-foot hills, with a skilful avoidance of all shade; and this

was at high noon, when puffs of heated air blew from the rocks on all

sides. "What must the heat be in May?" The Englishman's companion was a

cheery Brahmin, who wore the lightest of turbans and sat the smallest of

neat little country-breds. "Awful!" said the Brahmin. "But not so bad as

in the district. Look there!" and he pointed from the brow of a bad

eminence, across the quivering heat-haze, to where the white sand faded

into bleach blue sky and the horizon was shaken and tremulous. "It's

very bad in summer. Would knock you--oh yes--all to smash, but \_we\_ are

accustomed to it." A rock-strewn hill, about half a mile, as the crow

flies, from the Fort was pointed out as the place whence, at the

beginning of this century, the Pretender Sowae besieged Raja Maun for

five months, but could make no headway against his foe. One gun of the

enemy's batteries specially galled the Fort, and the Jodhpur King

offered a village to any of his gunners who should dismount it. "It was

smashed," said the Brahmin. "Oh yes, all to pieces." Practically, the

city which lies below the Fort is indefensible, and during the many wars

of Marwar has generally been taken up by the assailants without

resistance.

Entering the Fort by the Jeypore Gate, and studiously refraining from

opening his umbrella, the Englishman found shadow and coolth, took off

his hat to the tun-bellied, trunk-nosed God of Good-Luck who had been

very kind to him in his wanderings, and sat down near half a dozen of

the Maharaja's guns bearing the mark, "A. Broome, Cossipore, 1857," or

"G. Hutchinson, Cossipore, 1838." Now rock and masonry are so curiously

blended in this great pile that he who walks through it loses sense of

being among buildings. It is as though he walked through

mountain-gorges. The stone-paved, inclined planes, and the tunnel-like

passages driven under a hundred feet height of buildings, increase this

impression. In many places the wall and rock runs up unbroken by any

window for forty feet.

It would be a week's work to pick out even roughly the names of the dead

who have added to the buildings, or to describe the bewildering

multiplicity of courts and ranges of rooms; and, in the end, the result

would be as satisfactory as an attempt to describe a nightmare. It is

said that the rock on which the Fort stands is four miles in circuit,

but no man yet has dared to estimate the size of the city that they call

the Palace, or the mileage of its ways. Ever since Ras Joda, four

hundred years ago, listened to the voice of a \_Jogi\_, and leaving

Mundore built his eyrie on the "Bird's nest" as the Hill of Strife was

called, the Palaces have grown and thickened. Even to-day the builders

are still at work. Takht Singh, the present ruler's predecessor, built

royally. An incomplete bastion and a Hall of Flowers are among the works

of his pleasure. Hidden away behind a mighty wing of carved red

sandstone lie rooms set apart for Viceroys, Durbar Halls and

dinner-rooms without end. A gentle gloom covers the evidences of the

catholic taste of the State in articles of "bigotry and virtue"; but

there is enough light to show the \_raison d'Ãªtre\_ of the men who wait in

the dak-bungalow. And, after all, what is the use of Royalty in these

days if a man may not take delight in the pride of the eye? Kumbha Rana,

the great man of Chitor, fought like a Rajput, but he had an instinct

which made him build the Tower of Victory at, who knows what cost of

money and life. The fighting-instinct thrown back upon itself must have

some sort of outlet; and a merciful Providence wisely ordains that the

Kings of the East in the nineteenth century shall take pleasure in

shopping on an imperial scale. Dresden China snuff-boxes, mechanical

engines, electro-plated fish-slicers, musical boxes, and gilt

blown-glass Christmas-tree balls do not go well with the splendours of a

Palace that might have been built by Titans and coloured by the morning

sun. But there are excuses to be made for Kings who have no fighting to

do.

In one of the higher bastions stands a curious specimen of one of the

earliest \_mitrailleuses\_--a cumbrous machine carrying twenty gun-barrels

in two rows, which small-arm fire is flanked by two tiny cannon. As a

muzzle-loading implement its value after the first discharge would be

insignificant; but the soldiers lounging by assured the Englishman that

it had done good service in its time.

A man may spend a long hour in the upper tiers of the Palaces, but still

far from the roof-tops, in looking out across the desert. There are

Englishmen in these wastes, who say gravely that there is nothing so

fascinating as the sand of Bikanir and Marwar. "You see," explained an

enthusiast of the Hat-marked Caste, "you are not shut in by roads, and

you can go just as you please. And, somehow, it grows upon you as you

get used to it, and you end, y'know, by falling in love with the place."

Look steadily from the Palace westward where the city with its tanks and

serais is spread at your feet, and you will, in a lame way, begin to

understand the fascination of the Desert which, by those who have felt

it, is said to be even stronger than the fascination of the Road. The

city is of red sandstone and dull and sombre to look at. Beyond it,

where the white sand lies, the country is dotted with camels limping

into the Eiwigkeit or coming from the same place. Trees appear to be

strictly confined to the suburbs of the city. Very good. If you look

long enough across the sands, while a voice in your ear is telling you

of half-buried cities, old as old Time, and wholly unvisited by Sahibs,

of districts where the white man is unknown, and of the wonders of

far-away Jeysulmir ruled by a half-distraught king, sand-locked and now

smitten by a terrible food and water famine, you will, if it happen that

you are of a sedentary and civilised nature, experience a new

emotion--will be conscious of a great desire to take one of the lobbing

camels and get away into the desert, away from the last touch of To-day,

to meet the Past face to face. Some day a novelist will exploit the

unknown land from the Rann, where the wild ass breeds, northward and

eastward, till he comes to the Indus.

But the officials of Marwar do not call their country a desert. On the

contrary, they administer it very scientifically and raise, as has been

said, about thirty-eight lakhs from it. To come back from the influence

and the possible use of the desert to more prosaic facts. Read quickly a

rough record of things in modern Marwar. The old is drawn in Tod, who

speaks the truth. The Maharaja's right hand in the work of the State is

Maharaj Sir Pertab Singh, Prime Minister A.--D.--C. to the Prince of

Wales, capable of managing the Marwari who intrigues like a--Marwari,

equally capable, as has been seen, of moving in London Society, and

Colonel of a newly raised crack cavalry corps. The Englishman would have

liked to have seen him, but he was away in the desert somewhere, either

marking a boundary or looking after a succession case. Not very long

ago, as the Setts of Ajmir knew well, there was a State debt of fifty

lakhs. This has now been changed into a surplus of three lakhs, and the

revenue is growing. Also, the simple Dacoit who used to enjoy himself

very pleasantly, has been put into a department, and the Thug with him.

Consequently, for the department takes a genuine interest in this form

of \_shikar\_, and the gaol leg-irons are not too light, dacoities have

been reduced to such an extent that men say "you may send a woman, with

her ornaments upon her, from Sojat to Phalodi, and she will not lose a

nose-ring." Again, and this in a Rajput State is an important matter,

the boundaries of nearly every village in Marwar have been demarcated,

and boundary fights, in which both sides preferred small-arm fire to the

regulation club, are unknown. The open-handed system of giving away

villages had raised a large and unmannerly crop of \_jaghirdars\_. These

have been taken up and brought in hand by Sir Pertab Singh, to the

better order of the State.

A Punjabi Sirdar, Har Dyal Singh, has reformed, or made rather, Courts

on the Civil and Criminal Side; and his hand is said to be found in a

good many sweepings out of old corners. It must always be borne in mind

that everything that has been done, was carried through over and under

unlimited intrigue, for Jodhpur is a Native State. Intrigue must be met

with intrigue by all except Gordons or demi-gods; and it is curious to

hear how a reduction in tariff, or a smoothing out of some tangled

Court, had to be worked by shift and byway. The tales are comic, but not

for publication. Howbeit, Har Dyal Singh got his training in part under

the Punjab Government, and in part in a little Native State far away in

the Himalayas, where intrigue is not altogether unknown. To the credit

of the "Pauper Province" be it said, it is not easy to circumvent a

Punjabi. The details of his work would be dry reading. The result of it

is good, and there is justice in Marwar, and order and firmness in its

administration.

Naturally, the land-revenue is the most interesting thing in Marwar from

an administrative point of view. The basis of it is a tank about the

size of a swimming-bath, with a catchment of several hundred square

yards, draining through leeped channels. When God sends the rain, the

people of the village drink from the tank. When the rains fail, as they

failed this year, they take to their wells, which are brackish and breed

guinea-worm. For these reasons the revenue, like the Republic of San

Domingo, is never alike for two years running. There are no canal

questions to harry the authorities; but the fluctuations are enormous.

Under the Aravalis the soil is good: further north they grow millet and

pasture cattle, though, said a Revenue Officer cheerfully, "God knows

what the brutes find to eat." \_Apropos\_ of irrigation, the one canal

deserves special mention, as showing how George Stephenson came to

Jodhpur and astonished the inhabitants. Six miles from the city proper

lies the Balsaman Sagar, a great tank. In the hot weather, when the city

tanks ran out or stank, it was the pleasant duty of the women to tramp

twelve miles at the end of the day's work to fill their lotahs. In the

hot weather Jodhpur is--let a simile suffice. Sukkur in June would be

Simla to Jodhpur.

The State Engineer, who is also the Jodhpur State Line, for he has no

European subordinates, conceived the idea of bringing the water from the

Balsaman into the city. Was the city grateful? Not in the least. It is

said that the Sahib wanted the water to run uphill and was throwing

money into the tank. Being true Marwaris, men betted on the subject. The

canal--a built out one, for water must not touch earth in these

parts--was made at a cost of something over a lakh, and the water came

down because its source was a trifle higher than the city. Now, in the

hot weather, the women need not go for long walks, but the Marwari

cannot understand how it was that the waters came down to Jodhpur. From

the Marwari to money matters is an easy step. Formerly, that is to say,

up to within a very short time, the Treasury of Jodhpur was conducted in

a shiftless, happy-go-lucky sort of fashion, not uncommon in Native

States, whereby the Mahajuns "held the bag" and made unholy profits on

discount and other things, to the confusion of the Durbar Funds and

their own enrichment. There is now a Treasury modelled on English lines,

and English in the important particular that money is not to be got from

it for the asking, and the items of expenditure are strictly looked

after.

In the middle of all this bustle of reform planned, achieved,

frustrated, and replanned, and the never-ending underground warfare that

surges in a Native State, move the English officers--the irreducible

minimum of exiles. As a caste, the working Englishmen in Native States

are curiously interesting; and the traveller whose tact by this time has

been blunted by tramping, sits in judgment upon them as he has seen

them. In the first place, they are, they must be, the fittest who have

survived; for though, here and there, you shall find one chafing

bitterly against the burden of his life in the wilderness, one to be

pitied more than any chained beast, the bulk of the caste are honestly

and unaffectedly fond of their work, fond of the country around them,

and fond of the people they deal with. In each State their answer to a

question is the same. The men with whom they are in contact are "all

right" when you know them, but you've got to "know them first," as the

music-hall song says. Their hands are full of work; so full that, when

the incult wanderer said: "What do you find to do?" they look upon him

with contempt and amazement, exactly as the wanderer himself had once

looked upon a Globe-trotter, who had put to him the same impertinent

query. And--but here the Englishman may be wrong--it seemed to him that

in one respect their lives were a good deal more restful and

concentrated than those of their brethren under the British Government.

There was no talk of shiftings and transfers and promotions, stretching

across a Province and a half, and no man said anything about Simla. To

one who has hitherto believed that Simla is the hub of the Empire, it is

disconcerting to hear: "Oh, Simla! That's where you Bengalis go. We

haven't anything to do with Simla down here." And no more they have.

Their talk and their interests run in the boundaries of the States they

serve, and, most striking of all, the gossipy element seems to be cut

altogether. It is a backwater of the river of Anglo-Indian life--or is

it the main current, the broad stream that supplies the motive power,

and is the other life only the noisy ripple on the surface? You who

have lived, not merely looked at, both lives, decide. Much can be learnt

from the talk of the caste, many curious, many amusing, and some

startling things. One hears stories of men who take a poor, impoverished

State as a man takes a wife, "for better or worse," and, moved by some

incomprehensible ideal of virtue, consecrate--that is not too big a

word--consecrate their lives to that State in all single-heartedness and

purity. Such men are few, but they exist to-day, and their names are

great in lands where no Englishman travels. Again the listener hears

tales of grizzled diplomats of Rajputana--Machiavellis who have hoisted

a powerful intriguer with his own intrigue, and bested priestly cunning,

and the guile of the Oswal, simply that the way might be clear for some

scheme which should put money into a tottering Treasury, or lighten the

taxation of a few hundred thousand men--or both; for this can be done.

One tithe of that force spent on their own personal advancement would

have carried such men very far.

Truly the Hat-marked Caste are a strange people. They are so few and so

lonely and so strong. They can sit down in one place for years, and see

the works of their hands and the promptings of their brain grow to

actual and beneficent life, bringing good to thousands. Less fettered

than the direct servant of the Indian Government, and working over a

much vaster charge, they seem a bigger and a more large-minded breed.

And that is saying a good deal.

But let the others, the little people bound down and supervised, and

strictly limited and income-taxed, always remember that the Hat-marked

are very badly off for shops. If they want a neck-tie they must get it

up from Bombay, and in the Rains they can hardly move about; and they

have no amusements and must go a day's railway journey for a rubber, and

their drinking-water is doubtful: and there is less than one white woman

\_per\_ ten thousand square miles.

After all, comparative civilisation has its advantages.

XIV

AMONG THE HOUYHNHNMS.

Jodhpur differs from the other States of Rajputana in that its Royalty

are peculiarly accessible to an inquiring public. There are wanderers,

the desire of whose life it is "to see Nabobs," which is the

Globe-trotter's title for any one in unusually clean clothes, or an Oudh

Taluqdar in gala dress. Men asked in Jodhpur whether the Englishman

would like to see His Highness. The Englishman had a great desire to do

so, if His Highness would be in no way inconvenienced. Then they

scoffed: "Oh, he won't \_durbar\_ you, you needn't flatter yourself. If

he's in the humour he'll receive you like an English country-gentleman."

How in the world could the owner of such a place as Jodhpur Palace be in

any way like an English country-gentleman? The Englishman had not long

to wait in doubt. His Highness intimated his readiness to see the

Englishman between eight and nine in the morning at the Raika-Bagh. The

Raika-Bagh is not a Palace, for the lower storey and all the detached

buildings round it are filled with horses. Nor can it in any way be

called a stable, because the upper storey contains sumptuous apartments

full of all manner of valuables both of the East and the West. Nor is it

in any sense a pleasure-garden, for it stands on soft white sand, close

to a multitude of litter and sand training tracks, and is devoid of

trees for the most part. Therefore the Raika-Bagh is simply the

Raika-Bagh and nothing else. It is now the chosen residence of the

Maharaja who loves to live among his four hundred or more horses. All

Jodhpur is horse-mad by the way, and it behoves any one who wishes to be

any one to keep his own race-course. The Englishman went to the

Raika-Bagh, which stands half a mile or so from the city, and passing

through a long room filled with saddles by the dozen, bridles by the

score, and bits by the hundred, was aware of a very small and lively

little cherub on the roof of a garden-house. He was carefully muffled,

for the morning was chill. "Good morning," he cried cheerfully in

English, waving a mittened hand. "Are you going to see my faver and the

horses?" It was the Maharaja Kanwar, the Crown Prince, the apple of the

Maharaja's eye, and one of the quaintest little bodies that ever set an

Englishman disrespectfully laughing. He studies English daily with one

of the English officials of the State, and stands a very good chance of

being thoroughly spoiled, for he is a general pet. As befits his

dignity, he has his own carriage or carriages, his own twelve-hand

stable, his own house and retinue.

A few steps further on, in a little enclosure in front of a small

two-storied white bungalow, sat His Highness the Maharaja, deep in

discussion with the State Engineer. He wore an English ulster, and

within ten paces of him was the first of a long range of stalls. There

was an informality of procedure about Jodhpur which, after the strained

etiquette of other States, was very refreshing. The State Engineer, who

has a growing line to attend to, cantered away and His Highness after a

few introductory words, knowing what the Englishman would be after,

said: "Come along, and look at the horses." Other formality there was

absolutely none. Even the indispensable knot of hangers-on stood at a

distance, and behind a paling, in this most rustic country residence. A

well-bred fox-terrier took command of the proceedings, after the manner

of dogs the world over, and the Maharaja led to the horse-boxes. But a

man turned up, bending under the weight of much bacon. "Oh! here's the

pig I shot for Udaipur last night. You see that is the best piece. It's

pickled, and that's what makes it yellow to look at." He patted the

great side that was held up. "There will be a camel sowar to meet it

half way to Udaipur; and I hope Udaipur will be pleased with it. It was

a very big pig." "And where did you shoot it, Maharaja Sahib?" "Here,"

said His Highness, smiting himself high up under the armpit. "Where else

would you have it?" Certainly this descendant of Raja Maun was more like

an English country-gentleman than the Englishman in his ignorance had

deemed possible. He led on from horse-box to horse-box, the terrier at

his heels, pointing out each horse of note; and Jodhpur has many.

"There's \_Raja\_, twice winner of the Civil Service Cup." The Englishman

looked reverently and \_Raja\_ rewarded his curiosity with a vicious snap,

for he was being dressed over, and his temper was out of joint. Close to

him stood \_Autocrat\_, the grey with the nutmeg marks on the

off-shoulder, a picture of a horse, also disturbed in his mind. Next to

him was a chestnut Arab, a hopeless cripple, for one of his knees had

been smashed and the leg was doubled up under him. It was \_Turquoise\_,

who, six or eight years ago, rewarded good feeding by getting away from

his groom, falling down and ruining himself, but who, none the less, has

lived an honoured pensioner on the Maharaja's bounty ever since. No

horses are shot in the Jodhpur stables, and when one dies--they have

lost not more than twenty-five in six years--his funeral is an event. He

is wrapped in a white sheet which is strewn with flowers, and, amid the

weeping of the \_saises\_, is borne away to the burial ground.

After doing the honours for nearly half an hour the Maharaja departed,

and as the Englishman has not seen more than forty horses, he felt

justified in demanding more. And he got them. \_Eclipse\_ and \_Young

Revenge\_ were out down-country, but \_Sherwood\_ at the stud, \_Shere Ali\_,

\_Conqueror\_, \_Tynedale\_, \_Sherwood II\_, a maiden of Abdul Rahman's, and

many others of note, were in, and were brought out. Among the veterans,

a wrathful, rampant, red horse still, came \_Brian Boru\_, whose name has

been written large in the chronicles of the Indian turf, jerking his

\_sais\_ across the road. His near-fore is altogether gone, but as a

pensioner he condescends to go in harness, and is then said to be a

"handful." He certainly looks it.

At the two hundred and fifty-seventh horse, and perhaps the twentieth

block of stables, the Englishman's brain began to reel, and he demanded

rest and information on a certain point. He had gone into some fifty

stalls, and looked into all the rest, and in the looking had searchingly

sniffed. But, as truly as he was then standing far below \_Brian Boru's\_

bony withers, never the ghost of a stench had polluted the keen morning

air. The City of the Houyhnhnms was specklessly clean--cleaner than any

stable, racing or private, that he had been into. How was it done? The

pure white sand accounted for a good deal, and the rest was explained by

one of the Masters of Horse: "Each horse has one \_sais\_ at least--old

\_Ringwood\_ has four--and we make 'em work. If we didn't, we'd be mucked

up to the horses' bellies in no time. Everything is cleaned off at once;

and whenever the sand's tainted it's renewed. There's quite enough sand

you see hereabouts. Of course we can't keep their coats so good as in

other stables, by reason of the rolling; but we can keep 'em pretty

clean."

To the eye of one who knew less than nothing about horse-flesh, this

immaculate purity was very striking, and quite as impressive was the

condition of the horses, which was English--quite English. Naturally,

none of them were in any sort of training beyond daily exercise, but

they were fit and in such thoroughly good fettle. Many of them were out

on the various tracks, and many were coming in. Roughly, two hundred go

out of a morning, and, it is to be feared, learn from the heavy going of

the Jodhpur courses how to hang in their stride. This is a matter for

those who know, but it struck the Englishman that a good deal of the

unsatisfactory performances of the Jodhpur stables might be accounted

for by their having lost their clean stride on the sand, and having to

pick it up gradually on the less holding down-country

courses--unfortunately when they were \_not\_ doing training gallops, but

the real thing.

It was pleasant to sit down and watch the rush of the horses through the

great opening--gates are not affected--going on to the countryside where

they take the air. Here a boisterous, unschooled Arab shot out across

the road and cried, "Ha! Ha!" in the scriptural manner, before trying

to rid himself of the grinning black imp on his back. Behind him a

Cabuli--surely all Cabulis must have been born with Pelhams in their

mouths--bored sulkily across the road, or threw himself across the path

of a tall, mild-eyed Kurnal-bred youngster, whose cocked ears and

swinging head showed that, though he was so sedate, he was thoroughly

taking in his surroundings, and would very much like to know if there

were anybody better than himself on the course that morning. Impetuous

as a schoolboy and irresponsible as a monkey, one of the Prince's polo

ponies, not above racing in his own set, would answer the question by

rioting past the pupil of Parrott, the monogram on his bodycloth

flapping free in the wind, and his head and hogged tail in the elements.

The youngster would swing himself round, and polka-mazurka for a few

paces, till his attention would be caught by some dainty Child of the

Desert, fresh from the Bombay stables, sweating at every sound, backing

and filling like a rudderless ship. Then, thanking his stars that he was

wiser than some people, Number 177 would lob on to the track and settle

down to his spin like the gentleman he was. Elsewhere, the eye fell upon

a cloud of nameless ones, purchases from Abdul Rahman, whose worth will

be proved next hot weather, when they are seriously taken in

hand--skirmishing over the face of the land and enjoying themselves

immensely. High above everything else, like a collier among barges,

screaming shrilly, a black, flamboyant Marwari stallion, with a crest

like the crest of a barb, barrel-bellied, goose-rumped, and river-maned,

pranced through the press, while the slow-pacing waler carriage-horses

eyed him with deep disfavour, and the Maharaja Kanwar's tiny mount

capered under his pink, Roman nose, kicking up as much dust as the

\_Foxhall\_ colt who had got on to a lovely patch of sand and was dancing

a saraband in it. In and out of the tangle, going down to or coming back

from the courses, ran, shuffled, rocketed, plunged, sulked, or stampeded

countless horses of all kinds, shapes, and descriptions--so that the eye

at last failed to see what they were, and only retained a general

impression of a whirl of bays, greys, iron greys, and chestnuts with

white stockings, some as good as could be desired, others average, but

not one distinctly bad.

"We have no downright bad 'uns in this stable. What's the use?" said the

Master of Horse, calmly. "They are all good beasts and, one with

another, must cost more than a thousand rupees each. This year's new

ones bought from Bombay and the pick of our own studs are a hundred

strong about. May be more. Yes, they look all right enough; but you can

never know what they are going to turn out. Live-stock is very

uncertain." "And how are the stables managed? how do you make room for

the fresh stock?" Something this way. Here are all the new ones and

Parrott's lot, and the English colts that Maharaja Pertab Singh brought

out with him from Home. \_Winterlake\_ out o' \_Queen's Consort\_ that

chestnut is with the two white stockings you're looking at now. Well,

next hot weather we shall see what they're made of and which is who.

There's so many that the trainer hardly knows 'em one from another till

they begin to be a good deal forward. Those that haven't got the pace,

or that the Maharaja don't fancy, they're taken out and sold for what

they'll bring. The man who takes the horses out has a good job of it. He

comes back and says: "I sold such and such for so much, and here's the

money." That's all. Well, our rejections are worth having. They have

taken prizes at the Poona Horse Show. See for yourself. Is there one of

those that you wouldn't be glad to take for a hack, and look well after

too? Only they're no use to us, and so out they go by the score. We've

got sixty riding-boys, perhaps more, and they've got their work cut out

to keep them all going. What you've seen are only the stables. We've got

one stud at Bellara, eighty miles out, and they come in sometimes in

droves of three and four hundred from the stud. They raise Marwaris

there too, but that's entirely under native management. We've got

nothing to do with that. The natives reckon a Marwari the best

country-bred you can lay hands on; and some of them are beauties! Crests

on 'em like the top of a wave. Well, there's that stud and another stud

and, reckoning one with another, I should say the Maharaja has nearer

twelve hundred than a thousand horses of his own. For this place here,

two wagon-loads of grass come in every day from Marwar Junction. Lord

knows how many saddles and bridles we've got. I never counted. I suppose

we've about forty carriages, not counting the ones that get shabby and

are stacked in places in the city, as I suppose you've seen. We take 'em

out in the morning, a regular string altogether, brakes and all; but the

prettiest turn-out we ever turned out was Lady Dufferin's pony

four-in-hand. Walers--thirteen-two the wheelers, I think, and

thirteen-one the leaders. They took prizes in Poona. That \_was\_ a pretty

turn-out. The prettiest in India. Lady Dufferin, she drove it when the

Viceroy was down here last year. There are bicycles and tricycles in the

carriage department too. I don't know how many, but when the Viceroy's

camp was held, there was about one apiece for the gentlemen, with

remounts. They're somewhere about the place now, if you want to see

them. How do we manage to keep the horses so quiet? You'll find some o'

the youngsters play the goat a good deal when they come out o' stable,

but, as you say, there's no vice generally. It's this way. We don't

allow any curry-combs. If we did, the \_saises\_ would be wearing out

their brushes on the combs. It's all elbow-grease here. They've got to

go over the horses with their hands. They must handle 'em, and a native

he's afraid of a horse. Now an English groom, when a horse is doing the

fool, clips him over the head with a curry-comb, or punches him in the

belly; and that hurts the horse's feelings. A native, he just stands

back till the trouble is over. He \_must\_ handle the horse or he'd get

into trouble for not dressing him, so it comes to all handling and no

licking, and that's why you won't get hold of a really vicious brute in

these stables. Old \_Ringwood\_ he had four \_saises\_, and he wanted 'em

every one, but the other horses have no more than one \_sais\_ apiece. The

Maharaja he keeps fourteen or fifteen horses for his own riding. Not

that he cares to ride now, but he likes to have his horses; and no one

else can touch 'em. Then there's the horses that he mounts his visitors

on, when they come for pig-sticking and such like, and then there's a

lot of horses that go to Maharaja Pertab Singh's new cavalry regiment.

So you see a horse can go through all three degrees sometimes before he

gets sold, and be a good horse at the end of it. And I think that's

about all!"

A cloud of youngsters, sweating freely and ready for any mischief, shot

past on their way to breakfast, and the conversation ended in a cloud of

sand and the drumming of hurrying hooves.

In the Raika-Bagh are more racing cups than this memory holds the names

of. Chiefest of all was the Delhi Assemblage Cup--the Imperial Vase, of

solid gold, won by \_Crown Prince\_. The other pieces of plate were not so

imposing. But of all the Crown Jewels, the most valuable appeared at the

end of the inspection. It was the small Maharaja Kanwar lolling in state

in a huge barouche--his toes were at least two feet off the floor--that

was taking him from his morning drive. "Have you seen \_my\_ horses?" said

the Maharaja Kanwar. The four twelve-hand ponies had been duly looked

over, and the future ruler of Jodhpur departed satisfied.

XV

TREATS OF THE STARTLING EFFECT OF A REDUCTION IN WAGES AND THE PLEASURES

OF LOAFERDOM. PAINTS THE STATE OF THE BOONDI ROAD AND THE TREACHERY OF

GANESH OF SITUR.

"A twenty-five per cent reduction all roun' an' no certain leave when

you wants it. \_Of\_ course the best men goes somewhere else. That's only

natural, and 'ere's this sanguinary down mail a-stickin' in the eye of

the Khundwa down! I tell you, Sir, Injia's a bad place--a very bad

place. 'Tisn't what it was when I came out one and thirty year ago, an'

the drivers was getting their seven and eight 'undred rupees a month an'

was treated as \_men\_."

The Englishman was on his way to Nasirabad, and a gentleman in the

Railway was explaining to him the real reason of the decadence of the

Empire. It was because, the Rajputana-Malwa Railway had cut all its

employÃ©s twenty-five per cent. It is ungenerous to judge a caste by a

few samples; but the Englishman had on the Road and elsewhere seen a

good deal of gentlemen on the Railway, and they spend their pay in a

manner that would do credit to an income of a thousand a month. Now they

say that the twenty-five per cent reduction deprives them of all the

pleasures of life. So much the better if it makes them moderately

economical in their expenditure. Revolving these things in his mind,

together with one or two stories of extravagances not quite fit for

publication, the Englishman came to Nasirabad, before sunrise, and there

to an evil-looking tonga. Quoth Ram Baksh, proprietor, driver, \_sais\_,

and everything else, calmly: "At this time of the year and having regard

to the heat of the sun who wants a top to a tonga? I have no top. I have

a top, but it would take till twelve o'clock to put it on. And behold

Sahib, Padre Martum Sahib went in this tonga to Deoli. All the officer

Sahibs of Deoli and Nasirabad go in this tonga for \_shikar\_. This is a

'shutin-tonga'!" "When Church and Army are brought against one, argument

is in vain." But to take a soft, office-bred unfortunate into the

wilderness, upon a skeleton, a diagram of a conveyance, is brutality.

Ram Baksh did not see it, and headed his two thirteen-hand rats straight

towards the morning sun, along a beautiful military road. "We shall get

to Deoli in six hours," said Ram Baksh the boastful, and, even as he

spoke, the spring of the tonga bar snapt "mit a harp-like melodious

twang." "What does it matter?" said Ram Baksh. "Has the Sahib never seen

a tonga-iron break before? Padre Martum Sahib and all the Officer Sahibs

in Deoli--" "Ram Baksh," said the Englishman, sternly, "I am not a Padre

Sahib nor an Officer Sahib, and if you say anything more about Padre

Martum Sahib or the officer in Deoli I shall grow very angry, Ram

Baksh."

"Humph," said Ram Baksh, "I knew you were not a Padre Sahib." The little

mishap was patched up with string, and the tonga went on merrily. It is

Stevenson who says that the "invitation to the road," nature's great

morning song, has not yet been properly understood or put to music. The

first note of it is the sound of the dawn-wind through long grass. It is

good, good beyond expression, to see the sun rise upon a strange land

and to know that you have only to go forward and possess that land--that

it will dower you before the day is ended with a hundred new impressions

and, perhaps, one idea. It is good to snuff the wind when it comes in

over large uplands or down from the tops of the blue Aravalis--dry and

keen as a new-ground sword. Best of all is to light the First Pipe--is

there any tobacco so good as that we burn in honour of the breaking

day?--and, while the ponies wake the long white road with their hooves

and the birds go abroad in companions together, to thank your stars that

you are neither the Subaltern who has Orderly Room, the 'Stunt who has

office, or the Judge who has the Court to attend; but are only a loafer

in a flannel shirt bound, if God pleases, to "little Boondi," somewhere

beyond the faint hills beyond the plain.

But there was alloy in this delight. Men had told the Englishman darkly

that Boondi State had no love for Englishmen, that there was nowhere to

stop, and that no one would do anything for money. Love was out of the

question. Further, it was an acknowledged fact that there were no

Englishmen of any kind in Boondi. But the Englishman trusted that Ganesh

would be good to him, and that he would, somehow or other, fall upon his

feet as he had fallen before. The road from Nasirabad to Deoli, being

military in its nature, is nearly as straight as a ruler and about as

smooth. Here and there little rocky hills, the last off-shoots of the

Aravalis to the west, break the ground; but the bulk of it is fair and

without pimples. The Deoli Force are apparently so utterly Irregular

that they can do without a telegraph, have their mails carried by

runners, and dispense with bridges over all the fifty-six miles that

separate them from Nasirabad. However, a man who goes shikarring for any

length of time in one of Ram Baksh's tongas would soon learn to dispense

with anything and everything. "\_All\_ the Sahibs use my tonga; I've got

eight of them and twenty pairs of horses," said Ram Baksh. "They go as

far as Gangra, where the tigers are, for they are 'shutin-tongas.'" Now

the Englishman knew Gangra slightly, having seen it on the way to

Udaipur; and it was as perverse and rocky a place as any man would

desire to see. He politely expressed doubt. "I tell you my tongas go

anywhere," said Ram Baksh, testily. A hay-wagon--they cut and stack

their hay in these parts--blocked the road. Ram Baksh ran the tonga to

one side, into a rut, fetched up on a tree-stump, rebounded on to a

rock, and struck the road again. "Observe," said Ram Baksh; "but that is

nothing. You wait till we get on the Boondi Road, and I'll make you

shake, shake like a bottle." "Is it \_very\_ bad?" "I've never been to

Boondi myself, but I hear it is all rocks--great rocks as big as this

tonga." But though he boasted himself and his horses nearly all the way,

he could not reach Deoli in anything like the time he had set forth. "If

I am not at Boondi by four," he had said, at six in the morning, "let me

go without my fee." But by midday he was still far from Deoli, and

Boondi lay twenty-eight miles beyond that station. "What can I do?" said

he. "I've laid out lots of horses--any amount. But the fact is I've

never been to Boondi. I shan't go there in the night." Ram Baksh's "lots

of horses" were three pair between Nasirabad and Deoli--three pair of

undersized ponies who did wonders. At one place, after he had quitted a

cotton wagon, a drove of gipsies, and a man on horseback, with his

carbine across his saddle-bow, the Englishman came to a stretch of road

so utterly desolate that he said: "Now I am clear of everybody who ever

knew me. This is the beginning of the waste into which the scape-goat

was sent."

From a bush by the roadside sprang up a fat man who cried aloud in

English: "How does Your Honour do? I met Your Honour in Simla this year.

Are you quite well? Ya-as, I am here. Your Honour remembers me? I am

travelling. Ya-as. Ha! Ha!" and he went on, leaving His Honour bemazed.

It was a Babu--a Simla Babu, of that there could be no doubt; but who he

was or what he was doing, thirty miles from anywhere, His Honour could

not make out. The native moves about more than most folk, except railway

people, imagine. The big banking firms of Upper India naturally keep in

close touch with their great change-houses in Ajmir, despatching and

receiving messengers regularly. So it comes to pass that the necessitous

circumstances of Lieutenant McRannamack, of the Tyneside Tailtwisters,

quartered on the Frontier, are thoroughly known and discussed, a

thousand miles south of the cantonment where the light-hearted

Lieutenant goes to his money-lender.

This is by the way. Let us return to the banks of the Banas River, where

"poor Carey," as Tod calls him, came when he was sickening for his last

illness. The Banas is one of those streams which runs "over golden

sands with feet of silver," but, from the scarp of its banks, Deoli in

the rains must be isolated. Ram Baksh, questioned hereon, vowed that all

the Officer Sahibs never dreamed of halting, but went over in boats or

on elephants. According to Ram Baksh the men of Deoli must be wonderful

creatures. They do nothing but use his tongas. A break in some low hills

gives on to the dead flat plain in which Deoli stands. "You must stop

here for the night," said Ram Baksh. "I will \_not\_ take my horses

forward in the dark; God knows where the dak-bungalow is. I've

forgotten, but any one of the Officer Sahibs in Deoli will tell you."

Those in search of a new emotion would do well to run about an

apparently empty cantonment, in a disgraceful shooting-tonga, hunting

for a place to sleep in. Chaprassis come out of back verandahs, and are

rude, and regimental Babus hop off godowns, and are flippant, while in

the distance a Sahib looks out of his room, and eyes the dusty

forlorn-hope with silent contempt. It should be mentioned that the dust

on the Deoli Road not only powders but masks the face and raiment of the

passenger.

Next morning Ram Baksh was awake with the dawn, and clamorous to go on

to Boondi. "I've sent a pair of horses, big horses, out there and the

\_sais\_ is a fool. Perhaps they will be lost; I want to find them." He

dragged his unhappy passenger on the road once more and demanded of all

who passed the dak-bungalow which was the way to Boondi. "Observe," said

he, "there can be only one road, and if I hit it we are all right, and

I'll show you what the tonga can do." "Amen," said the Englishman,

devoutly, as the tonga jumped into and out of a larger hole. "Without

doubt this is the Boondi Road," said Ram Baksh; "it is so bad."

It has been before said that the Boondi State has no great love for

Sahibs. The state of the road proves it. "This," said Ram Baksh, tapping

the wheel to see whether the last plunge had smashed a spoke, "is a very

good road. You wait till you see what is ahead." And the funeral

staggered on--over irrigation cuts, through buffalo wallows, and dried

pools stamped with the hundred feet of kine (this, by the way, is the

most cruel road of all), up rough banks where the rock ledges peered out

of the dust, down steep-cut dips ornamented with large stones, and along

two-feet deep ruts of the rains, where the tonga went slantwise even to

the verge of upsetting. It was a royal road--a native road--a Raj road

of the roughest, and, through all its jolts and bangs and bumps and dips

and heaves, the eye of Ram Baksh rolled in its blood-shot socket,

seeking for the "big horses" he had so rashly sent into the wilderness.

The ponies that had done the last twenty miles into Deoli were nearly

used up, and did their best to lie down in the dry beds of nullahs.

A man came by on horseback, his servant walking before with platter and

meal-bag. "Have you seen any horses hereabouts?" cried Ram Baksh.

"Horses? What the Devil have I to do with your horses? D'you think I've

stolen them?" Now this was decidedly a strange answer, and showed the

rudeness of the land. An old woman under a tree cried out in a strange

tongue and ran away. It was a dream-like experience, this hunting for

horses in a wilderness with neither house nor hut nor shed in sight.

"If we keep to the road long enough we must find them. Look at the road.

This Raj ought to be smitten with bullets." Ram Baksh had been pitched

forward nearly on the off-pony's rump, and was in a very bad temper

indeed. The funeral found a house--a house walled with thorns--and near

by were two big horses, thirteen-two if an inch, and harnessed quite

regardless of expense.

Everything was repacked and rebound with triple ropes, and the Sahib was

provided with an extra cushion; but he had reached a sort of dreamsome

Nirvana, having several times bitten his tongue through, cut his boot

against the wheel-edge, and twisted his legs into a true-lovers'-knot.

There was no further sense of suffering in him. He was even beginning to

enjoy himself faintly and by gasps. The road struck boldly into hills

with all their teeth on edge, that is to say, their strata breaking

across the road in little ripples. The effect of this was amazing. The

tonga skipped merrily as a young fawn, from ridge to ridge. It shivered,

it palpitated, it shook, it slid, it hopped, it waltzed, it ricochetted,

it bounded like a kangaroo, it blundered like a sledge, it swayed like a

top-heavy coach on a down-grade, it "kicked" like a badly coupled

railway carriage, it squelched like a country-cart, it squeaked in its

torment, and lastly, it essayed to plough up the ground with its nose.

After three hours of this performance, it struck a tiny little ford, set

between steeply sloping banks of white dust, where the water was clear

brown and full of fish. And here a blissful halt was called under the

shadow of the high bank of a tobacco field.

Would you taste one of the real pleasures of Life? Go through severe

acrobatic exercises in and about a tonga for four hours; then, having

eaten and drank till you can no more, sprawl in the cool of a nullah bed

with your head among the green tobacco, and your mind adrift with the

one little cloud in a royally blue sky. Earth has nothing more to offer

her children than this deep delight of animal well-being. There were

butterflies in the tobacco--six different kinds, and a little rat came

out and drank at the ford. To him succeeded the flight into Egypt. The

white banks of the ford framed the picture perfectly--the Mother in

blue, on a great white donkey, holding the Child in her arms, and Joseph

walking beside, his hand upon the donkey's withers. By all the laws of

the East, Joseph should have been riding and the Mother walking. This

was an exception decreed for the Englishman's special benefit. It was

very warm and very pleasant, and, somehow, the passers by the ford grew

indistinct, and the nullah became a big English garden, with a cuckoo

singing far down in the orchard, among the apple-blossoms. The cuckoo

started the dream. He was the only real thing in it, for on waking the

garden slipped back into the water, but the cuckoo remained and called

and called for all the world as though he had been a veritable English

cuckoo. "Cuckoo--cuckoo--cuck;" then a pause and renewal of the cry from

another quarter of the horizon. After that the ford became distasteful,

so the procession was driven forward and in time plunged into what must

have been a big city once, but the only inhabitants were oil-men. There

were abundance of tombs here, and one carried a life-like carving in

high relief of a man on horseback spearing a foot-soldier. Hard by this

place the road or rut turned by great gardens, very cool and pleasant,

full of tombs and black-faced monkeys who quarrelled among the tombs,

and shut in from the sun by gigantic banians and mango trees. Under the

trees and behind the walls, priests sat singing; and the Englishman

would have inquired into what strange place he had fallen, but the men

did not understand him.

Ganesh is a mean little God of circumscribed powers. He was dreaming,

with a red and flushed face, under a banian tree; and the Englishman

gave him four annas to arrange matters comfortably at Boondi. His priest

took the four annas, but Ganesh did nothing whatever, as shall be shown

later. His only excuse is that his trunk was a good deal worn, and he

would have been better for some more silver leaf, but that was no fault

of the Englishman.

Beyond the dead city was a jhil, full of snipe and duck, winding in and

out of the hills; and beyond the jhil, hidden altogether among the

hills, was Boondi. The nearer to the city the viler grew the road and

the more overwhelming the curiosity of the inhabitants. But what befel

at Boondi must be reserved for another chapter.

XVI

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS AND THE EXPLOITATION OF BOONDI. THE CASTAWAY OF THE

DISPENSARY AND THE CHILDREN OF THE SCHOOLS. A CONSIDERATION OF THE

SHIELDS OF RAJASTHAN AND OTHER TRIFLES.

It is high time that a new treaty were made with Maha Rao Raja Ram

Singh, Bahadur, Raja of Boondi. He keeps the third article of the old

one too faithfully, which says that he "shall not enter into

negotiations with any one without the consent of the British

Government." He does not negotiate at all. Arrived at Boondi Gate, the

Englishman asked where he might lay his head for the night, and the

Quarter Guard with one accord said: "The Sukh Mahal, which is beyond the

city," and the tonga went thither through the length of the town till it

arrived at a pavilion on a lake--a place of two turrets connected by an

open colonnade. The "house" was open to the winds of heaven and the

pigeons of the Raj; but the latter had polluted more than the first

could purify. A snowy-bearded \_chowkidar\_ crawled out of a place of

tombs, which he seemed to share with some monkeys, and threw himself

into Anglo-Saxon attitudes. He was a great deal worse than Ram Baksh,

for he said that all the Officer Sahibs of Deoli came to the Sukh Mahal

for \_shikar\_ and--never went away again, so pleased were they. The Sahib

had brought the Honour of his Presence, and he was a very old man, and

without a written permit could do nothing. Then he fell deeply asleep

without warning; and there was a pause, of one hour only, which the

Englishman spent in seeing the lake. It, like the jhils on the road,

wound in and out among the hills, and, on the bund side, was bounded by

a hill of black rock crowned with a \_chhatri\_ of grey stone. Below the

bund was a garden as fair as eye could wish, and the shores of the lake

were dotted with little temples. Given a habitable house,--a mere

dak-bungalow,--it would be a delightful spot to rest in. Warned by some

bitter experiences in the past, the Englishman knew that he was in for

the demi-semi-royal or embarrassing reception, when a man, being the

unwelcome guest of a paternal State, is neither allowed to pay his way

and make himself comfortable, nor is he willingly entertained. When he

saw a one-eyed \_munshi\_ (clerk), he felt certain that Ganesh had turned

upon him at last. The \_munshi\_ demanded and received the \_purwana\_, or

written permit. Then he sat down and questioned the traveller

exhaustively as to his character and profession. Having thoroughly

satisfied himself that the visitor was in no way connected with the

Government or the "Agenty Sahib Bahadur," he took no further thought of

the matter and the day began to draw in upon a grassy bund, an open-work

pavilion, and a disconsolate tonga.

At last the faithful servitor, who had helped to fight the Battle of the

Mail Bags at Udaipur, broke his silence, and vowing that all these

devil-people--not more than twelve--had only come to see the fun,

suggested the breaking of the \_munshi's\_ head. And, indeed, that seemed

the best way of breaking the ice; for the \_munshi\_ had, in the politest

possible language, put forward the suggestion that there was nothing

particular to show that the Sahib who held the \_purwana\_ had really any

right to hold it. The \_chowkidar\_ woke up and chanted a weird chant,

accompanied by the Anglo-Saxon attitudes, a new set. He was an old man,

and all the Sahib-log said so, and within the pavilion were tables and

chairs and lamps and bath-tubs, and everything that the heart of man

could desire. Even now an enormous staff of menials were arranging all

these things for the comfort of the Sahib Bahadur and Protector of the

Poor, who had brought the honour and glory of his Presence all the way

from Deoli. What did tables and chairs and eggs and fowls and very

bright lamps matter to the Raj? He was an old man and ... "Who put the

present Raja on the throne?" "Lake Sahib," promptly answered the

\_chowkidar\_. "I was there. That is the news of many old years." Now Tod

says it was he himself who installed "Lalji the beloved" in the year

1821. The Englishman began to lose faith in the \_chowkidar\_. The

\_munshi\_ said nothing but followed the Englishman with his one workable

eye. A merry little breeze crisped the waters of the lake, and the fish

began to frolic before going to bed.

"Is nobody going to do or bring anything?" said the Englishman, faintly,

wondering whether the local gaol would give him a bed if he killed the

\_munshi\_. "I am an old man," said the \_chowkidar\_, "and because of their

great respect and reverence for the Sahib in whose Presence I am only a

bearer of orders and a servant awaiting them, men, many men, are

bringing now tent-flies which I with my own hands will wrap, here and

there, there and here, in and about the pillars of the place; and thus

you, O Sahib, who have brought the honour of your Presence to the Boondi

Raj over the road to Deoli, which is a \_kutcha\_ road, will be provided

with a very fine and large apartment over which I will watch while you

go to kill the tigers in these hills."

By this time two youths had twisted \_canvas\_ round some of the pillars

of the colonnade, making a sort of loose-box with a two-foot air-way all

round the top. There was no door, but there were unlimited windows. Into

this enclosure the \_chowkidar\_ heaped furniture on which many

generations of pigeons had evidently been carried off by cholera, until

he was entreated to desist. "What," said he, scornfully, "are tables and

chairs to this Raj? If six be not enough, let the Presence give an

order, and twelve shall be forthcoming. Everything shall be

forthcoming." Here he filled a native lamp with kerosene oil and set it

in a box upon a stick. Luckily, the oil which he poured so lavishly from

a quart bottle was bad, or he would have been altogether consumed.

Night had fallen long before this magnificence was ended. The

superfluous furniture--chairs for the most part--was shovelled out into

the darkness, and by the light of a flamboyant lamplet--a merry wind

forbade candles--the Englishman went to bed, and was lulled to sleep by

the rush of the water escaping from the overflow trap and the splash of

the water-turtle as he missed the evasive fish. It was a curious sight.

Cats and dogs rioted about the enclosure, and a wind from the lake

bellied the canvas. The brushwood of the hills around snapped and

cracked as beasts went through it, and creatures--not jackals--made

dolorous noises. On the lake it seemed that hundreds of water-birds were

keeping a hotel, and that there were arrivals and departures throughout

the night. The Raj insisted upon providing a guard of two sepoys, very

pleasant men, on four rupees a month. These said that tigers sometimes

wandered about on the hills above the lake, but were most generally to

be found five miles away. And the Englishman promptly dreamed that a

one-eyed tiger came into his tent without a \_purwana\_. But it was only a

wild cat after all; and it fled before the shoes of civilisation.

The Sukh Mahal was completely separated from the city, and might have

been a country-house. It should be mentioned that Boondi is jammed into

a V-shaped gorge--the valley at the main entrance being something less

than five hundred yards across. As it splays out, the thickly packed

houses follow its lines, and, seen from above, seem like cattle herded

together preparatory to a stampede through the gate. Owing to the set of

the hills, very little of the city is visible except from the Palace. It

was in search of this latter that the Englishman went abroad and became

so interested in the streets that he forgot all about it for a time.

Jeypore is a show-city and is decently drained; Udaipur is blessed with

a State Engineer and a printed form of Government; for Jodhpur the dry

sand, the burning sun, and an energetic doctor have done a good deal,

but Boondi has none of these things. The crampedness of the locality

aggravates the evil, and it can only be in the rains which channel and

furrow the rocky hillsides that Boondi is at all swept out. The Nal

Sagar, a lovely little stretch of water, takes up the head of the

valley called Banda Gorge, and must, in the nature of things, receive a

good deal of unholy drainage. But setting aside this weakness, it is a

fascinating place--this jumbled city of straight streets and cool

gardens, where gigantic mangoes and peepuls intertwine over gurgling

watercourses, and the cuckoo comes at midday. It boasts no foolish

Municipality to decree when a house is dangerous and uninhabitable. The

newer shops are built into, on to, over, and under time-blackened ruins

of an older day, and the little children skip about tottering arcades

and grass-grown walls, while their parents chatter below in the crowded

bazaar. In the black slums, the same stones seem to be used over and

over again for house-building. Wheeled conveyances are scarce in Boondi

city--there is scant room for carts, and the streets are paved with

knobsome stones, unpleasant to walk over. From time to time an inroad of

\_Bunjaras'\_ pack-bullocks sweeps the main streets clear of life, or one

of the Raja's elephants--he has twelve of them--blocks the way. But, for

the most part, the foot-passengers have all the city for their own.

They do not hurry themselves. They sit in the sun and think, or put on

all the arms in the family, and, hung with ironmongery, parade before

their admiring friends. Others, lean, dark men, with bound jaws and only

a tulwar for weapon, dive in and out of the dark alleys, on errands of

State. It is a beautifully lazy city, doing everything in the real,

true, original native way, and it is kept in very good order by the

Durbar. There either is or is not an order for everything. There is no

order to sell fishing-hooks, or to supply an Englishman with milk, or

to change for him currency notes. He must only deal with the Durbar for

whatever he requires; and wherever he goes he must be accompanied by at

least two armed men. They will tell him nothing, for they know or affect

to know nothing of the city. They will do nothing except shout at the

little innocents who joyfully run after the stranger and demand \_pice\_,

but there they are, and there they will stay till he leaves the city,

accompanying him to the gate, and waiting there a little to see that he

is fairly off and away. Englishmen are not encouraged in Boondi. The

intending traveller would do well to take a full suit of Political

uniform with the sunflowers, and the little black sword to sit down

upon. The local god is the "Agenty Sahib," and he is an incarnation

without a name--at least among the lower classes. The educated, when

speaking of him, always use the courtly "Bahadur" affix; and yet it is a

mean thing to gird at a State which, after all, is not bound to do

anything for intrusive Englishmen without any visible means of

livelihood. The King of this fair city should declare the blockade

absolute, and refuse to be troubled with any one except "Colon-nel

Baltah, Agenty Sahib Bahadur" and the Politicals. If ever a railway is

run through Kotah, as men on the Bombay side declare it must be, the

cloistered glory of Boondi will depart, for Kotah is only twenty miles

easterly of the city and the road is moderately good. In that day the

Globe-trotter will pry about the place, and the Charitable Dispensary--a

gem among dispensaries--will be public property.

The Englishman was hunting for the statue of a horse, a great horse

hight Hunja, who was a steed of Irak, and a King's gift to Rao Omeda,

one time monarch of Boondi. He found it in the city square as Tod had

said; and it was an unlovely statue, carven after the dropsical fashion

of later Hindu art. No one seemed to know anything about it. A little

further on, one cried from a byway in rusty English: "Come and see my

Dispensary." There are only two men in Boondi who speak English. One is

the head, and the other the assistant, teacher of the English side of

Boondi Free School. The third was, some twenty years ago, a pupil of the

Lahore Medical College when that institution was young; and he only

remembered a word here and there. He was head of the Charitable

Dispensary; and insisted upon, then and there, organising a small levee

and pulling out all his books. Escape was hopeless: nothing less than a

formal inspection and introduction to all the native physicians would

serve. There were sixteen beds in and about the courtyard, and between

twenty and thirty out-patients stood in attendance. Making allowances

for untouched Orientalism, the Dispensary is a good one, and must

relieve a certain amount of human misery. There is no other in all

Boondi. The operation-book, kept in English, showed the principal

complaints of the country. They were: "Asthama," "Numonia,"

"Skindiseas," "Dabalaty" and "Loin-bite." This last item occurred again

and again--three and four cases per week--and it was not until the

Doctor said "\_Sher se mara\_" that the Englishman read it aright. It was

"lion-bite," or tiger, if you insist upon zoological accuracy. There was

one incorrigible idiot, a handsome young man, naked as the day, who sat

in the sunshine, shivering and pressing his hands to his head. "I have

given him blisters and setons--have tried native and English treatment

for two years, but it is no use. He is always as you see him, and now he

stays here by the favour of the Durbar, which is a very good and pitiful

Durbar," said the Doctor. There were many such pensioners of the

Durbar--men afflicted with chronic "asthama" who stayed "by favour," and

were kindly treated. They were resting in the sunshine their hands on

their knees, sure that their daily dole of grain and tobacco and opium

would be forthcoming. "All folk, even little children, eat opium here,"

said the Doctor, and the diet-book proved it. After

laborious-investigation of everything, down to the last indent to Bombay

for Europe medicines, the Englishman was suffered to depart. "Sir, I

thank ...," began the Native Doctor, but the rest of the sentence stuck.

Sixteen years in Boondi does not increase knowledge of English; and he

went back to his patients, gravely conning over the name of the

Principal of the Lahore Medical School--a College now--who had taught

him all he knew, and to whom he intended to write. There was something

pathetic in the man's catching at news from the outside world of men he

had known as Assistant and House Surgeons who are now Rai Bahadurs, and

his parade of the few shreds of English that still clung to him. May he

treat "loin-bites" and "catrack" successfully for many years. In the

happy, indolent fashion that must have merits which we cannot

understand, he is doing a good work, and the Durbar allows his

Dispensary as much as it wants.

Close to the Dispensary stood the Free School, and thither an

importunate \_munshi\_ steered the Englishman, who, by this time, was

beginning to persuade herself that he really was an accredited agent of

Government, sent to report on the progress of Boondi. From a

peepul-shaded courtyard came a clamour of young voices. Thirty or forty

little ones, from five to eight years old, were sitting in an open

verandah learning accounts and Hindustani, said the teacher. No need to

ask from what castes they came, for it was written on their faces that

they were Mahajans, Oswals, Aggerwals, and in one or two cases, it

seemed, Sharawaks of Guzerat. They were learning the business of their

lives, and, in time, would take their father's places, and show in how

many ways money might be manipulated. Here the profession-type came out

with startling distinctness. Through the chubbiness of almost babyhood,

or the delicate suppleness of maturer years, in mouth and eyes and

hands, it betrayed itself. The Rahtor, who comes of a fighting stock, is

a fine animal, and well bred; the Hara, who seems to be more compactly

built, is also a fine animal; but for a race that show blood in every

line of their frame, from the arch of the instep to the modelling of the

head, the financial--trading is too coarse a word--the financial class

of Rajputana appears to be the most remarkable. Later in life may become

clouded with fat jowl and paunch; but in his youth, his quick-eyed,

nimble youth, the young Marwar, to give him his business title, is

really a thing of beauty. His manners are courtly. The bare ground and a

few slates sufficed for the children who were merely learning the ropes

that drag States; but the English class, of boys from ten to twelve, was

supplied with real benches and forms and a table with a cloth top. The

assistant teacher, for the head was on leave, was a self-taught man of

Boondi, young and delicate looking, who preferred reading to speaking

English. His youngsters were supplied with "The Third English Reading

Book," and were painfully thumbing their way through a doggerel poem

about an "old man with hoary hair." One boy, bolder than the rest, slung

an English sentence at the visitor, and collapsed. It was his little

stock-in-trade, and the rest regarded him enviously. The Durbar supports

the school, which is entirely free and open; a just distinction being

maintained between the various castes. The old race prejudice against

payment for knowledge came out in reply to a question. "You must not

sell teaching," said the teacher; and the class murmured applausively,

"You must not sell teaching."

The population of Boondi seems more obviously mixed than that of the

other States. There are four or five thousand Mahometans within its

walls, and a sprinkling of aborigines of various varieties, besides the

human raffle that the Bunjaras bring in their train, with Pathans and

sleek Delhi men. The new heraldry of the State is curious--something

after this sort. \_Or\_, a demi-god, \_sable\_, issuant of flames, holding

in right hand a sword and in the left a bow--\_all proper\_. In chief, a

dagger of the \_second\_, sheathed \_vert\_, fessewise over seven arrows in

sheaf of the \_second\_. This latter blazon Boondi holds in commemoration

of the defeat of an Imperial Prince who rebelled against the Delhi

Throne in the days of Jehangir, when Boondi, for value received, took

service under the Mahometan. It might also be, but here there is no

certainty, the memorial of Rao Rutton's victory over Prince Khoorm, when

the latter strove to raise all Rajputana against Jehangir his father;

or of a second victory over a riotous lordling who harried Mewar a

little later. For this exploit, the annals say, Jehangir gave Rao Rutton

honorary flags and kettle-drums which may have been melted down by the

science of the Heralds College into the blazon aforesaid. All the

heraldry of Rajputana is curious, and, to such as hold that there is any

worth in the "Royal Science," interesting. Udaipur's shield is,

naturally \_gules\_, a sun in splendour, as befits the "children of the

Sun and Fire," and one of the most ancient houses in India. Her crest is

the straight Rajput sword, the \_Khanda\_, for an account of the worship

of which very powerful divinity read Tod. The supporters are a Bhil and

a Rajput, attired for the forlorn-hope; commemorating not only the

defences of Chitor, but also the connection of the great Bappa Rawul

with the Bhils, who even now play the principal part in the

Crown-Marking of a Rana of Udaipur. Here, again, Tod explains the matter

at length. Banswara claims alliance with Udaipur, and carries a sun,

with a label of difference of some kind. Jeypore has the five-coloured

flag of Amber with a sun, because the House claim descent from Rama, and

her crest is a kuchnar tree, which is the bearing of Dasaratha, father

of Rama. The white horse, which faces the tiger as supporter, may or may

not be memorial of the great \_aswamedha yuga\_, or horse sacrifice, that

Jey Singh, who built Jeypore, did--\_not\_ carry out.

Jodhpur has the five-coloured flag, with a falcon, in which shape Durga,

the patron Goddess of the State, has been sometimes good enough to

appear. She has perched in the form of a wagtail on the howdah of the

Chief of Jeysulmir, whose shield is blazoned with "forts in a desert

land," and a naked left arm holding a broken spear, because, the legend

goes, Jeysulmir was once galled by a horse with a magic spear. They tell

the story to-day, but it is a long one. The supporters of the

shield--this is canting heraldry with a vengeance!--are antelopes of the

desert spangled with gold coin, because the State was long the refuge of

the wealthy bankers of India.

Bikanir, a younger House of Jodhpur, carries three white hawks on the

five-coloured flag. The patron Goddess of Bikanir once turned the thorny

jungle round the city to fruit trees, and the crest therefore is a green

tree--strange emblem for a desert principality. The motto, however, is a

good one. When the greater part of the Rajput States were vassals of

Akbar, and he sent them abroad to do his will, certain Princes objected

to crossing the Indus, and asked Bikanir to head the mutiny because his

State was the least accessible. He consented, on condition that they

would all for one day greet him thus: "\_Jey Jangal dar Badshah!\_"

History shows what became of the objectors, and Bikanir's motto: "Hail

to the King of the Waste!" proves that the tale \_must\_ be true. But from

Boondi to Bikanir is a long digression, bred by idleness on the bund of

the Burra. It would have been sinful not to let down a line into those

crowded waters, and the Guards, who were Mahometans, said that if the

Sahib did not eat fish, they did. And the Sahib fished luxuriously,

catching two and three pounders, of a perch-like build, whenever he

chose to cast. He was wearied of schools and dispensaries, and the

futility of heraldry accorded well with sloth--that is to say Boondi.

It should be noted, none the less, that in this part of the world the

soberest mind will believe anything--believe in the ghosts by the Gau

Mukh, and the dead Thakurs who get Out of their tombs and ride round the

Burra Talao at Boondi--will credit every legend and lie that rises as

naturally as the red flush of sunset, to gild the dead glories of

Rajasthan.

XVII

SHOWS THAT THERE MAY BE POETRY IN A BANK, AND ATTEMPTS TO SHOW THE

WONDERS OF THE PALACE OF BOONDI.

"This is a devil's place you have come to, Sahib. No grass for the

horses, and the people don't understand anything, and their dirty \_pice\_

are no good in Nasirabad. Look here." Ram Baksh wrathfully exhibited a

handful of lumps of copper. The nuisance of taking a native out of his

own beat is that he forthwith regards you not only as the author of his

being, but of all his misfortunes as well. He is as hampering as a

frightened child and as irritating as a man. "Padre Martum Sahib never

came here," said Ram Baksh, with an air of one who had been led against

his will into bad company.

A story about a rat that found a piece of turmeric and set up a bunnia's

shop had sent the one-eyed \_munshi\_ away, but a company of lesser

\_munshis\_, runners, and the like were in attendance, and they said that

money might be changed at the Treasury, which was in the Palace. It was

quite impossible to change it anywhere else--there was no order. From

the Sukh Mahal to the Palace the road ran through the heart of the city,

and by reason of the continual shouting of the \_munshis\_, not more than

ten thousand of the fifty thousand people of Boondi knew for what

purpose the Sahib was journeying through their midst. Cataract was the

most prevalent affliction, cataract in its worst forms, and it was,

therefore, necessary that men should come very close to look at the

stranger. They were in no sense rude, but they stared devoutly. "He has

not come for \_shikar\_, and he will not take petitions. He has come to

see the place, and God knows what he is." The description was quite

correct, as far as it went; but, somehow or another, when shouted out at

four crossways in the midst of a very pleasant little gathering it did

not seem to add to dignity or command respect.

It has been written "the \_coup d'oeil\_ of the castellated Palace of

Boondi, from whichever side you approach it, is perhaps the most

striking in India. Whoever has seen the Palace of Boondi can easily

picture to himself the hanging gardens of Semiramis." This is true--and

more too. To give on paper any adequate idea of the Boondi-ki-Mahal is

impossible. Jeypore Palace may be called the Versailles of India;

Udaipur's House of State is dwarfed by the hills round it and the spread

of the Pichola Lake; Jodhpur's House of Strife, grey towers on red rock,

is the work of giants, but the Palace of Boondi, even in broad daylight,

is such a Palace as men build for themselves in uneasy dreams--the work

of goblins more than of men. It is built into and out of the hillside,

in gigantic terrace on terrace, and dominates the whole of the city. But

a detailed description of it were useless. Owing to the dip of the

valley in which the city stands, it can only be well seen from one

place, the main road of the city; and from that point looks like an

avalanche of masonry ready to rush down and block the gorge. Like all

the other Palaces of Rajputana, it is the work of many hands, and the

present Raja has thrown out a bastion of no small size on one of the

lower levels, which has been four or five years in the building. No one

knows where the hill begins and where the Palace ends. Men say that

there are subterranean chambers leading into the heart of the hills, and

passages communicating with the extreme limits of Taragarh, the giant

fortress that crowns the hill and flanks the whole of the valley on the

Palace side. They say that there is as much room under as above ground,

and that none have traversed the whole extent of the Palace. Looking at

it from below, the Englishman could readily believe that nothing was

impossible for those who had built it. The dominant impression was of

height--height that heaved itself out of the hillside and weighed upon

the eyelids of the beholder. The steep slope of the land had helped the

builders in securing this effect. From the main road of the city a steep

stone-paved ascent led to the first gate--name not communicated by the

zealous following. Two gaudily painted fishes faced each other over the

arch, and there was little except glaring colour ornamentation visible.

This gate gave into what they called the \_chowk\_ of the Palace, and one

had need to look twice ere realising that this open space, crammed with

human life, was a spur of the hill on which the Palace stood, paved and

built over. There had been little attempt at levelling the ground. The

foot-worn stones followed the contours of the ground, and ran up to the

walls of the Palace smooth as glass. Immediately facing the Gate of the

Fish was the Quarter-Guard barracks, a dark and dirty room, and here, in

a chamber hollowed out in a wall, were stored the big drums of State,

the \_nakarras\_. The appearance of the Englishman seemed to be the signal

for smiting the biggest of all, and the dull thunder rolled up the

Palace \_chowk\_, and came back from the unpierced Palace walls in hollow

groaning. It was an eerie welcome--this single, sullen boom. In this

enclosure, four hundred years ago, if the legend be true, a son of the

great Rao Bando, who dreamed a dream as Pharaoh did and saved Boondi

from famine, left a little band of Haras to wait his bidding while he

went up into the Palace and slew his two uncles who had usurped the

throne and abandoned the faith of their fathers. When he had pierced one

and hacked the other, as they sat alone and unattended, he called out to

his followers, who made a slaughter-house of the enclosure and cut up

the usurpers' adherents. At the best of times men slip on these smooth

stones; and when the place was swimming in blood, foothold must have

been treacherous indeed.

An inquiry for the place of the murder of the uncles--it is marked by a

staircase slab, or Tod, the accurate, is at fault--was met by the answer

that the Treasury was close at hand. They speak a pagan tongue in

Boondi, swallow half their words, and adulterate the remainder with

local patois. What can be extracted from a people who call four miles

variously \_do kosh\_, \_do kush\_, \_dhi hkas\_, \_doo-a koth\_, and \_diakast\_

all one word? The country-folk are quite unintelligible; which

simplifies matters. It is the catching of a shadow of a meaning here and

there, the hunting for directions cloaked in dialect, that is annoying.

Foregoing his archÃ¦ological researches, the Englishman sought the

Treasury. He took careful notes; he even made a very bad drawing, but

the Treasury of Boondi defied pinning down before the public. There was

a gash in the brown flank of the Palace--and this gash was filled with

people. A broken bees' comb with the whole hive busily at work on

repairs will give a very fair idea of this extraordinary place--the

Heart of Boondi. The sunlight was very vivid without and the shadows

were heavy within, so that little could be seen except this clinging

mass of humanity wriggling like maggots in a carcass. A stone staircase

ran up to a rough verandah built out of the wall, and in the wall was a

cave-like room, the guardian of whose depths was one of the refined

financial classes, a man with very small hands and soft, low voice. He

was girt with a sword, and held authority over the Durbar funds. He

referred the Englishman courteously to another branch of the department,

to find which necessitated a blundering progress up another narrow

staircase crowded with loungers of all kinds. Here everything shone from

constant contact of bare feet and hurrying bare shoulders. The staircase

was the thing that, seen from without, had produced the bees' comb

impression. At the top was a long verandah shaded from the sun, and here

the Boondi Treasury worked, under the guidance of a grey-haired old man,

whose sword lay by the side of his comfortably wadded cushion. He

controlled twenty or thirty writers, each wrapped round a huge, country

paper account-book, and each far too busy to raise his eyes.

The babble on the staircase might have been the noise of the sea so far

as these men were concerned. It ebbed and flowed in regular beats, and

spread out far into the courtyard below. Now and again the

\_click-click-click\_ of a scabbard tip being dragged against the wall,

cut the dead sound of tramping naked feet, and a soldier would stumble

up the narrow way into the sunlight. He was received, and sent back or

forward by a knot of keen-eyed loungers, who seemed to act as a buffer

between the peace of the Secretariat and the pandemonium of the

Administrative. \_Saises\_ and grass-cutters, mahouts of elephants,

brokers, mahajuns, villagers from the district, and here and there a

shock-headed aborigine, swelled the mob on and at the foot of the

stairs. As they came up, they met the buffer-men who spoke in low voices

and appeared to filter them according to their merits. Some were sent to

the far end of the verandah, where everything melted away in a fresh

crowd of dark faces. Others were sent back, and joined the detachment

shuffling for their shoes in the \_chowk\_. One servant of the Palace

withdrew himself to the open, underneath the verandah, and there sat

yapping from time to time like a hungry dog: "The grass! The grass! The

grass!" But the men with the account-books never stirred. And they bowed

their heads gravely and made entry or erasure, turning back the rustling

leaves. Not often does a reach of the River of Life so present itself

that it can without alteration be transferred to canvas. But the

Treasury of Boondi, the view up the long verandah, stood complete and

ready for any artist who cared to make it his own. And by that lighter

and less malicious irony of Fate, who is always giving nuts to those who

have no teeth, the picture was clinched and brought together by a

winking, brass hookah-bowl of quaint design, pitched carelessly upon a

roll of dull red cloth in the foreground. The faces of the accountants

were of pale gold, for they were an untanned breed, and the face of the

old man, their controller, was frosted silver.

It was a strange Treasury, but no other could have suited the Palace.

The Englishman watched, open-mouthed, blaming himself because he could

not catch the meaning of the orders given to the flying chaprassies, nor

make anything of the hum in the verandah and the tumult on the stairs.

The old man took the commonplace currency note and announced his

willingness to give change in silver. "We have no small notes here," he

said. "They are not wanted. In a little while, when you next bring the

Honour of your Presence this way, you shall find the silver."

The Englishman was taken down the steps and fell into the arms of a

bristly giant who had left his horse in the courtyard, and the giant

spoke at length waving his arms in the air, but the Englishman could not

understand him and dropped into the hubbub at the Palace foot. Except

the main lines of the building there is nothing straight or angular

about it. The rush of people seems to have rounded and softened every

corner, as a river grinds down boulders. From the lowest tier, two

zigzags, all of rounded stones sunk in mortar, took the Englishman to a

gate where two carved elephants were thrusting at each other over the

arch; and, because neither he nor any one round him could give the gate

a name, he called it the "Gate of the Elephants." Here the noise from

the Treasury was softened, and entry through the gate brought him into a

well-known world, the drowsy peace of a King's Palace. There was a

courtyard surrounded by stables, in which were kept chosen horses, and

two or three grooms were sleeping in the sun. There was no other life

except the whir and coo of the pigeons. In time--though there really is

no such a thing as time off the line of railway--an official appeared

begirt with the skewer-like keys that open the native bayonet-locks,

each from six inches to a foot long. Where was the Raj Mahal in which,

sixty-six years ago, Tod formally installed Ram Singh, "who is now in

his eleventh year, fair and with a lively, intelligent cast of face"?

The warden made no answer, but led to a room, overlooking the courtyard,

in which two armed men stood before an empty throne of white marble.

They motioned silently that none must pass immediately before the seat

of the King, but go round, keeping to the far side of the double row of

pillars. Near the walls were stone slabs pierced to take the butts of

long, venomous, black bamboo lances; rude coffers were disposed about

the room, and ruder sketches of Ganesh adorned the walls. "The men,"

said the warden, "watch here day and night because this place is the

Rutton Daulat." That, you will concede, is lucid enough. He who does not

understand it, may go to for a thick-headed barbarian.

From the Rutton Daulat the warden unlocked doors that led into a hall of

audience--the Chutter Mahal--built by Raja Chutter Lal, who was killed

more than two hundred years ago in the latter days of Shah Jehan for

whom he fought. Two rooms, each supported on double rows of pillars,

flank the open space, in the centre of which is a marble reservoir. Here

the Englishman looked anxiously for some of the atrocities of the West,

and was pleased to find that, with the exception of a vase of

artificial flowers and a clock, there was nothing that jarred with the

exquisite pillars, and the raw blaze of colour in the roofs of the

rooms. In the middle of these impertinent observations, something

sighed--sighed like a distressed ghost. Unaccountable voices are at all

times unpleasant, especially when the hearer is some hundred feet or so

above ground in an unknown Palace in an unknown land. A gust of wind had

found its way through one of the latticed balconies, and had breathed

upon a thin plate of metal, some astrological instrument, slung gongwise

on a tripod. The tone was as soft as that of an Ãolian harp, and,

because of the surroundings, infinitely more plaintive.

There was an inlaid ivory door, set in lintel and posts crusted with

looking-glass--all apparently old work. This opened into a darkened room

where there were gilt and silver charpoys, and portraits, in the native

fashion, of the illustrious dead of Boondi. Beyond the darkness was a

balcony clinging to the sheer side of the Palace, and it was then that

the Englishman realised to what a height he had climbed without knowing

it. He looked down upon the bustle of the Treasury and the stream of

life flowing into and out of the Gate of the Fishes where the big drums

lie. Lifting his eyes, he saw how Boondi City had built itself,

spreading from west to east as the confined valley became too narrow and

the years more peaceable. The Boondi hills are the barrier that

separates the stony, uneven ground near Deoli from the flats of Kotah,

twenty miles away. From the Palace balcony the road to the eye is clear

to the banks of the Chumbul River, which was the Debatable Ford in times

gone by and was leaped, as all rivers with any pretensions to a

pedigree have been, by more than one magic horse. Northward and easterly

the hills run out to Indurgarh, and southward and westerly to territory

marked "disputed" on the map in the present year of grace. From this

balcony the Raja can see to the limit of his territory eastward, his

empire all under his hand. He is, or the Politicals err, that same Ram

Singh who was installed by Tod in 1821, and for whose success in killing

his first deer, Tod was, by the Queen-Mother of Boondi, bidden to

rejoice. To-day the people of Boondi say: "This Durbar is very old; so

old that few men remember its beginning, for that was in our father's

time." It is related also of Boondi that, on the occasion of the Queen's

Jubilee, they said proudly that their ruler had reigned for sixty years,

and he was a man. They saw nothing astonishing in the fact of a woman

having reigned for fifty. History does not say whether they jubilated;

for there are no Englishmen in Boondi to write accounts of

demonstrations and foundation-stone laying to the daily newspaper, and

Boondi is very, very small. In the early morning you may see a man

pantingly chased out of the city by another man with a naked sword. This

is the mail and the mail-guard; and the effect is as though runner and

swordsman lay under a doom--the one to fly with the fear of death always

before him, as men fly in dreams, and the other to perpetually fail of

his revenge.

The warden unlocked more doors and led the Englishman still higher, but

into a garden--a heavily timbered garden with a tank for gold fish in

the midst. For once the impassive following smiled when they saw that

the Englishman was impressed.

"This," said they, "is the Rang Bilas." "But who made it?" "Who knows?

It was made long ago." The Englishman looked over the garden-wall, a

foot-high parapet, and shuddered. There was only the flat side of the

Palace, and a drop on to the stones of the zigzag scores of feet below.

Above him was the riven hillside and the decaying wall of Taragarh, and

behind him this fair garden, hung like Mahomet's coffin, but full of the

noise of birds and the talking of the wind in the branches. The warden

entered into a lengthy explanation of the nature of the delusion,

showing how--but he was stopped before he was finished. His listener did

not want to know "how the trick was done." Here was the garden, and

there were three or four storeys climbed to reach it. At one end of the

garden was a small room, under treatment by native artists who were

painting the panels with historical pictures, in distemper. Theirs was

florid polychromatic art, but skirting the floor was a series of

frescoes in red, black, and white, of combats with elephants, bold and

temperate as good German work. They were worn and defaced in places; but

the hand of some bygone limner, who did not know how to waste a line,

showed under the bruises and scratches, and put the newer work to shame.

Here the tour of the Palace ended; and it must be remembered that the

Englishman had not gone the depth of three rooms into one flank. Acres

of building lay to the right of him, and above the lines of the terraces

he could see the tops of green trees. "Who knew how many gardens, such

as the Rang Bilas, were to be found in the Palace?" No one answered

directly, but all said that there were many. The warden gathered up his

keys, and, locking each door behind him as he passed, led the way down

to earth. But before he had crossed the garden the Englishman heard,

deep down in the bowels of the Palace, a woman's voice singing, and the

voice rang as do voices in caves. All Palaces in India excepting dead

ones, such as that of Amber, are full of eyes. In some, as has been

said, the idea of being watched is stronger than in others. In Boondi

Palace it was overpowering--being far worse than in the green shuttered

corridors of Jodhpur. There were trap-doors on the tops of terraces, and

windows veiled in foliage, and bull's-eyes set low in unexpected walls,

and many other peep-holes and places of vantage. In the end, the

Englishman looked devoutly at the floor, but when the voice of the woman

came up from under his feet, he felt that there was nothing left for him

but to go. Yet, excepting only this voice, there was deep silence

everywhere, and nothing could be seen.

The warden returned to the Chutter Mahal to pick up a lost key. The

brass table of the planets was sighing softly to itself as it swung to

and fro in the wind. That was the last view of the interior of the

Palace, the empty court, and the swinging, sighing astrolabe.

About two hours afterwards, when he had reached the other side of the

valley and seen the full extent of the buildings, the Englishman began

to realise first that he had not been taken through one-tenth of the

Palace; and secondly, that he would do well to measure its extent by

acres, in preference to meaner measures. But what made him blush hotly,

all alone among the tombs on the hillside, was the idea that he with his

ridiculous demands for eggs, firewood, and sweet drinking water should

have clattered and chattered through any part of it at all.

He began to understand why Boondi does not encourage Englishmen.

XVIII

OF THE UNCIVILISED NIGHT AND THE DEPARTURE TO THINGS CIVILISED. SHOWING

HOW A FRIEND MAY KEEP AN APPOINTMENT TOO WELL.

"Let us go hence my songs, she will not hear. Let us go hence together

without fear." But Ram Baksh the irrepressible sang it in altogether a

baser key. He came by night to the pavilion on the lake, while the

sepoys were cooking their fish, and reiterated his whine about the

devildom of the country into which the Englishman had dragged him. Padre

Martum Sahib would never have thus treated the owner of sixteen horses,

all fast and big ones, and eight superior "shutin-tongas." "Let us get

away," said Ram Baksh. "You are not here for \_shikar\_, and the water is

very bad." It was indeed, except when taken from the lake, and then it

only tasted fishy. "We will go, Ram Baksh," said the Englishman. "We

will go in the very early morning, and in the meantime here is fish to

stay your stomach with."

When a transparent piece of canvas, which fails by three feet to reach

ceiling or floor, is the only bar between the East and the West, he

would be a churl indeed who stood upon invidious race distinctions. The

Englishman went out and fraternised with the Military--the four-rupee

soldiers of Boondi who guarded him. They were armed, one with an old

Tower musket crazy as to nipple and hammer, one with a native-made

smooth-bore, and one with a composite contrivance--English sporting

muzzle-loader stock with a compartment for a jointed cleaning-rod, and

hammered octagonal native barrel, wire-fastened, a tuft of cotton on the

foresight. All three guns were loaded, and the owners were very proud of

them. They were simple folk, these men-at-arms, with an inordinate

appetite for broiled fish. They were not \_always\_ soldiers they

explained. They cultivated their crops until called for any duty that

might turn up. They were paid now and again, at intervals, but they were

paid in coin and not in kind.

The \_munshis\_ and the vakils and the runners had departed after seeing

that the Englishman was safe for the night, so the freedom of the little

gathering on the bund was unrestrained. The \_chowkidar\_ came out of his

cave into the firelight. He took a fish and incontinently choked, for he

was a feeble old man. Set right again, he launched into a very long and

quite unintelligible story while the sepoys said reverently: "He is an

old man and remembers many things." As he babbled, the night shut in

upon the lake and the valley of Boondi. The last cows were driven into

the water for their evening drink, the waterfowl and the monkeys went to

bed, and the stars came out and made a new firmament in the untroubled

bosom of the lake. The light of the fire showed the ruled lines of the

bund springing out of the soft darkness of the wooded hill on the left

and disappearing into the solid darkness of a bare hill on the right.

Below the bund a man cried aloud to keep wandering pigs from the gardens

whose tree-tops rose to a level with the bund-edge. Beyond the trees all

was swaddled in gloom. When the gentle buzz of the unseen city died

out, it seemed as though the bund were the very Swordwide Bridge that

runs, as every one knows, between this world and the next. The water

lapped and muttered, and now and again a fish jumped, with the shatter

of broken glass, blurring the peace of the reflected heavens.

"And duller should I be than some fat weed

That rolls itself at ease on Lethe's wharf."

The poet who wrote those lines knew nothing whatever of Lethe's wharf.

The Englishman had found it, and it seemed to him, at that hour and in

that place, that it would be good and desirable never to return to the

Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioners any more, but to lie at ease

on the warm sunlit bund by day, and, at night, near a shadow-breeding

fire, to listen for the strangled voices and whispers of the darkness in

the hills. Thus after as long a life as the \_chowkidar's\_, dying easily

and pleasantly, and being buried in a red tomb on the borders of the

lake. Surely no one would come to reclaim him, across those weary, weary

miles of rock-strewn road.... "And this," said the \_chowkidar\_, raising

his voice to enforce attention, "is true talk. Everybody knows it, and

now the Sahib knows it. I am an old man." He fell asleep at once, with

his head on the clay pipe that was doing duty for a whole \_huqa\_ among

the company. He had been talking for nearly a quarter of an hour.

See how great a man is the true novelist! Six or seven thousand miles

away, Walter Besant of the Golden Pen had created Mr. Maliphant--the

ancient of figure-heads in the \_All Sorts and Conditions of Men\_, and

here, in Boondi, the Englishman had found Mr. Maliphant in the withered

flesh. So he drank Walter Besant's health in the water of the Burra

Talao. One of the sepoys turned himself round, with a clatter of

accoutrements, shifted his blanket under his elbow, and told a tale. It

had something to do with his \_khet\_, and a \_gunna\_ which certainly was

not sugar-cane. It was elusive. At times it seemed that it was a woman,

then changed to a right of way, and lastly appeared to be a tax; but the

more he attempted to get at its meaning through the curious patois in

which its doings or its merits were enveloped, the more dazed the

Englishman became. None the less the story was a fine one, embellished

with much dramatic gesture which told powerfully against the firelight.

Then the second sepoy, who had been enjoying the pipe all the time, told

a tale, the purport of which was that the dead in the tombs round the

lake were wont to get up of nights and go hunting. This was a fine and

ghostly story; and its dismal effect was much heightened by some clamour

of the night far up the lake beyond the floor of stars.

The third sepoy said nothing. He had eaten too much fish and was fast

asleep by the side of the \_chowkidar\_.

They were all Mahometans, and consequently all easy to deal with. A

Hindu is an excellent person, but ... but ... there is no knowing what

is in his heart, and he is hedged about with so many strange

observances.

This Hindu or Musalman bent, which each Englishman's mind must take

before he has been three years in the country, is, of course, influenced

by Province or Presidency. In Rajputana generally, the Political swears

by the Hindu, and holds that the Mahometan is untrustworthy. But a man

who will eat with you and take your tobacco, sinking the fiction that it

has been doctored with infidel wines, cannot be very bad after all.

That night when the tales were all told and the guard, bless them, were

snoring peaceably in the starlight, a man came stealthily into the

enclosure of canvas and woke the Englishman, muttering "Sahib, Sahib,"

in his ear. It was no robber but some poor devil with a petition--a

grimy, welted paper. He was absolutely unintelligible, and stammered

almost to dumbness. He stood by the bed, alternately bowing to the earth

and standing erect, his arms spread aloft, and his whole body working as

he tried to force out some rebellious word in a key that should not wake

the men without. What could the Englishman do? He was no Government

servant, and had no concern with petitions. The man clicked and choked

and gasped in his desperate desire to make the Sahib understand. But it

was no use; and in the end he departed as he had come-bowed, abject, and

unintelligible.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let every word written against Ganesh be rescinded. It was by his

ordering that the Englishman saw such a dawn on the Burra Talao as he

had never before set eyes on. Every fair morning is a reprint, blurred

perhaps, of the First Day; but this splendour was a thing to be put

aside from all other days and remembered. The stars had no fire in them

and the fish had stopped jumping, when the black water of the lake

paled and grew grey. While he watched it seemed to the Englishman that

voices on the hills were intoning the first verses of Genesis. The grey

light moved on the face of the waters till, with no interval, a

blood-red glare shot up from the horizon and, inky black against the

intense red, a giant crane floated out towards the sun. In the

still-shadowed city the great Palace Drum boomed and throbbed to show

that the gates were open, while the dawn swept up the valley and made

all things clear. The blind man who said, "The blast of a trumpet is

red," spoke only the truth. The breaking of the red dawn is like the

blast of a trumpet.

"What," said the \_chowkidar\_, picking the ashes of the overnight fire

out of his beard, "what, I say, are five eggs or twelve eggs to such a

Raj as ours? What also are fowls--what are" ... "There was no talk of

fowls. Where is the fowl-man from whom you got the eggs?" "He is here.

No, he is there. I do not know. I am an old man, and I and the Raj

supply everything without price. The fowl-man will be paid by the

State--liberally paid. Let the Sahib be happy. \_Wah. Wah.\_"

Experience of forced labour in Himalayan villages had made the

Englishman very tender in raising supplies that were given gratis; but

the fowl-man could not be found, and the value of his wares was, later,

paid to Ganesh--Ganesh of Situr, for that is the name of the village

full of priests, through which the Englishman had passed in ignorance

two days before. A double handful of sweet smelling flowers made the

receipt.

Boondi was wide-awake before half-past seven in the morning. Her

hunters, on foot and on horse, were filing towards the Deoli Gate. They

would hunt tiger and deer they said, even with matchlocks and muzzle

loaders as uncouth as those the Sahib saw. They were a merry company and

chaffed the Quarter-Guard at the gate unmercifully when a bullock-cart,

laden with the cases of the "Batoum Naphtha and Oil Company" blocked the

road. One of them had been a soldier of the Queen, and, excited by the

appearance of a Sahib, did so rebuke and badger the Quarter-Guard for

their slovenliness that they threatened to come out of the barracks and

destroy him.

So, after one last look at the Palace high up the hillside, the

Englishman was borne away along the Deoli Road. The peculiarity of

Boondi is the peculiarity of the covered pitfall. One does not see it

till one falls into it. A quarter of a mile from the gate, town and

Palace were invisible. But the Englishman was grieved at heart. He had

fallen in love with Boondi the beautiful, and believed that he would

never again see anything half so fair. The utter untouchedness of the

town was one-half the charm and its association the other. Read Tod, who

is far too good to be chipped or sampled; read Tod luxuriously on the

bund of the Burra Talao, and the spirit of the place will enter into you

and you will be happy.

To enjoy life thoroughly, haste and bustle must be abandoned. Ram Baksh

has said that Englishmen are always bothering to go forward, and for

this reason, though beyond doubt they pay well and readily, are not wise

men. He gave utterance to this philosophy after he had mistaken his road

and pulled up in what must have been a disused quarry hard by a

cane-field. There were patches and pockets of cultivation along the

rocky road, where men grew cotton, chillies, tobacco, and sugar-cane. "I

will get you sugar-cane," said Ram Baksh. "Then we will go forward, and

perhaps some of these jungly-fools will tell us where the road is." A

"jungly fool," a tender of goats, did in time appear, but there was no

hurry; the sugar-cane was sweet and purple and the sun warm.

The Englishman lay out at high noon on the crest of a rolling upland

crowned with rock, and heard, as a loafer had told him he would hear,

the "set of the day," which is as easily discernible as the change of

tone between the rising and the falling tide. At a certain hour the

impetus of the morning dies out, and all things, living and inanimate,

turn their thoughts to the prophecy of the coming night. The little

wandering breezes drop for a time, and, when they blow afresh, bring the

message. The "set of the day," as the loafer said, has changed, the

machinery is beginning to run down, the unseen tides of the air are

falling. This moment of change can only be felt in the open and in touch

with the earth, and once discovered, seems to place the finder in deep

accord and fellowship with all things on earth. Perhaps this is why the

genuine loafer, though "frequently drunk," is "always polite to the

stranger," and shows such a genial tolerance towards the weaknesses of

mankind, black, white, or brown.

In the evening when the jackals were scuttling across the roads and the

cranes had gone to roost, came Deoli the desolate, and an unpleasant

meeting. Six days away from his kind had bred in a Cockney heart a

great desire to see a fellow-subject. An elaborate loaf through the

cantonment--fifteen minutes' walk from end to end--showed only one

distant dog-cart and a small English child with an ayah. There was grass

in the soldierly straight roads, and some of the cross-cuts had never

been used at all since the days when the cantonment had been first laid

out. In the western corner lay the cemetery--the only carefully tended

and newly whitewashed thing in this God-forgotten place. Some years ago

a man had said good-by to the Englishman; adding cheerily: "We shall

meet again. The world's a very little place y' know."

His prophecy was a true one, for the two met indeed, but the prophet was

lying in Deoli Cemetery near the well, which is decorated so

ecclesiastically with funeral urns.

XIX

COMES BACK TO THE RAILWAY, AFTER REFLECTIONS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE

EMPIRE; AND SO HOME AGAIN, WITH APOLOGY TO ALL WHO HAVE READ THUS FAR.

In the morning the tonga rattled past Deoli Cemetery into the open,

where the Deoli Irregulars were drilling. They marked the beginning of

civilisation and white shirts; and so they seemed altogether detestable.

Yet another day's jolting, enlivened by the philosophy of Ram Baksh, and

then came Nasirabad. The last pair of ponies suggested serious thought.

They had covered eighteen miles at an average speed of eight miles an

hour, and were well-conditioned little rats. "A Colonel Sahib gave me

this one for a present," said Ram Baksh, flicking the near one. "It was

his child's pony. The child was five years old." When he went away, the

Colonel Sahib said: "Ram Baksh, you are a good man. Never have I seen

such a good man. This horse is yours." Ram Baksh was getting a horse's

work out of a child's pony. Surely we in India work the land much as the

Colonel Sahib worked his son's mount; making it do child's work when so

much more can be screwed out of it. A native and a native State deals

otherwise with horse and holding. Perhaps our extreme scrupulousness in

handling may be statecraft, but, after even a short sojourn in places

which are dealt with not so tenderly, it seems absurd. There are States

where things are done, and done without protest, that would make the

hair of the educated native stand on end with horror. These things are

of course not expedient to write; because their publication would give a

great deal of unnecessary pain and heart-searching to estimable native

administrators who have the hope of a Star before their eyes and would

not better matters in the least.

Note this fact though. With the exception of such journals as, occupying

a central position in British territory, levy blackmail from the

neighbouring States, there are no independent papers in Rajputana. A

King may start a weekly, to encourage a taste for Sanskrit and high

Hindi, or a Prince may create a Court Chronicle; but that is all. A

"free press" is not allowed, and this the native journalist knows. With

good management he can, keeping under the shadow of our flag, raise two

hundred rupees from a big man here, and five hundred from a rich man

there, but he does not establish himself across the Border. To one who

has reason to hold a stubborn disbelief in even the elementary morality

of the native press, this bashfulness and lack of enterprise is amusing.

But to return to the native States' administrations. There is nothing

exactly wrong in the methods of government that are overlaid with

English terms and forms. They are vigorous, in certain points; and where

they are not vigorous, there is a cheery happy-go-luckiness about the

arrangement that must be seen to be understood. The shift and play of a

man's fortune across the Border is as sudden as anything in the days of

Haroun-al-Raschid of blessed memory, and there are stories, to be got

for the unearthing, as wild and as improbable as those in the \_Thousand

and One Nights\_. Most impressive of all is the way in which the country

is "used," and its elasticity under pressure. In the good old days the

Durbar raised everything it could from the people, and the King spent as

much as ever he could on his personal pleasures. Now the institution of

the Political agent has stopped the grabbing, for which, by the way,

some of the monarchs are not in the least grateful--and smoothed the

outward face of things. But there is still a difference, between our

ways and the ways of the other places. A year spent among native States

ought to send a man back to the Decencies and the Law Courts and the

Rights of the Subject with a supreme contempt for those who rave about

the oppressions of our brutal bureaucracy. One month nearly taught an

average Englishman that it was the proper thing to smite anybody of mean

aspect and obstructive tendencies on the mouth with a shoe. Hear what an

intelligent loafer said. His words are at least as valuable as these

babblings. He was, as usual, wonderfully drunk, and the gift of speech

came upon him. The conversation--he was a great politician, this

loafer--had turned on the poverty of India. "Poor?" said he. "Of course,

it's poor. Oh, yes, d----d poor. And I'm poor, an' you're poor,

altogether. Do you expect people will give you money without you ask

'em? No, I tell you, Sir, there's enough money in India to pave Hell

with if you could only get at it. I've kep' servants in my day. Did they

ever leave me without a hundred or a hundred and fifty rupees put

by--and never touched? You mark that. Does any black man who had been

in Guv'ment service go away without hundreds an' hundreds put by, and

never touched? You mark that. Money? The place stinks o' money--just

kept out o' sight. Do you ever know a native that didn't say \_Garib

admi\_ (I'm a poor man)? They've been sayin' \_Garib admi\_ so long that

the Guv'ment learns to believe 'em, and now they're all bein' treated as

though they was paupers. I'm a pauper, an' you're a pauper--\_we\_ 'aven't

got anything hid in the ground--an' so's every white man in this

forsaken country. But the Injian he's a rich man. How do I know? Because

I've tramped on foot, or warrant pretty well from one end of the place

to the other, an' I know what I'm talkin' about, and this 'ere Guv'ment

goes peckin' an' fiddlin' over its tuppenny-ha'penny little taxes as if

it was afraid. Which it is. You see how they do things in ----. It's six

sowars here, and ten sowars there, and--'Pay up, you brutes, or we'll

pull your ears over your head.' And when they've taken all they can get,

the headman, he says: 'This is a dashed poor yield. I'll come again.'

\_Of course\_ the people digs up something out of the ground, and they

pay. I know the way it's done, and that's the way to do it. You can't go

to an Injian an' say: 'Look here. Can you pay me five rupees?' He says:

'\_Garib admi\_,' of course, an' would say it if he was as rich as banker.

But if you send half a dozen swords at him and shift the thatch off of

his roof, he'll pay. Guv'ment can't do that. I don't suppose it could.

There is no reason why it shouldn't. But it might do something like it,

to show that it wasn't going to have no nonsense. Why, I'd undertake to

raise a hundred million--what am I talking of?--a hundred and fifty

million pounds from this country \_per annum\_, and it wouldn't be

strained \_then\_. One hundred and fifty millions you could raise as easy

as paint, if you just made these 'ere Injians understand that they had

to pay an' make no bones about it. It's enough to make a man sick to go

in over yonder to ---- and see what they do; and then come back an' see

what we do. Perfectly sickenin' it is. Borrer money? Why the country

could pay herself an' everything she wants, if she was only made to do

it. It's this blooomin' \_Garib admi\_ swindle that's been going on all

these years, that has made fools o' the Guv'ment."

Then he became egotistical, this ragged ruffian who conceived that he

knew the road to illimitable wealth and told the story of his life,

interspersed with anecdotes that would blister the paper they were

written on. But through all his ravings, he stuck to his

hundred-and-fifty-million theory, and though the listener dissented from

him and the brutal cruelty with which his views were stated, an

unscientific impression remained not to be shaken off. Across the Border

one feels that the country is being used, exploited, "made to sit up,"

so to speak. In our territories the feeling is equally strong of wealth

"just round the corner," as the loafer said, of a people wrapped up in

cotton wool and ungetatable. Will any man, who really knows something of

a little piece of India and has not the fear of running counter to

custom before his eyes, explain how this impression is produced, and why

it is an erroneous one?

Nasirabad marked the end of the Englishman's holiday, and there was

sorrow in his heart. "Come back again," said Ram Baksh, cheerfully,

"and bring a gun with you. Then I'll take you to Gungra, and I'll drive

you myself. 'Drive you just as well as I've driven these four days

past." An amicable open-minded soul was Ram Baksh. May his tongas never

grow less!

\* \* \* \* \*

"This 'ere Burma fever is a bad thing to have. It's pulled me down

awful; an' now I am going to Peshawar. Are you the Station-master?" It

was Thomas--white-cheeked, sunken-eyed, drawn-mouthed Thomas--travelling

from Nasirabad to Peshawar on pass; and with him was a Corporal new to

his stripes and doing station duty. Every Thomas is interesting, except

when he is too drunk to speak. This Thomas was an enthusiast. He had

volunteered, from a Home-going regiment shattered by Burma fever, into a

regiment at Peshawar, had broken down at Nasirabad on his way up with

his draft, and was now journeying into the unknown to pick up another

medal. "There's sure to be something on the Frontier," said this gaunt,

haggard boy--he was little more, though he reckoned four years' service

and considered himself somebody. "When there's anything going,

Peshawar's the place to be in, they tell me; but I hear we shall have to

march down to Calcutta in no time." The Corporal was a little man and

showed his friend off with great pride: "Ah, you should have come to

\_us\_," said he; "we're the regiment, we are." "Well, I went with the

rest of our men," said Thomas. "There's three hundred of us volunteered

to stay on, and we all went for the same regiment. Not but what I'm

saying yours is a good regiment," he added with grave courtesy. This

loosed the Corporal's tongue, and he descanted on the virtues of the

regiment and the merits of the officers. It has been written that Thomas

is devoid of \_esprit de corps\_, because of the jerkiness of the

arrangements under which he now serves. If this be true, he manages to

conceal his feelings very well; for he speaks most fluently in praise of

his own regiment; and, for all his youth, has a keen appreciation of the

merits of his officers. Go to him when his heart is opened, and hear him

going through the roll of the subalterns, by a grading totally unknown

in the Army List, and you will pick up something worth the hearing.

Thomas, with the Burma fever on him, tried to cut in, from time to time,

with stories of his officers and what they had done "when we was

marchin' all up and down Burma," but the little Corporal went on gayly.

They made a curious contrast--these two types. The lathy, town-bred

Thomas with hock-bottle shoulders, a little education, and a keen desire

to get more medals and stripes; and the little, deep-chested,

bull-necked Corporal brimming over with vitality and devoid of any ideas

beyond the "regiment." And the end of both lives, in all likelihood,

would be a nameless grave in some cantonment burying-ground with, if the

case were specially interesting and the Regimental Doctor had a turn for

the pen, an obituary notice in the Indian Medical Journal. It was an

unpleasant thought.

From the Army to the Navy is a perfectly natural transition, but one

hardly to be expected in the heart of India. Dawn showed the railway

carriage full of riotous boys, for the Agra and Mount Abu schools had

broken up for holidays. Surely it was natural enough to ask a

child--not a boy, but a child--whether he was going home for the

holidays; and surely it was a crushing, a petrifying thing to hear in a

clear treble tinged with icy scorn: "No. I'm on leave. I'm a

midshipman." Two "officers of Her Majesty's Navy"--mids of a man-o'-war

at Bombay--were going up-country on ten days' leave. They had not

travelled much more than twice round the world; but they should have

printed the fact on a label. They chattered like daws, and their talk

was as a whiff of fresh air from the open sea, while the train ran

eastward under the Aravalis. At that hour their lives were bound up in

and made glorious by the hope of riding a horse when they reached their

journey's end. Much had they seen "cities and men," and the artless way

in which they interlarded their conversation with allusions to "one of

those shore-going chaps, you see," was delicious. They had no cares, no

fears, no servants, and an unlimited stock of wonder and admiration for

everything they saw, from the "cute little well-scoops" to a herd of

deer grazing on the horizon. It was not until they had opened their

young hearts with infantile abandon that the listener could guess from

the incidental \_argot\_ where these pocket-Ulysseses had travelled. South

African, Norwegian, and Arabian words were used to help out the slang of

shipboard, and a copious vocabulary of shipboard terms, complicated with

modern Greek. As free from self-consciousness as children, as ignorant

as beings from another planet of the Anglo-Indian life into which they

were going to dip for a few days, shrewd and observant as befits men of

the world who have authority, and neat-handed and resourceful as ----

blue-jackets, they were a delightful study, and accepted freely and

frankly the elaborate apologies tendered to them for the unfortunate

mistake about the "holidays." The roads divided and they went their way;

and there was a shadow after they had gone, for the Globe-trotter said

to his wife, "What I like about Jeypore"--accent on the first syllable,

if you please--"is its characteristic easternness." And the

Globe-trotter's wife said: "Yes. It is purely Oriental."

This was Jeypore with the gas-jets and the water-pipes as was shown at

the beginning of these trivial letters; and the Globe-trotter and his

wife had not been to Amber. Joyful thought! They had not seen the soft

splendours of Udaipur, the nightmare of Chitor, the grim power of

Jodhpur, and the virgin beauties of Boondi--fairest of all places that

the Englishman had set eyes on. The Globe-trotter was great in the

matter of hotels and food, but he had not lain under the shadow of a

tonga in soft warm sand, eating cold pork with a pocket-knife, and

thanking Providence who put sweet-water streams where wayfarers wanted

them. He had not drunk out the brilliant cold-weather night in the

company of a King of Loafers, a grimy scallawag with a six days' beard

and an unholy knowledge of native States. He had attended service in

cantonment churches; but he had not known what it was to witness the

simple, solemn ceremonial in the dining room of a far-away Residency,

when all the English folk within a hundred-mile circuit bowed their

heads before the God of the Christians. He had blundered about temples

of strange deities with a guide at his elbow; but he had not known what

it was to attempt conversation, with a temple dancing-girl (\_not\_ such

an one as Edwin Arnold invented), and to be rewarded for a misturned

compliment with a deftly heaved bunch of marigold buds in his

respectable bosom. Yet he had undoubtedly lost much, and the measure of

his loss was proven in his estimate of the Orientalism of Jeypore.

But what had he who sat in judgment upon him gained? One perfect month

of loaferdom, to be remembered above all others and the night of the

visit to Chitor, to be remembered even when the month is forgotten. Also

the sad knowledge that of all the fair things seen, the inept pen gives

but a feeble and blurred picture.

Let those who have read to the end, pardon a hundred blemishes.

FROM SEA TO SEA

FROM SEA TO SEA

MARCH-SEPTEMBER, 1889

No. I

OF FREEDOM AND THE NECESSITY OF USING HER. THE MOTIVE AND THE SCHEME

THAT WILL COME TO NOTHING. A DISQUISITION UPON THE OTHERNESS OF THINGS

AND THE TORMENTS OF THE DAMNED.

When all the world is young, lad,

And all the trees are green,

And every goose a swan, lad,

And every lass a queen,--

Then hey for boot and horse, lad,

And o'er the world away--

Young blood must have its course, lad,

And every dog its day.

After seven years it pleased Necessity, whom we all serve, to turn to me

and say: "Now you need do Nothing Whatever. You are free to enjoy

yourself. I will take the yoke of bondage from your neck for one year.

What do you choose to do with my gift?" And I considered the matter in

several lights. At first I held notions of regenerating Society; but it

appeared that this would demand more than a year, and perhaps Society

would not be grateful after all. Then I would fain enter upon one

monumental "bust"; but I reflected that this at the outside could endure

but three months, while the headache would last for nine. Then came by

the person that I most hate,--a Globe-trotter. He, sitting in my chair,

discussed India with the unbridled arrogance of five weeks on a Cook's

ticket. He was from England and had dropped his manners in the Suez

Canal. "I assure you," said he, "that you who live so close to the

actual facts of things cannot form dispassionate judgments of their

merits. You are too near. Now I--" he waved his hand modestly and left

me to fill the gaps.

I considered him, from his new helmet to his deck-shoes, and I perceived

that he was but an ordinary man. I thought of India, maligned and silent

India, given up to the ill-considered wanderings of such as he--of the

land whose people are too busy to reply to the libels upon their life

and manners. It was my destiny to avenge India upon nothing less than

three-quarters of the world. The idea necessitated sacrifices,--painful

sacrifices,--for I had to become a Globe-trotter, with a helmet and

deck-shoes. In the interests of our little world I would endure these

things and more. I would deliver "brawling judgments all day long; on

all things unashamed." I would go toward the rising sun till I reached

the heart of the world and once more smelt London asphalt.

The Indian public never gave me a brief. I took it, appointing myself

Commissioner in General for Our Own Sweet Selves. Then all the aspects

of life changed, as, they say, the appearance of his room grows strange

to a dying man when he sees it upon the last morning, and knows that it

will confront him no more. I had wilfully stepped aside from the current

of our existence, and had no part in any of Our interests. Up-country

the peach was beginning to bud, and men said that by cause of the heavy

snows in the Hills the hot weather would be a short one. That was

nothing to me. The punkahs and their pullers sat together in the

verandah, and the public buildings spawned thermantidotes. The

copper-smith sang in the garden and the early wasp hummed low down by

the door-handle, and they prophesied of the hot weather to come. These

things were no concern of mine. I was dead, and looked upon the old life

as a dead man--without interest and without concern.

It was a strange life; I had lived it for seven years or one day, I

could not be certain which. All that I knew was that I could watch men

going to their offices, while I slept luxuriously; could go out at any

hour of the day and sit up to any hour of the night, secure that each

morning would bring no toil. I understood with what emotions the freed

convict regards the prison he has quitted--insight which had hitherto

been denied me; and I further saw how intense is the selfishness of the

irresponsible man. Some said that the coming year would be one of

scarcity and distress because unseasonable rains were falling. I was

grieved. I feared that the Rains might break the railway line to the

sea, and so delay my departure. Again, the season would be a sickly one.

I fancied that Necessity might repent of her gift and for mere jest wipe

me off the face of the earth ere I had seen anything of what lay upon

it. There was trouble on the Afghan frontier; perhaps an army-corps

would be mobilised, and perhaps many men would die, leaving folk to

mourn for them at the hill-stations. My dread was that a Russian

man-of-war might intercept the steamer which carried my precious self

between Yokohama and San Francisco. Let Armageddon be postponed, I

prayed, for my sake, that my personal enjoyments may not be interfered

with. War, famine, and pestilence would be so inconvenient to me. And I

abased myself before Necessity, the great Goddess, and said

ostentatiously: "It is naught, it is naught, and you needn't look at me

when I wander about." Surely we are only virtuous by compulsion of

earning our daily bread.

So I looked upon men with new eyes, and pitied them very much indeed.

They worked. They had to. I was an aristocrat. I could call upon them at

inconvenient hours and ask them why they worked, and whether they did it

often. Then they grunted, and the envy in their eyes was a delight to

me. I dared not, however, mock them too pointedly, lest Necessity should

drag me back by the collar to take my still warm place by their side.

When I had disgusted all who knew me, I fled to Calcutta, which, I was

pained to see, still persisted in being a city and transacting commerce

after I had formally cursed it one year ago. That curse I now repeat, in

the hope that the unsavoury capital will collapse. One must begin to

smoke at five in the morning--which is neither night nor day--on coming

across the Howrah Bridge, for it is better to get a headache from honest

nicotine than to be poisoned by evil smells. And a man, who otherwise

was a nice man, though he worked with his hands and his head, asked me

why the scandal of the Simla Exodus was allowed to continue. To him I

made answer: "It is because this sewer is unfit for human habitation. It

is because you are all one gigantic mistake,--you and your monuments and

your merchants and everything about you. I rejoice to think that scores

of lakhs of rupees have been spent on public offices at a place called

Simla, that scores and scores will be spent on the Delhi-Kalka line, in

order that civilised people may go there in comfort. When that line is

opened, your big city will be dead and buried and done with, and I hope

it will teach you a lesson. Your city will rot, Sir." And he said: "When

people are buried here, they turn into adipocere in five days if the

weather is rainy. They saponify, you know." I said: "Go and saponify,

for I hate Calcutta." But he took me to the Eden Gardens instead, and

begged me for my own sake not to go round the world in this prejudiced

spirit. I was unhappy and ill, but he vowed that my spleen was due to my

"Simla way of looking at things."

All this world of ours knows something about the Eden Gardens, which are

supposed by the uninitiated of the mofussil to represent the gilded

luxury of the metropolis. As a matter of fact they are hideously dull.

The inhabitants appear in top-hats and frock-coats, and walk dolorously

to and fro under the glare of jerking electric lamps, when they ought to

be sitting in their shirt-sleeves round little tables and treating their

wives to iced lager beer. My friend--it was a muggy March night--wrapped

himself in the prescribed garments and said graciously: "You can wear a

round hat, but you mustn't wear deck-shoes; and for goodness' sake, my

dear fellow, don't smoke on the Red Road--all the people one knows go

there." Most of the people who were people sat in their carriages, in an

atmosphere of hot horse, harness, and panel-lacquer, outside the

gardens, and the remnant tramped up and down, by twos and threes, upon

squashy green grass, until they were wearied, while a band played at

them. "And is this all you do?" I asked. "It is," said my friend. "Isn't

it good enough? We meet every one we know here, and walk with him or

her, unless he or she is among the carriages."

Overhead was a woolly warm sky; underfoot feverish soft grass; and from

all quarters the languorous breeze bore faint reminiscences of stale

sewage upon its wings. Round the horizon were stacked lines of

carriages, and the electric flare bred aches in the strained eyebrow. It

was a strange sight and fascinating. The doomed creatures walked up and

down without cessation, for when one fled away into the lamp-spangled

gloom twenty came to take his place. Slop-hatted members of the

mercantile marine, Armenian merchants, Bengal civilians, shop-girls and

shop-men, Jews, Parthians, and Mesopotamians, were all there in the

tepid heat and the fetid smell.

"This," said my friend, "is how we enjoy ourselves. There are the

Viceregal liveries. Lady Lansdowne comes here." He spoke as though

reading to me the Government House list of Paradise. I reflected that

these people would continue to walk up and down until they died,

drinkless, dusty, sad, and blanched.

In saying this last thing I had made a mistake. Calcutta is no more

Anglo-Indian than West Brompton. In common with Bombay, it has achieved

a mental attitude several decades in advance of that of the raw and

brutal India of fact. An intelligent and responsible financier,

discussing the Empire, said: "But why do we want so large an army in

India? Look at the country all about." I think he meant as far as the

Circular Road or perhaps Raneegunge. Some of these days, when the voice

of the two uncomprehending cities carries to London, and its advice is

acted upon, there will be trouble. Till this second journey to Calcutta

I was unable to account for the acid tone and limited range of the

Presidency journals. I see now that they are ward papers and ought to be

treated as such.

In the fulness of time--there was no hurry--imagine that, O you toilers

of the land--I took ship and fled from Calcutta by that which they call

the Mutton-Mail, because it takes sheep and correspondence to Rangoon.

Half the Punjab was going with us to serve the Queen in the Burma

Military Police, and it was grateful to catch once more the raw, rasping

up-country speech amid the jabber of Burmese and Bengali.

To Rangoon, then, aboard the \_Madura\_, come with me down the Hughli, and

try to understand what sort of life is led by the pilots, those strange

men who only seem to know the land by watching it from the river.

"And I fetched up under the north ridge with six inches o' water under

me, with a sou'west monsoon blowing, an' me not knowing any more than

the dead where in--Paradise--I was taking her," says one deep voice.

"Well, what do you expect?" says another. "They ought not all to be

occulting lights. Give me a red with two flashes for outlying danger

anyhow. The Hughli's the worst river in the world. Why, off the Lower

Gasper only last year...."

"And look at the way Government treats you!"

The Hughli pilot is human. He may talk Greek in the exercise of his

profession, but he can unite at swearing at the Government as thoroughly

as though he were an uncovenanted civilian. His life is a hard one; but

he is full of strange stories, and when treated with proper respect may

condescend to tell some of them. If he has served on the river for six

years as a "cub," and is neither dead nor decrepit, I believe he can

earn as much as fifty rupees by sending two thousand tons of ship and a

few hundred souls flying down the reaches at twelve miles an hour. Then

he drops over the side with your last love-letters and wanders about the

estuary in a tug until he finds another steamer and brings her up. It

does not take much to comfort him.

\* \* \* \* \*

\_Somewhere in the open sea some days later.\_ I give it up. I \_cannot\_

write, and to sleep I am not ashamed. A glorious idleness has taken

entire possession of me; journalism is an imposture; so is Literature;

so is Art. All India dropped out of sight yesterday and the rocking

pilot-brig at the Sandheads bore my last message to the prison that I

quit. We have reached blue water--crushed sapphire--and a little breeze

is bellying the awning. Three flying-fish were sighted this morning; the

tea at \_chota-hazri\_ is not nice, but the captain is excellent. Is this

budget of news sufficiently exciting, or must I in strict confidence

tell you the story of the Professor and the compass? You will hear more

about the Professor later, if, indeed, I ever touch pen again. When he

was in India he worked about nine hours a day. At noon to-day he

conceived an interest in cyclones and things of that kind--would go to

his cabin to get a compass and a meteorological book. He went, but

stopped to reflect by the brink of a drink. "The compass is in a box,"

said he, drowsily, "but the nuisance of it is that to get it I shall

have to pull the box out from under my berth. All things considered, I

don't think it's worth while." He loafed on deck, and I think by this

time is fast asleep. There was no trace of shame in his voice for his

mighty sloth. I would have reproved him, but the words died on my

tongue. I was guiltier than he.

"Professor," said I, "there is a foolish little paper in Allahabad

called the \_Pioneer\_. I am supposed to be writing it a letter--a letter

with my hands! Did you ever hear of anything so absurd?"

"I wonder if Angostura bitters really go with whisky," said the

Professor, toying with the neck of the bottle.

There is no such place as India; there never was a daily paper called

the \_Pioneer\_. It was all a weary dream. The only real things in the

world are crystal seas, clean-swept decks, soft rugs, warm sunshine, the

smell of salt in the air, and fathomless, futile indolence.

No. II

THE RIVER OF THE LOST FOOTSTEPS AND THE GOLDEN MYSTERY UPON ITS BANKS.

THE INIQUITY OF JORDAN. SHOWS HOW A MAN MAY GO TO THE SHWAY DAGON PAGODA

AND SEE IT NOT AND TO THE PEGU CLUB AND HEAR TOO MUCH. A DISSERTATION ON

MIXED DRINKS.

"I am a part of all that I have met,

Yet all experience is an arch where through

Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move."

There was a river and a bar, a pilot and a great deal of nautical

mystery, and the Captain said the journey from Calcutta was ended and

that we should be in Rangoon in a few hours. It is not an impressive

stream, being low-banked, scrubby, and muddy; but as we gave the

staggering rice-boats the go-by, I reflected that I was looking upon the

River of the Lost Footsteps--the road that so many, many men of my

acquaintance had travelled, never to return, within the past three

years. Such a one had gone up to open out Upper Burma, and had himself

been opened out by a Burmese dah in the cruel scrub beyond Minhla; such

another had gone to rule the land in the Queen's name, but could not

rule a hill stream and was carried down under his horse. One had been

shot by his servant; another by a dacoit while he sat at dinner; and a

pitifully long list had found in jungle-fever their sole reward for

"the difficulties and privations inseparably connected with military

service," as the Bengal Army Regulations put it. I ran over half a score

of names--policemen, subalterns, young civilians, employÃ©s of big

trading firms, and adventurers. They had gone up the river and they had

died. At my elbow stood one of the workers in New Burma, going to report

himself at Rangoon, and he told tales of interminable chases after

evasive dacoits, of marchings and counter-marchings that came to

nothing, and of deaths in the wilderness as noble as they were sad.

Then, a golden mystery upheaved itself on the horizon--a beautiful

winking wonder that blazed in the sun, of a shape that was neither

Muslim dome nor Hindu temple spire. It stood upon a green knoll, and

below it were lines of warehouses, sheds, and mills. Under what new god,

thought I, are we irrepressible English sitting now?

"There's the old Shway Dagon" (pronounced Dagone, \_not\_ like the god in

the Scriptures), said my companion. "Confound it!" But it was not a

thing to be sworn at. It explained in the first place why we took

Rangoon, and in the second why we pushed on to see what more of rich or

rare the land held. Up till that sight my uninstructed eyes could not

see that the land differed much in appearance from the Sunderbuns, but

the golden dome said: "This is Burma, and it will be quite unlike any

land you know about." "It's a famous old shrine o' sorts," said my

companion, "and now the Tounghoo-Mandalay line is open, pilgrims are

flocking down by the thousand to see it. It lost its big gold

top--'thing that they call a \_'htee\_--in an earthquake: that's why it's

all hidden by bamboo-work for a third of its height. You should see it

when it's all uncovered. They're regilding it now."

Why is it that when one views for the first time any of the wonders of

the earth a bystander always strikes in with, "You should see it, etc."?

Such men given twenty minutes from the tomb at the Day of Judgment,

would patronize the naked souls as they hurried up with the glare of

Tophet on their faces, and say: "You should have seen this when Gabriel

first began to blow." What the Shway Dagon really is and how many books

may have been written upon its history and archÃ¦ology is no part of my

business. As it stood overlooking everything it seemed to explain all

about Burma--why the boys had gone north and died, why the troopers

bustled to and fro, and why the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla lay

like black-backed gulls upon the water.

Then we came to a new land, and the first thing that one of the regular

residents said was: "This place isn't India at all. They ought to have

made it a Crown colony." Judging the Empire as it ought to be judged, by

its most prominent points--\_videlicet\_, its smells--he was right; for

though there is one stink in Calcutta, another in Bombay, and a third

and most pungent one in the Punjab, yet they have a kinship of stinks,

whereas Burma smells quite otherwise. It is not exactly what China ought

to smell like, but it is not India. "What is it?" I asked; and the man

said "\_Napi\_," which is fish pickled when it ought to have been buried

long ago. This food, in guide-book language, is inordinately consumed by

... but everybody who has been within downwind range of Rangoon knows

what \_napi\_ means, and those who do not will not understand.

Yes, it was a very new land--a land where the people understood

colour--a delightfully lazy land full of pretty girls and very bad

cheroots.

The worst of it was that the Anglo-Indian was a foreigner, a creature of

no account. He did not know Burman,--which was no great loss,--and the

Madrassi insisted upon addressing him in English. The Madrassi, by the

way, is a great institution. He takes the place of the Burman, who will

not work, and in a few years returns to his native coast with rings on

his fingers and bells on his toes. The consequences are obvious. The

Madrassi demands, and receives, enormous wages, and gets to know that he

is indispensable. The Burman exists beautifully, while his women-folk

marry the Madrassi and the Chinaman, because these support them in

affluence. When the Burman wishes to work he gets a Madrassi to do it

for him. How he finds the money to pay the Madrassi I was not informed,

but all men were agreed in saying that under no circumstances will the

Burman exert himself in the paths of honest industry. Now, if a

bountiful Providence had clothed you in a purple, green, amber or puce

petticoat, had thrown a rose-pink scarf-turban over your head, and had

put you in a pleasant damp country where rice grew of itself and fish

came up to be caught, putrified and pickled, would \_you\_ work? Would you

not rather take a cheroot and loaf about the streets seeing what was to

be seen? If two-thirds of your girls were grinning, good-humoured little

maidens and the remainder positively pretty, would you not spend your

time in making love?

The Burman does both these things, and the Englishman, who after all

worked himself to Burma, says hard things about him. Personally I love

the Burman with the blind favouritism born of first impression. When I

die I will be a Burman, with twenty yards of real King's silk, that has

been made in Mandalay, about my body, and a succession of cigarettes

between my lips. I will wave the cigarette to emphasise my conversation,

which shall be full of jest and repartee, and I will always walk about

with a pretty almond-coloured girl who shall laugh and jest too, as a

young maiden ought. She shall not pull a sari over her head when a man

looks at her and glare suggestively from behind it, nor shall she tramp

behind me when I walk: for these are the customs of India. She shall

look all the world between the eyes, in honesty and good fellowship, and

I will teach her not to defile her pretty mouth with chopped tobacco in

a cabbage leaf, but to inhale good cigarettes of Egypt's best brand.

Seriously, the Burmese girls are very pretty, and when I saw them I

understood much that I had heard about--about our army in Flanders let

us say.

Providence really helps those who do not help themselves. I went up a

street, name unknown, attracted by the colour that was so wantonly

flashed down its length. There is colour in Rajputana and in Southern

India, and you can find a whole paletteful of raw tints at any

down-country durbar; but the Burmese way of colouring is different. With

the women the scarf, petticoat, and jacket are of three lively hues, and

with the men putso and head-wrap are gorgeous. Thus you get your colours

dashed down in dots against a background of dark timber houses set in

green foliage. There are no canons of art anywhere, and every scheme of

colouring depends on the power of the sun above. That is why men in a

London fog do still believe in pale greens and sad reds. Give me lilac,

pink, vermilion, lapis lazuli, and blistering blood red under fierce

sunlight that mellows and modifies all. I had just made this discovery

and was noting that the people treated their cattle kindly, when the

driver of an absurd little hired carriage built to the scale of a fat

Burma pony, volunteered to take me for a drive, and we drove in the

direction of the English quarter of the town where the sahibs live in

dainty little houses made out of the sides of cigar boxes. They looked

as if they could be kicked in at a blow and (trust a Globe-trotter for

evolving a theory at a minute's notice) it is to avoid this fate that

they are built for the most part on legs. The houses are not cantonment

bred in any way--nor did the uneven ground and dusty reddish roads fit

in with any part of the Indian Empire except it may be Ootacamund.

The pony wandered into a garden studded with lovely little lakes which,

again, were studded with islands, and there were sahibs in flannels in

the boats. Outside the park were pleasant little monasteries full of

clean-shaved gentlemen in gold amber robes learning to renounce the

world, the flesh, and the devil by chatting furiously amongst

themselves, and at every corner stood the three little maids from

school, almost exactly as they had been dismissed from the side scenes

of the Savoy after the \_Mikado\_ was over: and the strange part of it all

was that every one laughed--laughed, so it seemed, at the sky above them

because it was blue, at the sun because it was sinking, and at each

other because they had nothing better to do. A small fat child laughed

loudest of all, in spite of the fact that it was smoking a cheroot that

ought to have made it deathly sick. The pagoda was always close at

hand--as brilliant a mystery as when first sighted far down the river;

but it changed its shape as we came nearer, and showed in the middle of

a nest of hundreds of smaller pagodas. There appeared suddenly two

colossal tigers (after the Burmese canons) in plaster on a hillside, and

they were the guardians of Burma's greatest pagoda. Round them rustled a

great crowd of happy people in pretty dresses, and the feet of all were

turned towards a great stoneway that ran from between the tigers even to

the brow of the mound. But the nature of the stairs was peculiar. They

were covered in for the most part by a tunnel, or it may have been a

walled-in colonnade, for there were heavily gilt wooden pillars visible

in the gloom. The afternoon was drawing on as I came to this strange

place and saw that I should have to climb up a long, low hill of stairs

to get to the pagoda.

Once or twice in my life I have seen a Globe-trotter literally gasping

with jealous emotion because India was so much larger and more lovely

than he had ever dreamed, and because he had only set aside three months

to explore it in. My own sojourn in Rangoon was countable by hours, so I

may be forgiven when I pranced with impatience at the bottom of the

staircase because I could not at once secure a full, complete, and

accurate idea of everything that was to be seen. The meaning of the

guardian tigers, the inwardness of the main pagoda, and the countless

little ones, was hidden from me. I could not understand why the pretty

girls with cheroots sold little sticks and coloured candles to be used

before the image of Buddha. Everything was incomprehensible to me, and

there was none to explain. All that I could gather was that in a few

days the great golden \_'htee\_ that has been defaced by the earthquake

would be hoisted into position with feasting and song, and that half

Upper Burma was coming down to see the show.

I went forward between the two great beasts, across a whitewashed court,

till I came to a flat-headed arch guarded by the lame, the blind, the

leper, and the deformed. These plucked at my clothes as I passed, and

moaned and whined: but the stream that disappeared up the gentle slope

of the stairway took no notice of them. And I stepped into the

semi-darkness of a long, long corridor flanked by booths, and floored

with stones worn very smooth by human feet.

At the far end of the roofed corridor there was a breadth of evening

sky, and at this point rose a second and much steeper flight of stairs,

leading directly to the Shwedagon (this, by the way, is its real

spelling). Down this staircase fell, from gloom to deeper gloom, a

cascade of colour. At this point I stayed, because there was a beautiful

archway of Burmese build, and adorned with a Chinese inscription,

directly in front of me, and I conceived foolishly that I should find

nothing more pleasant to look at if I went farther. Also, I wished to

understand how such a people could produce the dacoit of the newspaper,

and I knew that a great deal of promiscuous knowledge comes to him who

sits down by the wayside. Then I saw a Face--which explained a good

deal. The chin, jowl, lips, and neck were modelled faithfully on the

lines of the worst of the Roman Empresses--the lolloping, walloping

women that Swinburne sings about, and that we sometimes see pictures

of. Above this gross perfection of form came the Mongoloid nose, narrow

forehead, and flaring pig's eyes. I stared intently, and the man stared

back again, with admirable insolence, that puckered one corner of his

mouth. Then he swaggered forward, and I was richer by a new face and a

little knowledge. "I must make further inquiries at the Club," said I,

"but that man seems to be of the proper dacoit type. He could crucify on

occasion."

Then a brown baby came by in its mother's arms and laughed, wherefore I

much desired to shake hands with it, and grinned to that effect. The

mother held out the tiny soft pud and laughed, and the baby laughed, and

we all laughed together, because that seemed to be the custom of the

country, and returned down the now dark corridor where the lamps of the

stall-keepers were twinkling and scores of people were helping us to

laugh. They must be a mild-mannered nation, the Burmese, for they leave

little three-year-olds in charge of a whole wilderness of clay dolls or

a menagerie of jointed tigers.

I had not actually entered the Shwedagon, but I felt just as happy as

though I had.

In the Pegu Club I found a friend--a Punjabi--upon whose broad bosom I

threw myself and demanded food and entertainment. He had not long since

received a visit from the Commissioner of Peshawar, of all places in the

world, and was not to be upset by sudden arrivals. But he had come down

in the world hideously. Years ago in the Black North he used to speak

the vernacular as it should be spoken, and was one of us.

"\_Daniel, how many socks master got?\_"

The unfinished peg fell from my fist. "Good Heavens!" said I, "is it

possible that you--you--speak that disgusting pidgin-talk to your

\_nauker\_? It's enough to make one cry. You're no better than a

Bombaywallah."

"I'm a Madrassi," said he, calmly. "We all talk English to our boys

here. Isn't it beautiful? Now come along to the Gymkhana and then we'll

dine here. Daniel, master's hat and stick get."

There must be a few hundred men who are fairly behind the scenes of the

Burma War--one of the least known and appreciated of any of our little

affairs. The Pegu Club seemed to be full of men on their way up or down,

and the conversation was but an echo of the murmur of conquest far away

to the north.

"See that man over there. He was cut over the head the other day at

Zoungloung-goo. Awfully tough man. That chap next him has been on the

dacoit-hunt for about a year. He broke up Boh Mango's gang: caught the

Boh in a paddy field, y'know. The other man's going home on sick

leave--got a lump of iron somewhere in his system. Try our mutton; I

assure you the Club is the only place in Rangoon where you get mutton.

Look here, you must \_not\_ speak vernacular to our boys. Hi, boy! get

master some more ice. They're all Bombay men or Madrassis. Up at the

front there are some Burman servants: but a real Burman will never work.

He prefers being a simple little \_daku\_."

"How much?"

"Dear little dacoit. We call 'em \_dakus\_ for short--sort o' pet name.

That's the butter-fish. I forgot you didn't get much fish up-country.

Yes, I s'pose Rangoon has its advantages. You pay like a Prince. Take

an ordinary married establishment. Little furnished house--one hundred

and fifty rupees. Servants' wages two twenty or two fifty. That's four

hundred at once. My dear fellow, a sweeper won't take less than twelve

or sixteen rupees a month here, and even then he'll work for other

houses. It's worse than Quetta. Any man who comes to Lower Burma in the

hope of living on his pay is a fool."

\_Voice from lower end of table.\_ "Dee fool. It's different in Upper

Burma, where you get command and travelling allowances."

\_Another voice in the middle of a conversation.\_ "They never got that

story into the papers, but I can tell you we weren't quite as quick in

rushing the fort as they made believe. You see Boh Gwee had us in a

regular trap, and by the time we had closed the line our men were being

peppered front and rear: that jungle-fighting is the deuce and all. More

ice please."

Then they told me of the death of an old school-fellow under the ramp of

the Minhla redoubt--does any one remember the affair at Minhla that

opened the third Burmese ball?

"I was close to him," said a voice. "He died in A.'s arms, I fancy, but

I'm not quite sure. Anyhow, I know he died easily. He was a good

fellow."

"Thank you," said I, "and now I think I'll go;" and I went out into the

steamy night, my head ringing with stories of battle, murder, and sudden

death. I had reached the fringe of the veil that hides Upper Burma, and

I would have given much to have gone up the river and seen a score of

old friends, now jungle-worn men of war. All that night I dreamed of

interminable staircases down which swept thousands of pretty girls, so

brilliantly robed that my eyes ached at the sight. There was a great

golden bell at the top of the stairs, and at the bottom, his face turned

to the sky, lay poor old D----dead at Minhla, and a host of unshaven

ragamuffins in khaki were keeping guard over him.

No. III

THE CITY OF ELEPHANTS WHICH IS GOVERNED BY THE GREAT GOD OF IDLENESS,

WHO LIVES ON THE TOP OF A HILL. THE HISTORY OF THREE GREAT DISCOVERIES

AND THE NAUGHTY CHILDREN OF IQUIQUE.

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house

Wherein at ease for aye to dwell,

I said: Oh, soul, make merry and carouse,

Dear soul, for all is well."

So much for making definite programmes of travel beforehand. In my first

letter I told you that I would go from Rangoon to Penang direct. Now we

are lying off Moulmein in a new steamer which does not seem to run

anywhere in particular. Why she should go to Moulmein is a mystery; but

as every soul on the ship is a loafer like myself, no one is

discontented. Imagine a shipload of people to whom time is no object,

who have no desires beyond three meals a day and no emotions save those

caused by a casual cockroach.

Moulmein is situated up the mouth of a river which ought to flow through

South America, and all manner of dissolute native craft appear to make

the place their home. Ugly cargo-steamers that the initiated call

"Geordie tramps" grunt and bellow at the beautiful hills all round, and

the pot-bellied British India liners wallow down the reaches. Visitors

are rare in Moulmein--so rare that few but cargo-boats think it worth

their while to come off from the shore.

Strictly in confidence I will tell you that Moulmein is not a city of

this earth at all. Sindbad the Sailor visited it, if you recollect, on

that memorable voyage when he discovered the burial-ground of the

elephants.

As the steamer came up the river we were aware of first one elephant and

then another hard at work in timber-yards that faced the shore. A few

narrow-minded folk with binoculars said that there were \_mahouts\_ upon

their backs, but this was never clearly proven. I prefer to believe in

what I saw--a sleepy town, just one house thick, scattered along a

lovely stream and inhabited by slow, solemn elephants, building

stockades for their own diversion. There was a strong scent of freshly

sawn teak in the air--we could not see any elephants sawing--and

occasionally the warm stillness was broken by the crash of the log. When

the elephants had got an appetite for luncheon they loafed off in

couples to their club, and did not take the trouble to give us greeting

and the latest mail papers; at which we were much disappointed, but took

heart when we saw upon a hill a large white pagoda surrounded by scores

of little pagodas. "This," we said with one voice, "is the place to make

an excursion to," and then shuddered at our own profanity, for above all

things we did not wish to behave like mere vulgar tourists.

The \_ticca-gharies\_ at Moulmein are three sizes smaller than those of

Rangoon, as the ponies are no bigger than decent sheep. Their drivers

trot them uphill and down, and as the \_ghari\_ is extremely narrow and

the roads are anything but good, the exercise is refreshing. Here again

all the drivers are Madrassis.

I should better remember what that pagoda was like had I not fallen

deeply and irrevocably in love with a Burmese girl at the foot of the

first flight of steps. Only the fact of the steamer starting next noon

prevented me from staying at Moulmein forever and owning a pair of

elephants. These are so common that they wander about the streets, and,

I make no doubt, could be obtained for a piece of sugar-cane.

Leaving this far too lovely maiden, I went up the steps only a few

yards, and, turning me round, looked upon a view of water, island, broad

river, fair grazing ground, and belted wood that made me rejoice that I

was alive. The hillside below me and above me was ablaze with

pagodas--from a gorgeous golden and vermilion beauty to a delicate grey

stone one just completed in honour of an eminent priest lately deceased

at Mandalay. Far above my head there was a faint tinkle, as of golden

bells, and a talking of the breezes in the tops of the toddy-palms.

Wherefore I climbed higher and higher up the steps till I reached a

place of great peace, dotted with Burmese images, spotlessly clean. Here

women now and again paid reverence. They bowed their heads and their

lips moved, because they were praying. I had an umbrella--a black

one--in my hand, deck-shoes upon my feet, and a helmet upon my head. I

did not pray--I swore at myself for being a Globe-trotter, and wished

that I had enough Burmese to explain to these ladies that I was sorry

and would have taken off my hat but for the sun. A Globe-trotter is a

brute. I had the grace to blush as I tramped round the pagoda. That

will be remembered to me for righteousness. But I stared horribly--at a

gold and red side-temple with a beautifully gilt image of Buddha in

it--at the grim figures in the niches at the base of the main pagoda--at

the little palms that grew out of the cracks in the tiled paving of the

court--at the big palms above, and at the low hung bronze bells that

stood at each corner for the women to smite with stag-horns. Upon one

bell rang this amazing triplet in English, evidently the composition of

the caster, who completed his work--and now, let us hope, has reached

Nibban--thirty-five years ago:--

"He who destroyed this Bell

They must be in the great Hel

And unable to coming out."

I respect a man who is not able to spell Hell properly. It shows that he

has been brought up in an amiable creed. You who come to Moulmein treat

this bell with respect, and refrain from playing with it, for that hurts

the feelings of the worshippers.

In the base of the pagoda were four rooms, lined as to three sides with

colossal plaster figures, before each of whom burned one solitary dip

whose rays fought with the flood of evening sunshine that came through

the windows, and the room was filled with a pale yellow light--unearthly

to stand in. Occasionally a woman crept in to one of these rooms to

pray, but nearly all the company stayed in the courtyard; but those that

faced the figures prayed more zealously than the others, so I judged

that their troubles were the greater. Of the actual cult I knew less

than nothing; for the neatly bound English books that we read make no

mention of pointing red-tipped straws at a golden image, or of the

banging of bells after the custom of worshippers in a Hindu temple. It

must be a genial one, however. To begin with, it is quiet and carried on

among the fairest possible surroundings that ever landscape offered.

In this particular case, the massive white pagoda shot into the blue

from the west of a walled hill that commanded four separate and

desirable views as you looked either at the steamer in the river below,

the polished silver reaches to the left, the woods to the right, or the

roofs of Moulmein to the landward. Between each pause of the rustling of

dresses and the low-toned talk of the women fell, from far above, the

tinkle of innumerable metal leaves which were stirred by the breeze as

they hung from the \_'htee\_ of the pagoda. A golden image winked in the

sun; the painted ones stared straight in front of them over the heads of

the worshippers, and somewhere below a mallet and a plane were lazily

helping to build yet another pagoda in honour of the Lord of the Earth.

Sitting in meditation while the Professor went round with a sacrilegious

camera, to the vast terror of the Burmese youth, I made two notable

discoveries and nearly went to sleep over them. The first was that the

Lord of the Earth is Idleness--thick slab idleness with a little

religion stirred in to keep it sweet, and the second was that the shape

of the pagoda came originally from a bulging toddy-palm trunk. There was

one between me and the far-off sky line, and it exactly duplicated the

outlines of a small grey stone building.

Yet a third discovery, and a much more important one, came to me later

on. A dirty little imp of a boy ran by clothed more or less in a

beautifully worked silk putso, the like of which I had in vain attempted

to secure at Rangoon. A bystander told me that such an article would

cost one hundred and ten rupees--exactly ten rupees in excess of the

price demanded at Rangoon, when I had been discourteous to a pretty

Burmese girl with diamonds in her ears, and had treated her as though

she were a Delhi boxwallah.

"Professor," said I, when the camera spidered round the corner, "there

is something wrong with this people. They won't work, they aren't all

dacoits, and their babies run about with hundred-rupees putsoes on them,

while their parents speak the truth. How in the world do they get a

living?"

"They exist beautifully," said the Professor; "and I only brought half a

dozen plates with me. I shall come again in the morning with some more.

Did I ever dream of a place like this?"

"No," said I. "It's perfect, and for the life of me I can't quite see

where the precise charm lies."

"In its Beastly Laziness," said the Professor, as he packed the camera,

and we went away, regretfully, haunted by the voices of many wind-blown

bells.

Not ten minutes from the pagoda we saw a real British bandstand, a

shanty labelled "Municipal Office," a collection of P. W. D. bungalows

that in vain strove to blast the landscape, and a Madras band. I had

never seen Madrassi troops before. They seem to dress just like Tommies,

and have an air of much culture and refinement. It is said that they

read English books and know all about their rights and privileges. For

further details apply to the Pegu Club, second table from the top on

the right hand side as you enter.

In an evil hour I attempted to revive the drooping trade of Moulmein,

and to this end bound a native of the place to come on board the steamer

next morn with a collection of Burmese silks. It was only a five

minutes' pull, and he could have sat in the stern all the while. Morning

came, but not the man. Not a boat of watermelons, pink fleshy

watermelons, neared the ship. We might have been in quarantine. As we

slipped down the river on our way to Penang, I saw the elephants playing

with the teak logs as solemnly and as mysteriously as ever. They were

the chief inhabitants, and, for aught I know, the rulers of the place.

Their lethargy had corrupted the town, and when the Professor wished to

photograph them, I believe they went away in scorn.

We are now running down to Penang with the thermometer 87Â° in the

cabins, and anything you please on deck. We have exhausted all our

literature, drunk two hundred lemon squashes; played forty different

games of cards (Patience mostly), organised a lottery on the run (had it

been a thousand rupees instead of ten I should not have won it), and

slept seventeen hours out of the twenty-four. It is perfectly impossible

to write, but you may be morally the better for the story of the Bad

People of Iquique which, "as you have not before heard, I will now

proceed to relate." It has just been told me by a German orchid-hunter,

fresh from nearly losing his head in the Lushai hills, who has been over

most of the world.

Iquique is somewhere in South America--at the back of or beyond

Brazil--and once upon a time there came to it a tribe of Aborigines from

out of the woods, so innocent that they wore nothing at all--absolutely

nothing at all. They had a grievance, but no garments, and the former

they came to lay before His Excellency, the Governor of Iquique. But the

news of their coming and their exceeding nakedness had gone before them,

and good Spanish ladies of the town agreed that the heathen should first

of all be clothed. So they organised a sewing-bee, and the result, which

was mainly aprons, was served out to the Bad People with hints as to its

use. Nothing could have been better. They appeared in their aprons

before the Governor and all the ladies of Iquique, ranged on the steps

of the cathedral, only to find that the Governor could not grant their

demands. And do you know what these children of nature did? In the

twinkling of an eye they had off those aprons, slung them round their

necks, and were dancing naked as the dawn before the scandalised ladies

of Iquique, who fled with their fans before their eyes into the

sanctuary of the cathedral. And when the steps were deserted the Bad

People withdrew, shouting and leaping, their aprons still round their

necks, for good cloth is valuable property. They encamped near the town,

knowing their own power. 'Twas impossible to send the military against

them, and equally impossible that Donnas and SeÃ±oritas should be exposed

to the chance of being shocked whenever they went abroad. No one knew at

what hour the Bad People would sweep through the streets. Their demands

were therefore granted and Iquique had rest. Nuda est Veritas et

prevalebit.

"But," said I, "what is there so awful in a naked Indian--or two

hundred naked Indians for that matter?"

"My friend," said the German, "dey vas Indians of Sout' America. I dell

you dey do not demselves shtrip vell."

I put my hand on my mouth and went away.

No. IV

SHOWING HOW I CAME TO PALMISTE ISLAND AND THE PLACE OF PAUL AND

VIRGINIA, AND FELL ASLEEP IN A GARDEN. A DISQUISITION ON THE FOLLY OF

SIGHT-SEEING.

"Some for the glories of this world and some

Sigh for the Prophet's paradise to come.

Ah, take the cash and let the credit go,

Nor heed the rumble of a distant drum."

There is something very wrong in the Anglo-Saxon character. Hardly had

the \_Africa\_ dropped anchor in Penang Straits when two of our

fellow-passengers were smitten with madness because they heard that

another steamer was even then starting for Singapur. If they went by it

they would gain several days. Heaven knows why time should have been so

precious to them. The news sent them flying into their cabins, and

packing their trunks as though their salvation depended upon it. Then

they tumbled over the side and were rowed away in a sampan, hot, but

happy. They were on a pleasure-trip, and they had gained perhaps three

days. That was their pleasure.

Do you recollect Besant's description of Palmiste Island in \_My Little

Girl\_ and \_So They Were Married\_? Penang is Palmiste Island. I found

this out from the ship, looking at the wooded hills that dominate the

town, and at the regiments of palm trees three miles away that marked

the coast of Wellesley Province. The air was soft and heavy with

laziness, and at the ship's side were boat-loads of much jewelled

Madrassis--even those to whom Besant has alluded. A squall swept across

the water and blotted out the rows of low, red-tiled houses that made up

Penang, and the shadows of night followed the storm.

I put my twelve-inch rule in my pocket to measure all the world by, and

nearly wept with emotion when on landing at the jetty I fell against a

Sikh--a beautiful bearded Sikh, with white leggings and a rifle. As is

cold water in a thirsty land so is a face from the old country. My

friend had come from Jandiala in the Umritsar district. Did I know

Jandiala? Did I not? I began to tell all the news I could recollect

about crops and armies and the movements of big men in the far, far

north while the Sikh beamed. He belonged to the military police, and it

was a good service, but of course it was far from the old country. There

was no hard work, and the Chinamen gave but little trouble. They had

fights among themselves, but "they do not care to give \_us\_ any

impudence;" and the big man swaggered off with the long roll and swing

of a whole Pioneer regiment, while I cheered myself with the thought

that India--the India I pretend to hold in hatred--was not so far off,

after all.

You know our ineradicable tendency to damn everything in the mofussil.

Calcutta professes astonishment that Allahabad has a good dancing floor;

Allahabad wonders if it is true that Lahore really has an ice-factory;

and Lahore pretends to believe that everybody in Peshawar sleeps armed.

Very much in the same way I was amused at seeing a steam tramway in

Rangoon, and after we had quitted Moulmein fully expected to find the

outskirts of civilisation. Vanity and ignorance were severely shocked

when they confronted a long street of business--a street of two-storied

houses, full of \_ticca-gharies\_, shop signs, and above all

\_jinrickshaws\_.

You in India have never seen a proper \_'rickshaw\_. There are about two

thousand of them in Penang, and no two seem alike. They are lacquered

with bold figures of dragons and horses and birds and butterflies: their

shafts are of black wood bound with white metal, and so strong that the

coolie sits upon them when he waits for his fare. There is only one

coolie, but he is strong, and he runs just as well as six bell-men. He

ties up his pigtail,--being a Cantonese,--and this is a disadvantage to

sahibs who cannot speak Tamil, Malay, or Cantonese. Otherwise he might

be steered like a camel.

The \_'rickshaw\_ men are patient and long-suffering. The evil-visaged

person who drove my carriage lashed at them when they came within whip

range, and did his best to drive over them as he headed for the

Waterfalls, which are five miles away from Penang Town. I expected that

the buildings should stop, choked out among the dense growth of

cocoanut. But they continued for many streets, very like Park and

Middleton streets in Calcutta, where shuttered houses, which were

half-bred between an Indian bungalow and a Rangoon rabbit-hutch, fought

with the greenery and crotons as big as small trees. Now and again there

blazed the front of a Chinese house, all open-work vermilion,

lamp-black, and gold, with six-foot Chinese lanterns over the doorways

and glimpses of quaintly cut shrubs in the well-kept gardens beyond.

We struck into roads fringed with native houses on piles, shadowed by

the everlasting cocoanut palms heavy with young nuts. The heat was heavy

with the smell of vegetation, and it was not the smell of the earth

after the rains. Some bird-thing called out from the deeps of the

foliage, and there was a mutter of thunder in the hills which we were

approaching: but all the rest was very still--and the sweat ran down our

faces in drops.

"Now you've got to walk up that hill," said the driver, pointing to a

small barrier outside a well-kept botanical garden; "all the carriages

stop here." One's limbs moved as though leaden, and the breath came

heavily, drawing in each time the vapour of a Turkish bath. The soil was

alive with wet and warmth, and the unknown trees--I was too sleepy to

read the labels that some offensively energetic man has written--were

wet and warm too. Up on the hillside the voice of the water was saying

something, but I was too sleepy to listen; and on the top of the hill

lay a fat cloud just like an eider-down quilt tucking everything in

safely.

"And in the afternoon they came unto a land

In which it seemed always afternoon."

I sat down where I was, for I saw that the upward path was very steep

and was cut into rude steps, and an exposition of sleep had come upon

me. I was at the mouth of a tiny gorge, exactly where the lotus-eaters

had sat down when they began their song, for I recognised the Waterfall

and the air round my ears "breathing as one that has a weary dream."

I looked and beheld that I could not give in words the genius of the

place. "I can't play the flute, but I have a cousin who plays the

violin." I knew a man who could. Some people said he was not a nice man,

and I might run the risk of contaminating morals, but nothing mattered

in such a climate. See now, go to the very worst of Zola's novels and

read there his description of a conservatory. That was it. Several

months passed away, but there was neither chill nor burning heat to mark

the passage of time. Only, with a sense of acute pain I felt that I must

"do" the Waterfall, and I climbed up the steps in the hillside, though

every boulder cried "sit down," until I found a small stream of water

coursing down the face of a rock, and a much bigger one down my own.

Then we went away to breakfast, the stomach being always more worthy

than any amount of sentiment. A turn in the road hid the gardens and

stopped the noise of the waters, and that experience was over for all

time. Experiences are very like cheroots. They generally begin badly,

taste perfect half way through, and at the butt-end are things to be

thrown away and never picked up again....

His name was John, and he had a pigtail five feet long--all real hair

and no silk braided, and he kept an hotel by the way and fed us with a

chicken, into whose innocent flesh onions and strange vegetables had

been forced. Till then we had feared Chinamen, especially when they

brought food, but now we will eat anything at their hands. The

conclusion of the meal was a half-guinea pineapple and a siesta. This is

a beautiful thing which we of India--but I am of India no more--do not

understand. You lie down and wait for time to pass. You are not in the

least wearied--and you would not go to sleep. You are filled with a

divine drowsiness--quite different from the heavy sodden slumber of a

hot-weather Sunday, or the businesslike repose of a Europe morning. Now

I begin to despise novelists who write about \_siestas\_ in cold climates.

I know what the real thing means.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have been trying to buy a few things--a \_sarong\_, which is a \_putso\_

which is a \_dhoti\_; a pipe; and a "damned Malayan kris." The \_sarongs\_

come chiefly from Germany, the pipes from the pawn-shops, and there are

no krises except little toothpick things that could not penetrate the

hide of a Malay. In the native town, I found a large army of

Chinese--more than I imagined existed in China itself--encamped in

spacious streets and houses, some of them sending block-tin to Singapur,

some driving fine carriages, others making shoes, chairs, clothes, and

every other thing that a large town desires. They were the first army

corps on the march of the Mongol. The scouts are at Calcutta, and a

flying column at Rangoon. Here begins the main body, some hundred

thousand strong, so they say. Was it not De Quincey that had a horror of

the Chinese--of their inhumaneness and their inscrutability? Certainly

the people in Penang are not nice; they are even terrible to behold.

They work hard, which in this climate is manifestly wicked, and their

eyes are just like the eyes of their own pet dragons. Our Hindu gods are

passable, some of them even jolly--witness our pot-bellied Ganesh; but

what can you do with a people who revel in D. T. monsters and crown

their roof-ridges with flames of fire, or the waves of the sea? They

swarmed everywhere, and wherever three or four met, there they eat

things without name--the insides of ducks for choice. Our deck

passengers, I know, fared sumptuously on offal begged from the steward

and flavoured with insect-powder to keep the ants off. This, again, is

not natural, for a man should eat like a man if he works like one. I

could quite understand after a couple of hours (this has the true

Globe-trotter twang to it) spent in Chinatown why the lower-caste

Anglo-Saxon hates the Celestial. He frightened me, and so I could take

no pleasure in looking at his houses, at his wares, or at himself....

The smell of printer's ink is marvellously penetrating. It drew me up

two pair of stairs into an office where the exchanges lay about in

delightful disorder, and a little hand-press was clacking out proofs

just in the old sweet way. Something like the \_Gazette of India\_ showed

that the Straits Settlements--even they--had a Government of their own,

and I sighed for a dead past as my eye caught the beautiful official

phraseology that never varies. How alike we English are! Here is an

extract from a report: "And the Chinese form of decoration which

formerly covered the office has been wisely obliterated with whitewash."

That was just what I came to inquire about. What were they going to do

with the Chinese decoration all over Penang? Would they try to wisely

obliterate that?

The Straits Settlement Council which lives at Singapur had just passed a

Bill (Ordinance they call it) putting down all Chinese secret societies

in the colony, which measure only awaited the Imperial assent. A little

business in Singapur connected with some municipal measure for clearing

away overhanging verandahs created a storm, and for three days those who

were in the place say the town was entirely at the mercy of the Chinese,

who rose all together and made life unpleasant for the authorities. This

incident forced the Government to take serious notice of the secret

societies who could so control the actions of men, and the result has

been a measure which it will not be easy to enforce. A Chinaman \_must\_

have a secret society of some kind. He has been bred up in a country

where they were necessary to his comfort, his protection, and the

maintenance of his scale of wages from time immemorial, and he will

carry them with him as he will carry his opium and his coffin.

"Do you expect then that the societies will collapse by proclamation?" I

asked the editor.

"No. There will be a row."

"What row? what sort of a row?"

"More troops, perhaps, and perhaps some gunboats. You see, we shall have

Sir Charles Warren then as our Commander-in-Chief at Singapur. Up till

the present our military administration has been subordinate to that of

Hong-Kong; when that is done away with and we have Sir Charles Warren,

things will be different. But there will be a row. Neither you nor I nor

any one else will be able to put these things down. Every joss house

will be the head of a secret society. What can one do? In the past the

Government made some use of them for the detection of crime. Now they

are too big and too important to be treated in that way. You will know

before long whether we have been able to suppress them. There will be a

row."

Certainly the great grievance of Penang is the Chinese question. She

would not be human did she not revile her Municipal Commissioners and

talk about the unsanitary condition of the island. If nose and eyes and

ears be any guide, she is far cleaner even in her streets than many an

Indian cantonment, and her water-supply seems perfection. But I sat in

that little newspaper office and listened to stories of municipal

intrigue that might have suited Serampore or Calcutta, only the names

were a little different, and in place of Ghose and Chuckerbutty one

heard titles such as Yih Tat, Lo Eng, and the like. The Englishman's

aggressive altruism always leads him to build towns for others, and

incite aliens to serve on municipal boards. Then he gets tired of his

weakness and starts papers to condemn himself. They had a Chinaman on

the Municipality last year. They have now got rid of him, and the

present body is constituted of two officials and four non-officials.

\_Therefore\_ they complain of the influence of officialdom.

Having thoroughly settled all the differences of Penang to my own great

satisfaction, I removed myself to a Chinese theatre set in the open

road, and made of sticks and old gunny-bags. The orchestra alone

convinced me that there was something radically wrong with the Chinese

mind. Once, long ago in Jummu, I heard the infernal clang of the horns

used by the Devil-dancers who had come from far beyond Ladakh to do

honour to the Prince that day set upon his throne. That was about three

thousand miles to the north, but the character of the music was

unchanged. A thousand Chinamen stood as close as possible to the horrid

din and enjoyed it. Once more, can anything be done to a people without

nerves as without digestion, and, if reports speak truly, without

morals? But it is not true that they are born with full-sized pigtails.

The thing grows, and in its very earliest stages is the prettiest

head-dressing imaginable, being soft brown, very fluffy, about three

inches long, and dressed as to the end with red silk. An infant pigtail

is just like the first tender sprout of a tulip bulb, and would be

lovable were not the Chinese baby so very horrible of hue and shape. He

isn't as pretty as the pig that Alice nursed in Wonderland, and he lies

quite still and never cries. This is because he is afraid of being

boiled and eaten. I saw cold boiled babies on a plate being carried

through the heart of the town. They said it was only sucking-pig, but I

knew better. Dead sucking-pigs don't grin with their eyes open.

About this time the faces of the Chinese frightened me more than ever,

so I ran away to the outskirts of the town and saw a windowless house

that carried the Square and Compass in gold and teakwood above the door.

I took heart at meeting these familiar things again, and knowing that

where they were was good fellowship and much charity, in spite of all

the secret societies in the world. Penang is to be congratulated on one

of the prettiest little lodges in the East.

No. V

OF THE THRESHOLD OF THE FAR EAST AND THE DWELLERS THEREON. A

DISSERTATION UPON THE USE OF THE BRITISH LION.

"How the world is made for each of us,

How all we perceive and know in it

Tends to some moment's product--thus

When a soul declares itself--to wit

By its fruit, the thing it does."

"I assure you, Sir, weather as hot as this has not been felt in Singapur

for years and years. March is always reckoned our hottest month, but

this is quite abnormal."

And I made answer to the stranger wearily:--

"Yes, of course. They always told that lie in the other places. Leave me

alone and let me drip."

This is the heat of an orchid-house,--a clinging, remorseless,

steam-sweat that knows no variation between night and day. Singapur is

another Calcutta, but much more so. In the suburbs they are building

rows of cheap houses; in the city they run over you and jostle you into

the kennel. These are unfailing signs of commercial prosperity. India

ended so long ago that I cannot even talk about the natives of the

place. They are all Chinese, except where they are French or Dutch or

German. England is by the uninformed supposed to own the island. The

rest belongs to China and the Continent, but chiefly China. I knew I had

touched the borders of the Celestial Empire when I was thoroughly

impregnated with the reek of Chinese tobacco, a fine-cut, greasy, glossy

weed, to whose smoke the aroma of a huqa in the cookhouse is all

Rimmell's shop.

Providence conducted me along a beach, in full view of five miles of

shipping,--five solid miles of masts and funnels,--to a place called

Raffles Hotel, where the food is as excellent as the rooms are bad. Let

the traveller take note. Feed at Raffles and sleep at the Hotel de

l'Europe. I would have done this but for the apparition of two large

ladies tastefully attired in bedgowns, who sat with their feet propped

on a chair. This Joseph ran; but it turned out that they were Dutch

ladies from Batavia, and that that was their national costume till

dinner time.

"If, as you say, they had on stockings and dressing-gowns, you have

nothing to complain of. They generally wear nothing but a night-gown

till five o'clock," quoth a man versed in the habits of the land.

I do not know whether he spoke the truth; I am inclined to think that he

did; but now I know what "Batavian grace" really means, I don't approve

of it. A lady in a dressing-gown disturbs the mind and prevents careful

consideration of the political outlook in Singapur, which is now

supplied with a set of very complete forts, and is hopefully awaiting

some nine-inch breach-loaders that are to adorn them. There is something

very pathetic in the trustful, clinging attitude of the Colonies, who

ought to have been soured and mistrustful long ago. "We hope the Home

Government may do this. It is possible that the Home Government may do

that," is the burden of the song, and in every place where the

Englishman cannot breed successfully must continue to be. Imagine an

India fit for permanent habitation by our kin, and consider what a place

it would be this day, with the painter cut fifty years ago, fifty

thousand miles of railways laid down and ten thousand under survey, and

possibly an annual surplus. Is this sedition? Forgive me, but I am

looking at the shipping outside the verandah, at the Chinamen in the

streets, and at the lazy, languid Englishmen in banians and white

jackets stretched on the cane chairs, and these things are not nice. The

men are not really lazy, as I will try to show later on, but they lounge

and loaf and seem to go to office at eleven, which must be bad for work.

And they all talk about going home at indecently short intervals, as

though that were their right. Once more, if we could only rear children

that did not run to leg and nose in the second generation in this part

of the world and one or two others, what an amazing disruption of the

Empire there would be before half of a Parnell Commission sitting was

accomplished! And then, later, when the freed States had plunged into

hot water, fought their fights, overborrowed, overspeculated, and

otherwise conducted themselves like younger sons, what a coming together

and revision of tariffs, ending in one great iron band girdling the

earth. Within that limit free trade. Without, rancorous Protection. It

would be too vast a hornet's nest for any combination of Powers to

disturb. The dream will not come about for a long time, but we shall

accomplish something like it one of these days. The birds of passage

from Canada, from Borneo,--Borneo that will have to go through a

general rough-and-tumble before she grips her possibilities,--from

Australia, from a hundred scattered islands, are saying the same thing:

"We are not strong enough yet, but some day We shall be."

Oh! dear people, stewing in India and swearing at all the Governments,

it is a glorious thing to be an Englishman. "Our lot has fallen unto us

in a fair ground. Yea, we have a goodly heritage." Take a map and look

at the long stretch of the Malay Peninsula,--a thousand miles southerly

it runs, does it not?--whereon Penang, Malacca, and Singapur are so

modestly underlined in red ink. See, now. We have our Residents at every

one of the Malay native States of any importance, and right up the line

to Kedah and Siam our influence regulates and controls all. Into this

land God put first gold and tin, and after these the Englishman, who

floats companies, obtains concessions and goes forward. Just at present,

one company alone holds a concession of two thousand square miles in the

interior. That means mining rights; and that means a few thousand

coolies and a settled administration such as obtains in the big Indian

collieries, where the heads of the mines are responsible kings.

With the companies will come the railroads. So far the Straits papers

spend their space in talking about them, for at present there are only

twenty-three or twenty-four miles of narrow-gauge railway open, near a

civilised place called Pirates' Creek, in the Peninsula. The Sultan of

Johore is, or has been, wavering over a concession for a railway through

his country, which will ultimately connect with this Pirates' Creek

line. Singapur is resolved ere long to bridge over the mile or

mile-and-a-half Straits between herself and the State of Johore. In this

manner a beginning will be made of the southerly extension of

Colquhoun's great line running, let us say, from Singapur through the

small States and Siam, without a break, into the great Indian railway

systems, so that a man will be able to book from here to Calcutta

direct. Anything like a business summary of the railway schemes that

come up for discussion from time to time would fill a couple of these

letters, and would be uncommonly dry reading. You know the sort of

"shop" talk that rages among engineers when a new line is being run in

India through perfectly known ground, whose traffic-potentialities may

be calculated to the last pie. It is very much the same here, with the

difference that no one knows for a certainty what the country ahead of

the surveys is like, or where the development is likely to stop. This

gives breeziness to the conversation. The audacity of the speakers is

amazing to one who has been accustomed to see things through Indian

eyes. They hint at "running up the Peninsula," establishing

communications here, consolidating influence there, and Providence only

knows what else; but never a word do they breathe about the necessity

for increased troops to stand by and back these little operations.

Perhaps they assume that the Home Government will provide, but it does

seem strange to hear them cold-bloodedly discussing notions that will

inevitably demand doubled garrisons to keep the ventures out of alien

hands. However, the merchant-men will do their work, and I suppose we

shall borrow three files and a sergeant from somewhere or other when

the time comes, and people begin to realise what sort of a gift our

Straits Settlements are. It is so cheap to prophesy. They will in the

near future grow into--

The Professor looked over my shoulder at this point. "Bosh!" said he.

"They will become just a supplementary China--another field for Chinese

cheap labour. When the Dutch Settlements were returned in 1815,--all

these islands hereabouts, you know,--we should have handed over these

places as well. Look!" He pointed at the swarming Chinamen below.

"Let me dream my dream, 'Fessor. I'll take my hat in a minute and settle

the question of Chinese immigration in five minutes." But I confess it

was mournful to look into the street, which ought to have been full of

Beharis, Madrassis, and men from the Konkan--from our India.

Then up and spake a sunburned man who had interests in North Borneo--he

owned caves in the mountains, some of them nine hundred feet high, so

please you, and filled with the guano of ages, and had been telling me

leech-stories till my flesh crawled. "North Borneo," said he, calmly,

"wants a million of labourers to do her any good. One million coolies.

Men are wanted everywhere,--in the Peninsula, in Sumatra for the tobacco

planting, in Java,--everywhere; but Borneo--the Company's provinces that

is to say--needs a million coolies." It is pleasant to oblige a

stranger, and I felt that I spoke with India at my back. "We could

oblige you with two million or twenty, for the matter of that," said I,

generously.

"Your men are no good," said the North Borneo man. "If one man goes

away, he must have a whole village to look after his wants. India as a

labour field is no good to us, and the Sumatra men say that your coolies

either can't or won't tend tobacco properly. We must have China coolies

as the land develops."

Oh, India, oh, my country! This it is to have inherited a highly

organised civilisation and an ancient precedence code. That your

children shall be scoffed at by the alien as useless outside their own

pot-bound provinces. Here was a labour outlet, a door to full dinners,

through which men--yellow men with pigtails--were pouring by the ten

thousand, while in Bengal the cultured native editor was shrieking over

"atrocities" committed in moving a few hundred souls a few hundred miles

into Assam.

No. VI

OF THE WELL-DRESSED ISLANDERS OF SINGAPUR AND THEIR DIVERSIONS; PROVING

THAT ALL STATIONS ARE EXACTLY ALIKE. SHOWS HOW ONE CHICAGO JEW AND AN

AMERICAN CHILD CAN POISON THE PUREST MIND.

"We are not divided,

All one body we--

One in hope and doctrine,

One in Charity."

When one comes to a new station the first thing to do is to call on the

inhabitants. This duty I had neglected, preferring to consort with

Chinese till the Sabbath, when I learnt that Singapur went to the

Botanical Gardens and listened to secular music.

All the Englishmen in the island congregated there. The Botanical

Gardens would have been lovely at Kew, but here, where one knew that

they were the only place of recreation open to the inhabitants, they

were not pleasant. All the plants of all the tropics grew there

together, and the orchid-house was roofed with thin battens of

wood--just enough to keep off the direct rays of the sun. It held

waxy-white splendours from Manila, the Philippines, and tropical

Africa--plants that were half-slugs, drawing nourishment apparently from

their own wooden labels; but there was no difference between the

temperature of the orchid-house and the open air; both were heavy,

dank, and steaming. I would have given a month's pay--but I have no

month's pay--for a clear breath of stifling hot wind from the sands of

Sirsa, for the darkness of a Punjab dust-storm, in exchange for the

perspiring plants, and the tree-fern that sweated audibly.

Just when I was most impressed with my measureless distance from India,

my carriage advanced to the sound of slow music, and I found myself in

the middle of an Indian station--not quite as big as Allahabad, and

infinitely prettier than Lucknow. It overlooked the gardens that sloped

in ridge and hollow below; and the barracks were set in much greenery,

and there was a mess-house that suggested long and cooling drinks, and

there walked round about a British band. It was just We Our Noble

Selves. In the centre was the pretty \_Memsahib\_ with light hair and

fascinating manners, and the plump little \_Memsahib\_ that talks to

everybody and is in everybody's confidence, and the spinster fresh from

home, and the bean-fed, well-groomed subaltern with the light coat and

fox-terrier. On the benches sat the fat colonel, and the large judge,

and the engineer's wife, and the merchant-man and his family after their

kind--male and female met I them, and but for the little fact that they

were entire strangers to me, I would have saluted them all as old

friends. I knew what they were talking about, could see them taking

stock of one another's dresses out of the corners of their eyes, could

see the young men backing and filling across the ground in order to walk

with the young maidens, and could hear the "Do you think so's" and "Not

really's" of our polite conversation. It is an awful thing to sit in a

hired carriage and watch one's own people, and know that though you know

their life, you have neither part nor lot in it.

"I am a shadow now; alas! alas!

Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling,"

I said mournfully to the Professor. He was looking at Mrs. ----, or some

one so like her that it came to the same thing. "Am I travelling round

the world to discover \_these\_ people?" said he. "I've seen 'em all

before. There's Captain Such-an-one and Colonel Such-another and Miss

What's-its-name as large as life and twice as pale."

The Professor had hit it. That was the difference. People in Singapur

are dead-white--as white as Naaman--and the veins on the backs of their

hands are painted in indigo.

It is as though the Rains were just over, and none of the womenfolk had

been allowed to go to the hills. Yet no one talks about the

unhealthiness of Singapur. A man lives well and happily until he begins

to feel unwell. Then he feels worse because the climate allows him no

chance of pulling himself together--and then he dies. Typhoid fever

appears to be one gate of death, as it is in India; also liver. The

nicest thing in the civil station which lies, of course, far from the

native town, and boasts pretty little bungalows--is Thomas--dear,

white-robed, swaggering, smoking, swearing Thomas Atkins the

unchangeable, who listens to the band and wanders down the bazaars, and

slings the unmentionable adjective about the palm trees exactly as

though he were in Mian Mir. The 58th (Northamptonshire) live in these

parts; so Singapur is quite safe, you see.

Nobody would speak to me in the gardens, though I felt that they ought

to have invited me to drink, and I crept back to my hotel to eat six

different fresh chutnies with one curry.

\* \* \* \* \*

I want to go Home! I want to go back to India! I am miserable. The

steamship \_Nawab\_ at this time of the year ought to have been empty,

instead of which we have one hundred first-class passengers and

sixty-six second. All the pretty girls are in the latter class.

Something must have happened at Colombo--two steamers must have clashed.

We have the results of the collision, and we are a menagerie. The

captain says that there ought to have been only ten or twelve passengers

by rights, and had the rush been anticipated, a larger steamer would

have been provided. Personally, I consider that half our shipmates ought

to be thrown overboard. They are only travelling round the world for

pleasure, and that sort of dissipation leads to the forming of hasty and

intemperate opinions. Anyhow, give me freedom and the cockroaches of the

British India, where we dined on deck, altered the hours of the meals by

plebiscite, and were lords of all we saw. You know the chain-gang

regulations of the P. and O.: how you must approach the captain standing

on your head with your feet waving reverently; how you must crawl into

the presence of the chief steward on your belly and call him

Thrice-Puissant Bottle-washer; how you must not smoke abaft the

sheep-pens; must not stand in the companion; must put on a clean coat

when the ship's library is opened; and crowning injustice, must order

your drinks for tiffin and dinner one meal in advance? How can a man

full of Pilsener beer reach that keen-set state of quiescence needful

for ordering his dinner liquor? This shows ignorance of human nature.

The P. and O. want healthy competition. They call their captains

commanders and act as though 'twere a favour to allow you to embark.

Again, freedom and the British India for ever, and down with the

comforts of a coolie ship and the prices of a palace!

There are about thirty women on board, and I have been watching with a

certain amount of indignation their concerted attempt at killing the

stewardess,--a delicate and sweet-mannered lady. I think they will

accomplish their end. The saloon is ninety feet long, and the stewardess

runs up and down it for nine hours a day. In her intervals of relaxation

she carries cups of beef-tea to the frail sylphs who cannot exist

without food between 9 A.M. and 1 P.M. This morning she advanced to me

and said, as though it were the most natural thing in the world: "Shall

I take away your tea-cup, sir?" She was a real white woman, and the

saloon was full of hulking, half-bred Portuguese. One young Englishman

let her take his cup, and actually did not turn round when he handed it.

This is awful, and teaches me, as nothing else has done, how far I am

from the blessed East. She (the stewardess) talks standing up, to men

who sit down!

We in India are currently supposed to be unkind to our servants. I

should very much like to see a sweeper doing one-half of the work these

strapping white matrons and maids exact from their sister. They make

her carry things about and don't even say, "Thank you." She has no name,

and if you bawl, "Stewardess," she is bound to come. Isn't it degrading?

But the real reason of my wish to return is because I have met a lump of

Chicago Jews and am afraid that I shall meet many more. The ship is full

of Americans, but the American-German-Jew boy is the most awful of all.

One of them has money, and wanders from bow to stern asking strangers to

drink, bossing lotteries on the run, and committing other atrocities. It

is currently reported that he is dying. Unfortunately he does not die

quickly enough.

But the real monstrosity of the ship is an American who is not quite

grown up. I cannot call it a boy, though officially it is only eight,

wears a striped jacket, and eats with the children. It has the wearied

appearance of an infant monkey--there are lines round its mouth and

under its eyebrows. When it has nothing else to do it will answer to the

name of Albert. It has been two years on the continuous travel; has

spent a month in India; has seen Constantinople, Tripoli, Spain; has

lived in tents and on horseback for thirty days and thirty nights, as it

was careful to inform me; and has exhausted the round of this world's

delights. There is no flesh on its bones, and it lives in the

smoking-room financing the arrangements of the daily lottery. I was

afraid of it, but it followed me, and in a level expressionless voice

began to tell me how lotteries were constructed. When I protested that I

knew, it continued without regarding the interruption, and finally, as a

reward for my patience, volunteered to give me the names and

idiosyncracies of all on board. Then it vanished through the

smoking-room window because the door was only eight feet high, and

therefore too narrow for that bulk of abnormal experiences. On certain

subjects it was partly better informed than I; on others it displayed

the infinite credulity of a two-year-old. But the wearied eyes were ever

the same. They will be the same when it is fifty. I was more sorry for

it than I could say. All its reminiscences had got jumbled, and

incidents of Spain were baled into Turkey and India. Some day a

schoolmaster will get hold of it and try to educate it, and I should

dearly like to see at which end he will begin. The head is too full

already and the--the other part does not exist. Albert is, I presume,

but an ordinary American child. He was to me a revelation. Now I want to

see a little American girl--but not now--not just now. My nerves are

shattered by the Jews and Albert; and unless they recover their tone I

shall turn back at Yokohama.

No. VII

SHOWS HOW I ARRIVED IN CHINA AND SAW ENTIRELY THROUGH THE GREAT WALL AND

OUT UPON THE OTHER SIDE.

"Where naked ignorance

Delivers brawling judgments all day long

On all things unashamed."

The past few days on the \_Nawab\_ have been spent amid a new people and a

very strange one. There were speculators from South Africa: financiers

from home (these never talked in anything under hundreds of thousands of

pounds and, I fear, bluffed awfully); there were Consuls of far-off

China ports and partners of China shipping houses talking a talk and

thinking thoughts as different from Ours as is Our slang from the slang

of London. But it would not interest you to learn the story of our

shipload--to hear about the hard-headed Scotch merchant with a taste for

spiritualism, who begged me to tell him whether there was really

anything in Theosophy and whether Tibet was full of levitating \_chelas\_,

as he believed; or of the little London curate out for a holiday who had

seen India and had faith in the progress of missionary work there--who

believed that the C. M. S. was shaking the thoughts and convictions of

the masses, and that the Word of the Lord would ere long prevail above

all other councils. He in the night-watches tackled and disposed of the

great mysteries of Life and Death, and was looking forward to a lifetime

of toil amid a parish without a single rich man in it.

When you are in the China Seas be careful to keep all your flannel-wear

to hand. In an hour the steamer swung from tropical heat (including

prickly) to a cold raw fog, as wet as a Scotch mist. Morning gave us a

new world--somewhere between Heaven and Earth. The sea was smoked glass:

reddish grey islands lay upon it under fog-banks that hovered fifty feet

above our heads. The squat sails of junks danced for an instant like

autumn leaves in the breeze and disappeared, and there was no solidity

in the islands against which the glassy levels splintered in snow. The

steamer groaned and grunted and howled because she was so damp and

miserable, and I groaned also because the guide-book said that Hong-Kong

had the finest harbour in the world, and I could not see two hundred

yards in any direction. Yet this ghost-like in-gliding through the

belted fog was livelily mysterious, and became more so when the movement

of the air vouchsafed us a glimpse of a warehouse and a derrick, both

apparently close aboard, and behind them the shoulder of a mountain. We

made our way into a sea of flat-nosed boats all manned by most muscular

humans, and the Professor said that the time to study the Chinese

question was now. We, however, were carrying a new general to these

parts, and nice, new, well-fitting uniforms came off to make him

welcome; and in the contemplation of things too long withheld from me I

forgot about the Pigtails. Gentlemen of the mess-room, who would wear

linen coats on parade if you could, wait till you have been a month

without seeing a patrol-jacket or hearing a spur go \_ling-a-ling\_, and

you will know why civilians want you always to wear uniform. The

General, by the way, was a nice General. He did not know much about the

Indian Army or the ways of a gentleman called Roberts, if I recollect

aright; but he said that Lord Wolseley was going to be

Commander-in-Chief one of these days on account of the pressing needs of

our Army. He was a revelation because he talked about nothing but

English military matters, which are very, very different from Indian

ones, and are mixed up with politics.

All Hong-Kong is built on the sea face; the rest is fog. One muddy road

runs for ever in front of a line of houses which are partly Chowringhee

and partly Rotherhithe. You live in the houses, and when wearied of

this, walk across the road and drop into the sea, if you can find a

square foot of unencumbered water. So vast is the accumulation of

country shipping, and such is its dirtiness as it rubs against the bund,

that the superior inhabitants are compelled to hang their boats from

davits above the common craft, who are greatly disturbed by a multitude

of steam-launches. These ply for amusement and the pleasure of

whistling, and are held in such small esteem that every hotel owns one,

and the others are masterless. Beyond the launches lie more steamers

than the eye can count, and four out of five of these belong to Us. I

was proud when I saw the shipping at Singapur, but I swell with

patriotism as I watch the fleets of Hong-Kong from the balcony of the

Victoria Hotel. I can almost spit into the water; but many mariners

stand below and they are a strong breed.

How recklessly selfish does a traveller become! We had dropped for more

than ten days all the world outside our trunks, and almost the first

word in the hotel was: "John Bright is dead, and there has been an awful

hurricane at Samoa."

"Ah! indeed that's very sad; but look here, where do you say my rooms

are?" At home the news would have given talk for half a day. It was

dismissed in half the length of a hotel corridor. One cannot sit down to

think with a new world humming outside the window--with all China to

enter upon and possess.

A rattling of trunks in the halls--a click of heels--and the apparition

of an enormous gaunt woman wrestling with a small Madrassi servant....

"Yes--I haf travelled everywhere and I shall travel everywhere else. I

go now to Shanghai and Pekin. I have been in Moldavia, Russia, Beyrout,

all Persia, Colombo, Delhi, Dacca, Benares, Allahabad, Peshawar, the Ali

Musjid in that pass, Malabar, Singapur, Penang, here in this place, and

Canton. I am Austrian-Croat, and I shall see the States of America and

perhaps Ireland. I travel for ever; I am--how you call?--\_veuve\_--widow.

My husband, he was dead; and so I am sad--I am always sad und so I

trafel. I am alife of course, but I do not live. You onderstandt? Always

sad. Vill you tell them the name of the ship to which they shall warf my

trunks now. You trafel for pleasure? So! I trafel because I am alone und

sad--always sad."

The trunks disappeared, the door shut, the heels clicked down the

passage, and I was left scratching my head in wonder. How did that

conversation begin--why did it end, and what is the use of meeting

eccentricities who never explained themselves? I shall never get an

answer, but that conversation is true, every word of it. I see now where

the fragmentary school of novelists get their material from.

When I went into the streets of Hong-Kong I stepped into thick slushy

London mud of the kind that strikes chilly through the boot, and the

rattle of innumerable wheels was as the rattle of hansoms. A soaking

rain fell, and all the sahibs hailed 'rickshaws,--they call them 'ricks

here,--and the wind was chillier than the rain. It was the first touch

of honest weather since Calcutta. No wonder with such a climate that

Hong-Kong was ten times livelier than Singapur, that there were signs of

building everywhere, and gas-jets in all the houses, that colonnades and

domes were scattered broadcast, and the Englishmen walked as Englishmen

should--hurriedly and looking forward. All the length of the main street

was verandahed, and the Europe shops squandered plate glass by the

square yard. (\_Nota bene.\_--As in Simla so elsewhere: mistrust the plate

glass shops. You pay for their fittings in each purchase.)

The same Providence that runs big rivers so near to large cities puts

main thoroughfares close to big hotels. I went down Queen Street, which

is not very hilly. All the other streets that I looked up were built in

steps after the fashion of Clovelly, and under blue skies would have

given the Professor scores of good photographs. The rain and the fog

blotted the views. Each upward-climbing street ran out in white mist

that covered the sides of a hill, and the downward-sloping ones were

lost in the steam from the waters of the harbour, and both were very

strange to see. "Hi-yi-yow," said my 'rickshaw coolie and balanced me

on one wheel. I got out and met first a German with a beard, then three

jolly sailor boys from a man-of-war, then a sergeant of Sappers, then a

Parsee, then two Arabs, then an American, then a Jew, then a few

thousand Chinese all carrying something, and then the Professor.

"They make plates--instantaneous plates--in Tokio, I'm told. What d'you

think of that?" he said. "Why, in India, the Survey Department are the

only people who make their own plates. Instantaneous plates in Tokio;

think of it!"

I had owed the Professor one for a long time. "After all," I replied,

"it strikes me that we have made the mistake of thinking too much of

India. We thought we were civilised, for instance. Let us take a lower

place. This beats Calcutta into a hamlet."

And in good truth it did, because it was clean beyond the ordinary,

because the houses were uniform, three storied, and verandahed, and the

pavements were of stone. I met one horse, very ashamed of himself, who

was looking after a cart on the sea road, but upstairs there are no

vehicles save 'rickshaws. Hong-Kong has killed the romance of the

'rickshaw in my mind. They ought to be sacred to pretty ladies, instead

of which men go to office in them, officers in full canonicals use them;

tars try to squeeze in two abreast, and from what I have heard down at

the barracks they do occasionally bring to the guard-room the drunken

defaulter. "He falls asleep inside of it, Sir, and saves trouble." The

Chinese naturally have the town for their own, and profit by all our

building improvements and regulations. Their golden and red signs flame

down the Queen's Road, but they are careful to supplement their own

tongue by well-executed Europe lettering. I found only one exception,

thus:--

Fussing, Garpenter

And Gabinet Naktr

Has good Gabi

Nets tor Sale.

The shops are made to catch the sailor and the curio hunter, and they

succeed admirably. When you come to these parts put all your money in a

bank and tell the manager man not to give it you, however much you ask.

So shall you be saved from bankruptcy.

The Professor and I made a pilgrimage from Kee Sing even unto Yi King,

who sells the decomposed fowl, and each shop was good. Though it sold

shoes or sucking pigs, there was some delicacy of carving or gilded

tracery in front to hold the eye, and each thing was quaint and striking

of its kind. A fragment of twisted roots helped by a few strokes into

the likeness of huddled devils, a running knop and flower cornice, a

dull red and gold half-door, a split bamboo screen--they were all good,

and their joinings and splicings and mortisings were accurate. The

baskets of the coolies were good in shape, and the rattan fastenings

that clenched them to the polished bamboo yoke were whipped down, so

that there were no loose ends. You could slide in and out the drawers in

the slung chests of the man who sold dinners to the 'rickshaw coolies;

and the pistons of the little wooden hand-pumps in the shops worked

accurately in their sockets.

I was studying these things while the Professor was roaming through

carved ivories, broidered silks, panels of inlay, tortoise-shell

filigree, jade-tipped pipes, and the God of Art only knows what else.

"I don't think even as much of him (meaning our Indian craftsman) as I

used to do," said the Professor, taking up a tiny ivory grotesque of a

small baby trying to pull a water-buffalo out of its wallow--the whole

story of beast and baby written in the hard ivory. The same thought was

in both our minds; we had gone near the subject once or twice before.

"They are a hundred times his superior in mere idea--let alone

execution," said the Professor, his hand on a sketch in woods and gems

of a woman caught in a gale of wind protecting her baby from its

violence.

"Yes; and don't you see that \_they\_ only introduce aniline dyes into

things intended for \_us\_. Whereas \_he\_ wears them on his body whenever

he can. What made this yellow image of a shopman here take delight in a

dwarf orange tree in a turquoise blue pot?" I continued, sorting a

bundle of cheap China spoons--all good in form, colour, and use. The

big-bellied Chinese lanterns above us swayed in the wind with a soft

chafing of oiled paper, but they made no sign, and the shopkeeper in

blue was equally useless.

"You wanchee buy? Heap plitty things here," said he; and he filled a

tobacco-pipe from a dull green leather pouch held at the mouth with a

little bracelet of plasma, or it might have been the very jade. He was

playing with a brown-wood abacus, and by his side was his day-book bound

in oiled paper, and the tray of Indian ink, with the brushes and the

porcelain supports for the brushes. He made an entry in his book and

daintily painted in his latest transaction. The Chinese of course have

been doing this for a few thousand years, but Life, and its experiences,

is as new to me as it was to Adam, and I marvelled.

"Wanchee buy?" reiterated the shopman after he had made his last

flourish.

"You," said I, in the new tongue which I am acquiring, "wanchee know one

piecee information b'long my pidgin. Savvy these things? Have got soul,

you?"

"Have got how?"

"Have got one piecee soul--allee same spilit? No savvy? This way

then--your people lookee allee same devil; but makee culio allee same

pocket-Joss, and not giving any explanation. Why-for are you such a

horrible contradiction?"

"No savvy. Two dollar an' half," he said, balancing a cabinet in his

hand. The Professor had not heard. His mind was oppressed with the fate

of the Hindu.

"There are three races who can work," said the Professor, looking down

the seething street where the 'rickshaws tore up the slush, and the

babel of Cantonese, and pidgin went up to the yellow fog in a jumbled

snarl.

"But there is only one that can swarm," I answered. "The Hindu cuts his

own throat and dies, and there are too few of the Sahib-log to last for

ever. These people work and spread. They must have souls or they

couldn't understand pretty things."

"I can't make it out," said the Professor. "They are better artists than

the Hindu,--that carving you are looking at is Japanese, by the

way,--better artists and stronger workmen, man for man. They pack close

and eat everything, and they can live on nothing."

"And I've been praising the beauties of Indian Art all my days." It was

a little disappointing when you come to think of it, but I tried to

console myself by the thought that the two lay so far apart there was no

comparison possible. And yet accuracy is surely the touchstone of all

Art.

"They will overwhelm the world," said the Professor, calmly, and he went

out to buy tea.

Neither at Penang, Singapur, nor this place have I seen a single

Chinaman asleep while daylight lasted. Nor have I seen twenty men who

were obviously loafing. All were going to some definite end--if it were

only like the coolie on the wharf, to steal wood from the scaffolding of

a half-built house. In his own land, I believe, the Chinaman is treated

with a certain amount of carelessness, not to say ferocity. Where he

hides his love of art, the Heaven that made him out of the yellow earth

that holds so much iron only knows. His love is for little things, or

else why should he get quaint pendants for his pipe, and at the backmost

back of his shop build up for himself a bowerbird's collection of odds

and ends, every one of which has beauty if you hold it sufficiently

close to the eye. It grieves me that I cannot account for the ideas of a

few hundred million men in a few hours. This much, however, seems

certain. If we had control over as many Chinamen as we have natives of

India, and had given them one tithe of the cossetting, the painful

pushing forward, and studious, even nervous, regard of their interests

and aspirations that we have given to India, we should long ago have

been expelled from, or have reaped the reward of, the richest land on

the face of the earth. A pair of my shoes have been, oddly enough,

wrapped in a newspaper which carries for its motto the words, "There is

no Indian nation, though there exists the germs of an Indian

nationality," or something very like that. This thing has been moving me

to unholy laughter. The great big lazy land that we nurse and wrap in

cotton-wool, and ask every morning whether it is strong enough to get

out of bed, seems like a heavy soft cloud on the far-away horizon; and

the babble that we were wont to raise about its precious future and its

possibilities, no more than the talk of children in the streets who have

made a horse out of a pea-pod and match-sticks, and wonder if it will

ever walk. I am sadly out of conceit of mine own other--not

mother--country now that I have had my boots blacked at once every time

I happened to take them off. The blacker did not do it for the sake of a

gratuity, but because it was his work. Like the beaver of old, he had to

climb that tree; the dogs were after him. There was competition.

\* \* \* \* \*

Is there really such a place as Hong-Kong? People say so, but I have not

yet seen it. Once indeed the clouds lifted and I saw a granite house

perched like a cherub on nothing, a thousand feet above the town. It

looked as if it might be the beginning of a civil station, but a man

came up the street and said, "See this fog It will be like this till

September. You'd better go away." I shall not go. I shall encamp in

front of the place until the fog lifts and the rain ceases. At present,

and it is the third day of April, I am sitting in front of a large coal

fire and thinking of the "frosty Caucasus"--you poor creatures in

torment afar. And you think as you go to office and orderly-room that

you are helping forward England's mission in the East. 'Tis a pretty

delusion, and I am sorry to destroy it, but you have conquered the wrong

country.

Let us annex China.

No. VIII

OF JENNY AND HER FRIENDS. SHOWING HOW A MAN MAY GO TO SEE LIFE AND MEET

DEATH THERE. OF THE FELICITY OF LIFE AND THE HAPPINESS OF CORINTHIAN

KATE. THE WOMAN AND THE CHOLERA.

"Love and let love, and so will I,

But, sweet, for me no more with you,

Not while I live, not though I die.

Good night, good-by!"

I am entirely the man about town, and sickness is no word for my

sentiments. It began with an idle word in a bar-room. It ended goodness

knows where. That the world should hold French, German, and Italian

ladies of the ancient profession is no great marvel; but it is, to one

who has lived in India, something shocking to meet again Englishwomen in

the same sisterhood. When an opulent papa sends his son and heir round

the world to enlarge his mind, does he reflect, I wonder, on the places

into which the innocent strolls under the guidance of equally

inexperienced friends? I am disposed to think that he does not. In the

interest of the opulent papa, and from a genuine desire to see what they

call Life, with a capital Hell, I went through Hong-Kong for the space

of a night. I am glad that I am not a happy father with a stray son who

thinks that he knows all the ropes. Vice must be pretty much the same

all the round world over, but if a man wishes to get out of pleasure

with it, let him go to Hong-Kong.

"Of course things are out and away better at 'Frisco," said my guide,

"but we consider this very fair for the Island." It was not till a fat

person in a black dressing-gown began to squeal demands for horrible

stuff called "a bottle of wine" that I began to understand the glory of

the situation. I was seeing Life. "Life" is a great thing. It consists

in swigging sweet champagne that was stolen from a steward of the P. and

O., and exchanging bad words with pale-faced baggages who laugh demnibly

without effort and without emotion. The \_argot\_ of the real "chippy"

(this means man of the world--\_Anglice\_, a half-drunk youth with his hat

on the back of his head) is not easy to come at. It requires an

apprenticeship in America. I stood appalled at the depth and richness of

the American language, of which I was privileged to hear a special

dialect. There were girls who had been to Leadville and Denver and the

wilds of the wilder West, who had acted in minor companies, and who had

generally misconducted themselves in a hundred weary ways. They

chattered like daws and shovelled down the sickly liquor that made the

rooms reek. As long as they talked sensibly things were amusing, but a

sufficiency of liquor made the mask drop, and verily they swore by all

their gods, chief of whom is Obidicut. Very many men have heard a white

woman swear, but some few, and among these I have been, are denied the

experience. It is quite a revelation; and if nobody tilts you backwards

out of your chair, you can reflect on heaps of things connected with

it. So they cursed and they drank and they told tales, sitting in a

circle, till I felt that this was really Life and a thing to be quitted

if I wished to like it. The young man who knew a thing or two, and gave

the girls leave to sell him if they could, was there of course, and the

hussies sold him as he stood for all he considered himself worth; and I

saw the by-play. Surely the safest way to be fooled is to know

everything. Then there was an interlude and some more shrieks and howls,

which the generous public took as indicating immense mirth and enjoyment

of Life; and I came to yet another establishment, where the landlady

lacked the half of her left lung, as a cough betrayed, but was none the

less amusing in a dreary way, until she also dropped the mask and the

playful jesting began. All the jokes I had heard before at the other

place. It is a poor sort of Life that cannot spring one new jest a day.

More than ever did the youth cock his hat and explain that he was a real

"chippy," and that there were no flies on him. Any one without a

cast-iron head would be "real chippy" next morning after one glass of

that sirupy champagne. I understand now why men feel insulted when sweet

fizz is offered to them. The second interview closed as the landlady

gracefully coughed us into the passage, and so into the healthy, silent

streets. She was very ill indeed, and announced that she had but four

months more to live.

"Are we going to hold these dismal levees all through the night?" I

demanded at the fourth house, where I dreaded the repetition of the

thrice-told tales.

"It's better in 'Frisco. Must amuse the girls a little bit, y'know. Walk

round and wake 'em up. That's Life. You never saw it in India?" was the

reply.

"No, thank God, I didn't. A week of this would make me hang myself," I

returned, leaning wearily against a door-post. There were very loud

sounds of revelry by night here, and the inmates needed no waking up.

One of them was recovering from a debauch of three days, and the other

was just entering upon the same course. Providence protected me all

through. A certain austere beauty of countenance had made every one take

me for a doctor or a parson--a qualified parson, I think; and so I was

spared many of the more pronounced jokes, and could sit and contemplate

the Life that was so sweet. I thought of the Oxonian in \_Tom and Jerry\_

playing jigs at the spinet,--you seen the old-fashioned plate,--while

Corinthian Tom and Corinthian Kate danced a stately saraband in a little

carpeted room. The worst of it was, the women were real women and

pretty, and like some people I knew, and when they stopped the insensate

racket for a while they were well behaved.

"Pass for real ladies anywhere," said my friend. "Aren't these things

well managed?"

Then Corinthian Kate began to bellow for more drinks,--it was three in

the morning,--and the current of hideous talk recommenced.

They spoke about themselves as "gay." This does not look much on paper.

To appreciate the full grimness of the sarcasm hear it from their lips

amid their own surroundings. I winked with vigour to show that I

appreciated Life and was a real chippy, and that upon me, too, there

were no flies. There is an intoxication in company that carries a man to

excess of mirth; but when a party of four deliberately sit down to

drink and swear, the bottom tumbles out of the amusement somehow, and

loathing and boredom follow. A night's reflection has convinced me that

there is no hell for these women in another world. They have their own

in this Life, and I have been through it a little way. Still carrying

the brevet rank of doctor, it was my duty to watch through the night to

the dawn a patient--gay, \_toujours\_ gay, remember--quivering on the

verge of a complaint called the "jumps." Corinthian Kate will get hers

later on. Her companion, emerging from a heavy drink, was more than

enough for me. She was an unmitigated horror, until I lost detestation

in genuine pity. The fear of death was upon her for a reason that you

shall hear.

"I say, you say you come from India. Do you know anything about

cholera?"

"A little," I answered. The voice of the questioner was cracked and

quavering. A long pause.

"I say, Doctor, what are the symptoms of cholera? A woman died just over

the street there last week."

"This is pleasant," I thought. "But I must remember that it is Life."

"She died last week--cholera. My God, I tell you she was dead in six

hours! I guess I'll get cholera, too. I can't, though. Can I? I thought

I had it two days ago. It hurt me terribly. I can't get it, can I? It

never attacks people twice, does it? Oh, say it doesn't and be damned to

you. Doctor, what are the symptoms of cholera?"

I waited till she had detailed her own attack, assured her that these

and no others were the symptoms, and--may this be set to my credit--that

cholera never attacked twice. This soothed her for ten minutes. Then

she sprang up with an oath and shrieked:--

"I won't be buried in Hong-Kong. That frightens me. When I die--of

cholera--take me to 'Frisco and bury me there. In 'Frisco--Lone Mountain

'Frisco--you hear, Doctor?"

I heard and promised. Outside the birds were beginning to twitter and

the dawn was pencilling the shutters.

"I say, Doctor, did you ever know Cora Pearl?"

"'Knew \_of\_ her." I wondered whether she was going to walk round the

room to all eternity with her eyes glaring at the ceiling and her hands

twisting and untwisting one within the other.

"Well," she began, in an impressive whisper, "it was young Duval shot

himself on her mat and made a bloody mess there. I mean real bloody. You

don't carry a pistol, Doctor? Savile did. You didn't know Savile. He was

my husband in the States. But I'm English, pure English. That's what I

am. Let's have a bottle of wine, I'm so nervous. Not good for me? What

the--No, you're a doctor. You know what's good against cholera. Tell me!

Tell me."

She crossed to the shutters and stared out, her hand upon the bolt, and

the bolt clacked against the wood because of the tremulous hand.

"I tell you Corinthian Kate's drunk--full as she can hold. She's always

drinking. Did you ever see my shoulder--these two marks on it? They were

given me by a man--a gentleman--the night before last. I \_didn't\_ fall

against any furniture. He struck me with his cane twice, the beast, the

beast, the beast! If I had been full, I'd have knocked the dust out of

him. The beast! But I only went into the verandah and cried fit to

break my heart. Oh, the beast!"

She paced the room, chafing her shoulder and crooning over it as though

it were an animal. Then she swore at the man. Then she fell into a sort

of stupor, but moaned and swore at the man in her sleep, and wailed for

her \_amah\_ to come and dress her shoulder.

Asleep she was not unlovely, but the mouth twitched and the body was

shaken with shiverings, and there was no peace in her at all. Daylight

showed her purple-eyed, slack-cheeked, and staring, racked with a

headache and the nervous twitches. Indeed I was seeing Life; but it did

not amuse me, for I felt that I, though I only made capital of her

extreme woe, was guilty equally with the rest of my kind that had

brought her here.

Then she told lies. At least I was informed that they were lies later on

by the real man of the world. They related to herself and her people,

and if untrue must have been motiveless, for all was sordid and

sorrowful, though she tried to gild the page with a book of photos which

linked her to her past. Not being a man of the world, I prefer to

believe that the tales were true, and thank her for the honour she did

me in the telling.

I had fancied that the house had nothing sadder to show me than her

face. Here was I wrong. Corinthian Kate had really been drinking, and

rose up reeling drunk, which is an awful thing to witness, and makes

one's head ache sympathetically. Something had gone wrong in the

slatternly menage where the plated tea-services were mixed with cheap

China; and the household was being called to account. I watched her

clutching the mosquito net for support, a horror and an offence in the

eye of the guiltless day. I heard her swear in a thick, sodden voice as

I have never yet heard a man swear, and I marvelled that the house did

not thunder in on our heads. Her companion interposed, but was borne

down by a torrent of blasphemy, and the half a dozen little dogs that

infested the room removed themselves beyond reach of Corinthian Kate's

hand or foot. That she was a handsome woman only made the matter worse.

The companion collapsed shivering on one of the couches, and Kate swayed

to and fro and cursed God and man and earth and heaven with puffed lips.

If Alma Tadema could have painted her,--an arrangement in white, black

hair, flashing eyes, and bare feet,--we should have seen the true

likeness of the Eternal Priestess of Humanity. Or she would have been

better drawn when the passion was over, tottering across the room, a

champagne glass held high above her head, shouting, at ten o'clock in

the morning, for some more of the infamous brewage that was even then

poisoning the air of the whole house. She got her liquor, and the two

women sat down to share it together. That was their breakfast.

I went away very sick and miserable, and as the door closed I saw the

two drinking.

"Out and away better in 'Frisco," said the real "chippy" one. "But you

see they are awfully nice--could pass for ladies any time they like. I

tell you a man has to go round and keep his eyes open among them when

he's seeing a little sporting life."

I have seen all that I wish to see, and henceforward I will pass. There

may be better champagne and better drinkers in 'Frisco and elsewhere,

but the talk will be the same, and the mouldiness and staleness of it

all will be the same till the end of time. If this be Life, give me a

little honest death, without drinks and without foul jesting. Anyway you

look at it 'tis a poor performance, badly played, and too near to a

tragedy to be pleasant. But it seems to amuse the young man wandering

about the world, and I cannot believe that it is altogether good for

him--unless, indeed, it makes him fonder of his home.

And mine was the greater sin! I was driven by no gust of passion, but

went in cold blood to make my account of this Inferno, and to measure

the measureless miseries of life. For the wholly insignificant sum of

thirty dollars I had purchased information and disgust more than I

required, and the right to look after a woman half crazed with drink and

fear the third part of a terrible night. Mine was the greater sin.

When we stepped back into the world I was glad that the fog stood

between myself and the heaven above.

No. IX

SOME TALK WITH A TAIPAN AND A GENERAL; PROVES IN WHAT MANNER A SEA

PICNIC MAY BE A SUCCESS.

"I should like to rise and go

Where the golden apples grow,

Where beneath another sky

Parrot-islands anchored lie."

--\_R. L. Stevenson.\_

Hong-Kong was so much alive, so built, so lighted, and so bloatedly rich

to all outward appearance that I wanted to know how these things came

about. You can't lavish granite by the cubic ton for nothing, or rivet

your cliffs with Portland cement, or build a five-mile bund, or

establish a club like a small palace. I sought a \_Taipan\_, which means

the head of an English trading firm. He was the biggest \_Taipan\_ on the

island, and quite the nicest. He owned ships and wharves and houses and

mines and a hundred other things. To him said I:--

"O \_Taipan\_, I am a poor person from Calcutta, and the liveliness of

your place astounds me. How is it that every one smells of money; whence

come your municipal improvements; and why are the White Men so

restless?"

Said the \_Taipan\_: "It is because the island is going ahead mightily.

Because everything pays. Observe this share-list."

He took me down a list of thirty or less companies--steam-launch

companies, mining, rope-weaving, dock, trading, agency and general

companies--and with five exceptions all the shares were at premium--some

a hundred, some five hundred, and others only fifty.

"It is not a boom," said the \_Taipan\_. "It is genuine. Nearly every man

you meet in these parts is a broker, and he floats companies."

I looked out of the window and beheld how companies were floated. Three

men with their hats on the back of their heads converse for ten minutes.

To these enters a fourth with a pocket-book. Then all four dive into the

Hong-Kong Hotel for material wherewith to float themselves and--there is

your company!

"From these things," said the \_Taipan\_, "comes the wealth of Hong-Kong.

Every notion here pays, from the dairy-farm upwards. We have passed

through our bad times and come to the fat years."

He told me tales of the old times--pityingly because he knew I could not

understand. All I could tell was that the place dressed by America--from

the hair-cutters' saloons to the liquor-bars. The faces of men were

turned to the Golden Gate even while they floated most of the Singapur

companies. There is not sufficient push in Singapur alone, so Hong-Kong

helps. Circulars of new companies lay on the bank counters. I moved amid

a maze of interests that I could not comprehend, and spoke to men whose

minds were at Hankow, Foochoo, Amoy, or even further--beyond the Yangtze

gorges where the Englishman trades.

After a while I escaped from the company-floaters because I knew I could

not understand them, and ran up a hill. Hong-Kong is all hill except

when the fog shuts out everything except the sea. Tree ferns sprouted on

the ground and azaleas mixed with the ferns, and there were bamboos over

all. Consequently it was only natural that I should find a tramway that

stood on its head and waved its feet in the mist. They called it the

Victoria Gap Tramway and hauled it up with a rope. It ran up a hill into

space at an angle of 65Â°, and to those who have seen the Rigi, Mount

Washington, a switchback railway, and the like would not have been

impressive. But neither you nor I have ever been hauled from Annandale

to the Chaura MaidÃ n in a bee-line with a five-hundred-foot drop on the

off-side, and we are at liberty to marvel. It is not proper to run up

inclined ways at the tail of a string, more especially when you cannot

see two yards in front of you and all earth below is a swirling cauldron

of mist. Nor, unless you are warned of the opticalness of the delusion,

is it nice to see from your seat, houses and trees at magic-lantern

angles. Such things, before tiffin, are worse than the long roll of the

China seas.

They turned me out twelve hundred feet above the city on the military

road to Dalhousie, as it will be when India has a surplus. Then they

brought me a glorified dandy which, not knowing any better, they called

a chair. Except that it is too long to run corners easily, a chair is

vastly superior to a dandy. It is more like a Bombay side \_tonjon\_--the

kind we use at Mahableshwar. You sit in a wicker chair, slung low on ten

feet of elastic wooden shafting, and there are light blinds against the

rain.

"We are now," said the Professor, as he wrung out his hat gemmed with

the dews of the driving mist, "we are now on a pleasure trip. This is

the road to Chakrata in the rains."

"Nay," said I; "it is from Solon to Kasauli that we are going. Look at

the black rocks."

"Bosh!" said the Professor. "This is a civilised country. Look at the

road, look at the railings--look at the gutters."

And as I hope never to go to Solon again, the road was cemented, the

railings were of iron mortised into granite blocks, and the gutters were

paved. 'Twas no wider than a hill-path, but if it had been the Viceroy's

pet promenade it could not have been better kept. There was no view.

That was why the Professor had taken his camera. We passed coolies

widening the road, and houses shut up and deserted, solid squat little

houses made of stone, with pretty names after our hill-station

custom--Townend, Craggylands, and the like--and at these things my heart

burned within me. Hong-Kong has no right to mix itself up with Mussoorie

in this fashion. We came to the meeting-place of the winds, eighteen

hundred feet above all the world, and saw forty miles of clouds. That

was the Peak--the great view-place of the island. A laundry on a washing

day would have been more interesting.

"Let us go down, Professor," said I, "and we'll get our money back. This

isn't a view."

We descended by the marvellous tramway, each pretending to be as little

upset as the other, and started in pursuit of a Chinese burying-ground.

"Go to the Happy Valley," said an expert. "The Happy Valley, where the

racecourse and the cemeteries are."

"It's Mussoorie," said the Professor. "I knew it all along."

It was Mussoorie, though we had to go through a half-mile of Portsmouth

Hard first. Soldiers grinned at us from the verandahs of their most

solid three-storied barracks; all the blue-jackets of all the China

squadron were congregated in the Royal Navy Seaman's Club, and they

beamed upon us. The bluejacket is a beautiful creature, and very

healthy, but ... I gave my heart to Thomas Atkins long ago, and him I

love.

By the way, how is it that a Highland regiment--the Argyll and

Southerlandshire for instance--get such good recruits? Do the kilt and

sporran bring in brawny youngsters of five-foot nine, and thirty-nine

inch round the chest? The Navy draws well-built men also. How is it that

Our infantry regiments fare so badly?

We came to the Happy Valley by way of a monument to certain dead

Englishmen. Such things cease to move emotion after a little while. They

are but the seed of the great harvest whereof our children's children

shall assuredly reap the fruits. The men were killed in a fight, or by

disease. We hold Hong-Kong, and by Our strength and wisdom it is a great

city, built upon a rock, and furnished with a dear little seven-furlong

racecourse set in the hills, and fringed as to one side with the homes

of the dead--Mahometan, Christian, and Parsee. A wall of bamboos shuts

off the course and the grand-stand from the cemeteries. It may be good

enough for Hong-Kong, but would you care to watch your pony running with

a grim reminder of "gone to the drawer" not fifty feet behind you? Very

beautiful are the cemeteries, and very carefully tended. The rocky

hillside rises so near to them that the more recent dead can almost

command a view of the racing as they lie. Even this far from the strife

of the Churches they bury the different sects of Christians apart. One

creed paints its wall white, and the other blue. The latter, as close to

the race-stand as may be, writes in straggling letters, "\_Hodie mihi

cras tibi.\_" No, I should \_not\_ care to race in Hong-Kong. The scornful

assemblage behind the grand-stand would be enough to ruin any luck.

Chinamen do not approve of showing their cemeteries. We hunted ours from

ledge to ledge of the hillsides, through crops and woods and crops

again, till we came to a village of black and white pigs and riven red

rocks beyond which the dead lay. It was a third-rate place, but was

pretty. I have studied that oilskin mystery, the Chinaman, for at least

five days, and why he should elect to be buried in good scenery, and by

what means he knows good scenery when he sees it, I cannot fathom. But

he gets it when the sight is taken from him, and his friends fire

crackers above him in token of the triumph.

That night I dined with the \_Taipan\_ in a palace. They say the merchant

prince of Calcutta is dead--killed by exchange. Hong-Kong ought to be

able to supply one or two samples. The funny thing in the midst of all

this wealth--wealth such as one reads about in novels--is to hear the

curious deference that is paid to Calcutta. Console yourselves with

that, gentlemen of the Ditch, for by my faith, it is the one thing that

you can boast of. At this dinner I learned that Hong-Kong was

impregnable and that China was rapidly importing twelve and forty ton

guns for the defence of her coasts. The one statement I doubted, but the

other was truth. Those who have occasion to speak of China in these

parts do so deferentially, as who should say: "Germany intends such and

such," or "These are the views of Russia." The very men who talk thus

are doing their best to force upon the great Empire all the stimulants

of the West--railways, tram lines, and so forth. What will happen when

China really wakes up, runs a line from Shanghai to Lhassa, starts

another line of imperial Yellow Flag immigrant steamers, and really

works and controls her own gun-factories and arsenals? The energetic

Englishmen who ship the forty-tonners are helping to this end, but all

they say is: "We're well paid for what we do. There's no sentiment in

business, and anyhow, China will never go to war with England." Indeed,

there is no sentiment in business. The \_Taipan's\_ palace, full of all

things beautiful, and flowers more lovely than the gem-like cabinets

they adorned, would have made happy half a hundred young men craving for

luxury, and might have made them writers, singers, and poets. It was

inhabited by men with big heads and straight eyes, who sat among the

splendours and talked business.

If I were not going to be a Burman when I die I would be a \_Taipan\_ at

Hong-Kong. He knows so much and he deals so largely with Princes and

Powers, and he has a flag of his very own which he pins on to all his

steamers.

The blessed chance that looks after travellers sent me next day on a

picnic, and all because I happened to wander into the wrong house. This

is quite true, and very like our Anglo-Indian ways of doing things.

"Perhaps," said the hostess, "this will be our only fine day. Let us

spend it in a steam-launch."

Forthwith we embarked upon a new world--that of Hong-Kong harbour--and

with a dramatic regard for the fitness of things our little ship was the

\_Pioneer\_. The picnic included the new General--he that came from

England in the \_Nawab\_ and told me about Lord Wolseley--and his

aide-de-camp, who was quite English and altogether different from an

Indian officer. He never once talked shop, and if he had a grievance hid

it behind his mustache.

The harbour is a great world in itself. Photographs say that it is

lovely, and this I can believe from the glimpses caught through the mist

as the \_Pioneer\_ worked her way between the lines of junks, the tethered

liners, the wallowing coal hulks, the trim, low-lying American corvette,

the \_Orontes\_, huge and ugly, the \_Cockchafer\_, almost as small as its

namesake, the ancient three-decker converted into a military

hospital,--Thomas gets change of air thus,--and a few hundred thousand

sampans manned by women with babies tied on to their backs. Then we

swept down the sea face of the city and saw that it was great, till we

came to an unfinished fort high up on the side of a green hill, and I

watched the new General as men watch an oracle. Have I told you that he

is an Engineer General, specially sent out to attend to the

fortifications? He looked at the raw earth and the granite masonry, and

there was keen professional interest in his eye. Perhaps he would say

something. I edged nearer in that hope. He did:--

"Sherry and sandwiches? Thanks, I will. 'Stonishing how hungry the

sea-air makes a man feel," quoth the General; and we went along under

the grey-green coast, looking at stately country houses made of granite,

where Jesuit fathers and opulent merchants dwell. It was the Mashobra of

this Simla. It was also the Highlands, it was also Devonshire, and it

was specially grey and chilly.

Never did \_Pioneer\_ circulate in stranger waters. On the one side was a

bewildering multiplicity of islets; on the other, the deeply indented

shores of the main island, sometimes running down to the sea in little

sandy coves, at others falling sheer in cliff and sea-worn cave full of

the boom of the breakers. Behind, rose the hills into the mist, the

everlasting mist.

"We are going to Aberdeen," said the hostess; "then to Stanley, and then

across the island on foot by way of the Ti-tam reservoir. That will show

you a lot of the country."

We shot into a fiord and discovered a brown fishing village which kept

sentry over two docks, and a Sikh policeman. All the inhabitants were

rosy-cheeked women, each owning one-third of a boat, and a whole baby,

wrapped up in red cloth and tied to the back. The mother was dressed in

blue for a reason,--if her husband whacked her over the shoulders, he

would run a fair chance of crushing the baby's head unless the infant

were of a distinct colour.

Then we left China altogether, and steamed into far Lochaber, with a

climate to correspond. Good people under the punkah, think for a moment

of cloud-veiled headlands running out into a steel-grey sea, crisped

with a cheek-rasping breeze that makes you sit down under the bulwarks

and gasp for breath. Think of the merry pitch and roll of a small craft

as it buzzes from island to island, or venturously cuts across the mouth

of a mile-wide bay, while you mature amid fresh scenery, fresh talk, and

fresh faces, an appetite that shall uphold the credit of the great

empire in a strange land. Once more we found a village which they called

Stanley; but it was different from Aberdeen. Tenantless buildings of

brownstone stared seaward from the low downs, and there lay behind them

a stretch of weather-beaten wall. No need to ask what these things

meant. They cried aloud: "It is a deserted cantonment, and the

population is in the cemetery."

I asked, "What regiment?"

"The Ninety-second, I think," said the General. "But that was in the old

times--in the Sixties. I believe they quartered a lot of troops here and

built the barracks on the ground; and the fever carried all the men off

like flies. Isn't it a desolate place?"

My mind went back to a neglected graveyard a stone's throw from

Jehangir's tomb in the gardens of Shalimar, where the cattle and the

cowherd look after the last resting-places of the troops who first

occupied Lahore. We are a great people and very strong, but we build Our

empire in a wasteful manner--on the bones of the dead that have died of

disease.

"But about the fortifications, General? Is it true that etc., etc.?"

"The fortifications are right enough as things go; what we want is men."

"How many?"

"Say about three thousand for the Island--enough to stop any expedition

that might come. Look at all these little bays and coves. There are

twenty places at the back of the island where you could land men and

make things unpleasant for Hong-Kong."

"But," I ventured, "isn't it the theory that any organised expedition

ought to be stopped by our fleet before it got here? Whereas the forts

are supposed to prevent cutting out, shelling, and ransoming by a

disconnected man-of-war or two."

"If you go on that theory," said the General, "the men-of-war ought to

be stopped by our fleets, too. That's all nonsense. If any Power can

throw troops here, you want troops to turn 'em out, and--don't we wish

we may get them!"

"And you? Your command here is for five years, isn't it?"

"Oh, no! Eighteen months ought to see me out. I don't want to stick here

for ever. I've other notions for myself," said the General, scrambling

over the boulders to get at his tiffin.

And that is just the worst of it. Here was a nice General helping to lay

out fortifications, with one eye on Hong-Kong and the other, his right

one, on England. He would be more than human not to sell himself and his

orders for the command of a brigade in the next English affair. He would

be afraid of being too long away from home lest he should drop out of

the running and ... Well, we are just the same in India, and there is

not the least hope of raising a Legion of the Lost for colonial

service--of men who would do their work in one place for ever and look

for nothing beyond it. But remember that Hong-Kong--with five million

tons of coal, five miles of shipping, docks, wharves, huge civil

station, forty million pounds of trade, and the nicest picnic parties

that you ever did see--wants three thousand men and--she won't get them.

She has two batteries of garrison artillery, a regiment, and a lot of

gun lascars--about enough to prevent the guns from rusting on their

carriages. There are three forts on an island--Stonecutter's

Island--between Hong-Kong and the mainland, three on Hong-Kong itself,

and three or four scattered about elsewhere. Naturally the full

complement of guns has not arrived. Even in India you cannot man forts

without trained gunners. But tiffin under the lee of a rock was more

interesting than colonial defence. A man cannot talk politics if he be

empty.

Our one fine day shut in upon the empty plates in wind and rain, and the

march across the island began.

As the launch was blotted out in the haze we squelched past sugar-cane

crops and fat pigs, past the bleak cemetery of dead soldiers on the

hill, across a section of moor, till we struck a hill-road above the

sea. The views shifted and changed like a kaleidoscope. First a shaggy

shoulder of land tufted with dripping rushes and naught above, beneath,

or around but mist and the straight spikes of the rain; then red road

swept by water that fell into the unknown; then a combe, straight walled

almost as a house, at the bottom of which crawled the jade-green sea;

then a vista of a bay, a bank of white sand, and a red-sailed junk

beating out before the squall; then only wet rock and fern, and the

voice of thunder calling from peak to peak.

A landward turn in the road brought us to the pine woods of Theog and

the rhododendrons--but they called them azaleas--of Simla, and ever the

rain fell as though it had been July in the hills instead of April at

Hong-Kong. An invading army marching upon Victoria would have a sad time

of it even if the rain did not fall. There are but one or two gaps in

the hills through which it could travel, and there is a scheme in

preparation whereby they shall be cut off and annihilated when they

come. When I had to climb a clay hill backwards digging my heels into

the dirt, I very much pitied that invading army.

Whether the granite-faced reservoir and two-mile tunnel that supplies

Hong-Kong with water be worth seeing I cannot tell. There was too much

water in the air for comfort even when one tried to think of Home.

But go you and take the same walk--ten miles, and only two of 'em on

level ground. Steam to the forsaken cantonment of Stanley and cross the

island, and tell me whether you have seen anything so wild and wonderful

in its way as the scenery. I am going up the river to Canton, and cannot

stay for word-paintings.

No. X

SHOWS HOW I CAME TO GOBLIN MARKET AND TOOK A SCUNNER AT IT AND CURSED

THE CHINESE PEOPLE. SHOWS FURTHER HOW I INITIATED ALL HONG-KONG INTO OUR

FRATERNITY.

Providence is pleased to be sarcastic. It sent rain and a raw wind from

the beginning till the end. That is one of the disadvantages of leaving

India. You cut yourself adrift, from the only trustworthy climate in the

world. I despise a land that has to waste half its time in watching the

clouds. The Canton trip (I have been that way) introduces you to the

American river steamer, which is not in the least like one of the

Irrawaddy flotilla or an omnibus, as many people believe. It is composed

almost entirely of white paint, sheet-lead, a cow-horn, and a

walking-beam, and holds about as much cargo as a P. and O. The trade

between Canton and Hong-Kong seems to be immense, and a steamer covers

the ninety miles between port and port daily. None the less are the

Chinese passengers daily put under hatches or its equivalent after they

leave port, and daily is the stand of loaded Sniders in the cabin

inspected and cleaned up. Daily, too, I should imagine, the captain of

each boat tells his Globe-trotting passengers the venerable story of the

looting of a river steamer--how two junks fouled her at a convenient

bend in the river, while the native passengers on her rose and made

things very lively for the crew, and ended by clearing out that steamer.

The Chinese are a strange people! They had a difficulty at Hong-Kong not

very long ago about photographing labour coolies, and in the excitement,

which was considerable, a rickety old war junk got into position off the

bund with the avowed intention of putting a three-pound shot through the

windows of the firm who had suggested the photographing. And this though

vessel and crew could have been blown in cigarette-ash in ten minutes!

But no one pirated the \_Ho-nam\_, though the passengers did their best to

set her on fire by upsetting the lamps of their opium pipes. She blared

her unwieldy way across the packed shipping of the harbour and ran into

grey mist and driving rain. When I say that the scenery was like the

West Highlands you will by this time understand what I mean. Large screw

steamers, China pig-boats very low in the water and choked with

live-stock, wallowing junks and ducking sampans filled the waterways of

a stream as broad as the Hughli and much better defended so far as the

art of man was concerned. Their little difficulty with the French a few

years ago has taught the Chinese a great many things which, perhaps, it

were better for us that they had left alone.

The first striking object of Canton city is the double tower of the big

Catholic Church. Take off your hat to this because it means a great

deal, and stands as the visible standard of a battle that has yet to be

fought. Never have the missionaries of the Mother of the Churches

wrestled so mightily with any land as with China, and never has nation

so scientifically tortured the missionary as has China. Perhaps when

the books are audited somewhere else, each race, the White and the

Yellow, will be found to have been right according to their lights.

I had taken one fair look at the city from the steamer, and threw up my

cards. "I can't describe this place, and besides, I hate Chinamen."

"Bosh! It is only Benares, magnified about eight times. Come along."

It was Benares, without any wide streets or chauks, and yet darker than

Benares, in that the little skyline was entirely blocked by tier on tier

of hanging signs,--red, gold, black, and white. The shops stood on

granite plinths, pukka brick above, and tile-roofed. Their fronts were

carved wood, gilt, and coloured savagely. John knows how to dress a

shop, though he may sell nothing more lovely than smashed fowl and

chitterlings. Every other shop was a restaurant, and the space between

them crammed with humanity. Do you know those horrible sponges full of

worms that grow in warm seas? You break off a piece of it and the worms

break too. Canton was that sponge. "Hi, low yah. To hoh wang!" yelled

the chair-bearers to the crowd, but I was afraid that if the poles

chipped the corner of a house the very bricks would begin to bleed.

Hong-Kong showed me how the Chinaman could work. Canton explained why he

set no value on life. The article was cheaper than in India. I hated the

Chinaman before; I hated him doubly as I choked for breath in his

seething streets where nothing short of the pestilence could clear a

way. There was of course no incivility from the people, but the mere mob

was terrifying. There are three or four places in the world where it is

best for an Englishman to agree with his adversary swiftly, whatever the

latter's nationality may be. Canton heads the list. Never argue with

anybody in Canton. Let the guide do it for you. Then the stinks rose up

and overwhelmed us. In this respect Canton was Benares twenty times

magnified. The Hindu is a sanitating saint compared to the Chinaman. He

is a rigid Malthusian in the same regard.

"Very bad stink, this place. You come right along," said Ah Cum, who had

learned his English from Americans. He was very kind. He showed me

feather-jewellery shops where men sat pinching from the gorgeous wings

of jays, tiny squares of blue and lilac feathers, and pasting them into

gold settings, so that the whole looked like Jeypore enamel of the

rarest. But we went into a shop. Ah Cum drew us inside the big door and

bolted it, while the crowd blocked up the windows and shutter-bars. I

thought more of the crowd than the jewellery. The city was so dark and

the people were so very many and so unhuman.

The March of the Mongol is a pretty thing to write about in magazines.

Hear it once in the gloom of an ancient curio shop, where nameless

devils of the Chinese creed make mouths at you from back-shelves, where

brazen dragons, revelations of uncleanliness, all catch your feet as you

stumble across the floor--hear the tramp of the feet on the granite

blocks of the road and the breaking wave of human speech, that is not

human! "Watch the yellow faces that glare at you between the bars, and

you will be afraid, as I was afraid.

"It's beautiful work," said the Professor, bending over a Cantonese

petticoat--a wonder of pale green, blue, and Silver. "Now I understand

why the civilised European of Irish extraction kills the Chinaman in

America. It is justifiable to kill him. It would be quite right to wipe

the city of Canton off the face of the earth, and to exterminate all the

people who ran away from the shelling. The Chinaman ought not to count."

I had gone off on my own train of thought, and it was a black and bitter

one.

"Why on earth can't you look at the lions and enjoy yourself, and leave

politics to the men who pretend to understand 'em?" said the Professor.

"It's no question of politics," I replied. "This people ought to be

killed off because they are unlike any people I ever met before. Look at

their faces. They despise us. You can see it, and they aren't a bit

afraid of us either."

Then Ah Cum took us by ways that were dark to the temple of the Five

Hundred Genii, which was one of the sights of the rabbit-warren. This

was a Buddhist temple with the usual accessories of altars and altar

lights and colossal figures of doorkeepers at the gates. Round the inner

court runs a corridor lined on both sides with figures about half

life-size, representing most of the races of Asia. Several of the Jesuit

Fathers are said to be in that gallery,--you can find it all in the

guide-books,--and there is one image of a jolly-looking soul in a hat

and full beard, but, like the others, naked to the waist. "That European

gentleman," said Ah Cum. "That Marco Polo." "Make the most of him," I

said. "The time is coming when there will be no European

gentlemen--nothing but yellow people with black hearts--black hearts,

Ah Cum--and a devil-born capacity for doing more work than they ought."

"Come and see a clock," said he. "Old clock. It runs by water. Come on

right along." He took us to another temple and showed us an old

water-clock of four \_gurrahs\_: just the same sort of thing as they have

in out-of-the-way parts of India for the use of the watchmen. The

Professor vows that the machine, which is supposed to give the time to

the city, is regulated by the bells of the steamers in the river, Canton

water being too thick to run through anything smaller than a half-inch

pipe. From the pagoda of this temple we could see that the roofs of all

the houses below were covered with filled water-jars. There is no sort

of fire organisation in the city. When lighted it burns till it stops.

Ah Cum led us to the Potter's Field, where the executions take place.

The Chinese slay by the hundred, and far be it from me to say that such

generosity of bloodshed is cruel. They could afford to execute in Canton

alone at the rate of ten thousand a year without disturbing the steady

flow of population. An executioner who happened to be wandering

about--perhaps in search of employment--offered us a sword under

guarantee that it had cut off many heads. "Keep it," I said. "Keep it,

and let the good work go on. My friend, you cannot execute too freely in

this land. You are blessed, I apprehend, with a purely literary

bureaucracy recruited--correct me if I am wrong--from all social strata,

more especially those in which the idea of cold-blooded cruelty has, as

it were, become embedded. Now, when to inherited devildom is superadded

a purely literary education of grim and formal tendencies, the result,

my evil-looking friend,--the result, I repeat,--is a state of affairs

which is faintly indicated in the Little Pilgrim's account of the Hell

of Selfishness. You, I presume, have not yet read the works of the

Little Pilgrim."

"He looks as if he was going to cut at you with that sword," said the

Professor. "Come away and see the Temple of Horrors."

That was a sort of Chinese Madame Tussaud's--life-like models of men

being brayed in mortars, sliced, fried, toasted, stuffed, and variously

bedevilled--that made me sick and unhappy. But the Chinese are merciful

even in their tortures. When a man is ground in a mill, he is, according

to the models, popped in head first. This is hard on the crowd who are

waiting to see the fun, but it saves trouble to the executioners. A

half-ground man has to be carefully watched, or else he wriggles out of

his place. To crown all, we went to the prison, which was a pest-house

in a back street. The Professor shuddered. "It's all right," I said.

"The people who sent the prisoners here don't care. The men themselves

look hideously miserable, but I suppose they don't care, and goodness

knows I don't care. They are only Chinamen. If they treat each other

like dogs, why should we regard 'em as human beings? Let 'em rot. I want

to get back to the steamer. I want to get under the guns of Hong-Kong.

Phew!"

Then we ran through a succession of second-rate streets and houses till

we reached the city wall on the west by a long flight of steps. It was

clean here. The wall had a drop of thirty or forty feet to paddy fields.

Beyond these were a semicircle of hills, every square yard of which is

planted out with graves. Her dead watch Canton the abominable, and the

dead are more than the myriads living. On the grass-grown top of the

wall were rusty English guns spiked and abandoned after the war. They

ought not to be there. A five-storied pagoda gave us a view of the city,

but I was wearied of these rats in their pit--wearied and scared and

sullen. The excellent Ah Cum led us to the Viceroy's summer garden-house

on the cityward slope of an azalea-covered hill surrounded by cotton

trees. The basement, was a handsome joss house: upstairs was a

durbar-hall with glazed verandahs and ebony furniture ranged across the

room in four straight lines. It was only an oasis of cleanliness. Ten

minutes later we were back in the swarming city, cut off from light and

sweet air. Once or twice we met a mandarin with thin official mustache

and "little red button a-top." Ah Cum was explaining the nature and

properties of a mandarin when we came to a canal spanned by an English

bridge and closed by an iron gate, which was in charge of a Hong-Kong

policeman. We were in an Indian station with Europe shops and Parsee

shops and everything else to match. This was English Canton, with two

hundred and fifty sahibs in it. 'Twould have been better for a Gatling

behind the bridge gate. The guide-books tell you that it was taken from

the Chinese by the treaty of 1860, the French getting a similar slice of

territory. Owing to the binding power of French officialism, "La

concession FranÃ§aise" has never been let or sold to private individuals,

and now a Chinese regiment squats on it. The men who travel tell you

somewhat similar tales about land in Saigon and Cambodia. Something

seems to attack a Frenchman as soon as he dons a colonial uniform. Let

us call it the red-tape-worm.

"Now where did you go and what did you see?" said the Professor, in the

style of the pedagogue, when we were once more on the \_Ho-nam\_ and

returning as fast as steam could carry us to Hong-Kong.

"A big blue sink of a city full of tunnels, all dark and inhabited by

yellow devils, a city that DorÃ© ought to have seen. I'm devoutly

thankful that I'm never going back there. The Mongol will begin to march

in his own good time. I intend to wait until he marches up to me. Let us

go away to Japan by the next boat."

The Professor says that I have completely spoiled the foregoing account

by what he calls "intemperate libels on a hard-working nation." He did

not see Canton as I saw it--through the medium of a fevered imagination.

Once, before I got away, I climbed to the civil station of Hong-Kong,

which overlooks the town. There in sumptuous stone villas built on the

edge of the cliff and facing shaded roads, in a wilderness of beautiful

flowers and a hushed calm unvexed even by the roar of the traffic below,

the residents do their best to imitate the life of an India up-country

station. They are better off than we are. At the bandstand the ladies

dress all in one piece--shoes, gloves, and umbrellas come out from

England with the dress, and every \_memsahib\_ knows what that means--but

the mechanism of their life is much the same. In one point they are

superior. The ladies have a club of their very own to which, I believe,

men are only allowed to come on sufferance. At a dance there are about

twenty men to one lady, and there are practically no spinsters in the

island. The inhabitants complain of being cooped in and shut up. They

look at the sea below them and they long to get away. They have their

"At Homes" on regular days of the week, and everybody meets everybody

else again and again. They have amateur theatricals and they quarrel and

all the men and women take sides, and the station is cleaved asunder

from the top to the bottom. Then they become reconciled and write to the

local papers condemning the local critic's criticism. Isn't it touching?

A lady told me these things one afternoon, and I nearly wept from sheer

home-sickness.

"And then, you know, after she had said \_that\_ he was obliged to give

the part to the other, and that made \_them\_ furious, and the races were

so near that nothing could be done, and Mrs. ---- said that it was

altogether impossible. You understand how very unpleasant it must have

been, do you not?"

"Madam," said I, "I do. I have been there before. My heart goes out to

Hong-Kong. In the name of the great Indian Mofussil I salute you.

Henceforward Hong-Kong is one of Us, ranking before Meerut, but after

Allahabad, at all public ceremonies and parades."

I think she fancied I had sunstroke; but you at any rate will know what

I mean.

We do not laugh any more on the P. and O. S. S. \_Ancona\_ on the way to

Japan. We are deathly sick, because there is a cross-sea beneath us and

a wet sail above. The sail is to steady the ship who refuses to be

steadied. She is full of Globe-trotters who also refuse to be steadied.

A Globe-trotter is extreme cosmopolitan. He will be sick anywhere.

No. XI

OF JAPAN AT TEN HOURS' SIGHT, CONTAINING A COMPLETE ACCOUNT OF THE

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF ITS PEOPLE, A HISTORY OF ITS CONSTITUTION,

PRODUCTS, ART, AND CIVILISATION, AND OMITTING A MEAL IN A TEA-HOUSE WITH

O-TOYO.

"Thou canst not wave thy staff in air

Or dip thy paddle in the lake,

But it carves the bow of beauty there,

And ripples in rhyme the oar forsake."--\_Emerson.\_

This morning, after the sorrows of the rolling night, my cabin porthole

showed me two great grey rocks studded and streaked with green and

crowned by two stunted blue-black pines. Below the rocks a boat, that

might have been carved sandal wood for colour and delicacy, was shaking

out an ivory-white frilled sail to the wind of the morning. An

indigo-blue boy with an old ivory face hauled on a rope. Rock and tree

and boat made a panel from a Japanese screen, and I saw that the land

was not a lie. This "good brown earth" of ours has many pleasures to

offer her children, but there be few in her gift comparable to the joy

of touching a new country, a completely strange race, and manners

contrary. Though libraries may have been written aforetime, each new

beholder is to himself another Cortez. And I was in Japan--the Japan of

cabinets and joinery, gracious folk and fair manners. Japan, whence the

camphor and the lacquer and the shark-skin swords come: among what was

it the books said?--a nation of artists. To be sure, we should only stop

at Nagasaki for twelve hours ere going on to KobÃ©, but in twelve hours

one can pack away a very fair collection of new experiences.

An execrable man met me on the deck, with a pale-blue pamphlet fifty

pages thick. "Have you," said he, "seen the Constitution of Japan? The

Emperor made it himself only the other day. It is on entirely European

lines."

I took the pamphlet and found a complete paper Constitution stamped with

the Imperial Chrysanthemum--an excellent little scheme of

representation, reforms, payment of members, budget estimates, and

legislation. It is a terrible thing to study at close quarters, because

it is so pitifully English.

There was a yellow-shot greenness upon the hills round Nagasaki

different, so my willing mind was disposed to believe, from the green of

other lands. It was the green of a Japanese screen, and the pines were

screen pines. The city itself hardly showed from the crowded harbour. It

lay low among the hills, and its business face--a grimy bund--was sloppy

and deserted. Business, I was rejoiced to learn, was at a low ebb in

Nagasaki. The Japanese should have no concern with business. Close to

one of the still wharves lay a ship of the Bad People; a Russian steamer

down from Vladivostok. Her decks were cumbered with raffle of all kinds;

her rigging was as frowsy and draggled as the hair of a lodging-house

slavey, and her sides were filthy.

"That," said a man of my people, "is a very fair specimen of a Russian.

You should see their men-of-war; they are just as filthy. Some of 'em

come into Nagasaki to clean."

It was a small piece of information and perhaps untrue, but it put the

roof to my good humour as I stepped on to the bund and was told in

faultless English by a young gentleman, with a plated chrysanthemum in

his forage cap and badly fitting German uniform on his limbs, that he

did not understand my language. He was a Japanese customs official. Had

our stay been longer, I would have wept over him because he was a

hybrid--partly French, partly German, and partly American--a tribute to

civilisation. All the Japanese officials from police upwards seem to be

clad in Europe clothes, and never do those clothes fit. I think the

Mikado made them at the same time as the Constitution. They will come

right in time.

When the 'rickshaw, drawn by a beautiful apple-cheeked young man with a

Basque face, shot me into the \_Mikado\_, First Act, I did not stop and

shout with delight, because the dignity of India was in my keeping. I

lay back on the velvet cushions and grinned luxuriously at Pittising,

with her sash and three giant hair-pins in her blue-black hair, and

three-inch clogs on her feet. She laughed--even as did the Burmese girl

in the old Pagoda at Moulmein. And her laugh, the laugh of a lady, was

my welcome to Japan. Can the people help laughing? I think not. You see

they have such thousands of children in their streets that the elders

must perforce be young lest the babes should grieve. Nagasaki is

inhabited entirely by children. The grown-ups exist on sufferance. A

four-foot child walks with a three-foot child, who is holding the hand

of a two-foot child, who carries on her back a one-foot child, who--but

you will not believe me if I say that the scale runs down to six-inch

little Jap dolls such as they used to sell in the Burlington Arcade.

These dolls wriggle and laugh. They are tied up in a blue bed-gown which

is tied by a sash, which again ties up the bed-gown of the carrier. Thus

if you untie that sash, baby and but little bigger brother are at once

perfectly naked. I saw a mother do this, and it was for all the world

like the peeling of hard-boiled eggs.

If you look for extravagance of colour, for flaming shop fronts and

glaring lanterns, you shall find none of these things in the narrow

stone-paved streets of Nagasaki. But if you desire details of house

construction, glimpses of perfect cleanliness, rare taste, and perfect

subordination of the thing made to the needs of the maker, you shall

find all you seek and more. All the roofs are dull lead colour, being

shingled or tiled, and all the house fronts are of the colour of the

wood as God made it. There is neither smoke nor haze, and in the clear

light of a clouded sky I could see down the narrowest alleyway as into

the interior of a cabinet.

The books have long ago told you how a Japanese house is constructed,

chiefly of sliding screens and paper partitions, and everybody knows the

story of the burglar of Tokio who burgled with a pair of scissors for

jimmy and centrebit and stole the Consul's trousers. But all the telling

in print will never make you understand the exquisite finish of a

tenement that you could kick in with your foot and pound to match-wood

with your fists. Behold a \_bunnia's\_[9] shop. He sells rice and chillies

and dried fish and wooden scoops made of bamboo. The front of his shop

is very solid. It is made of half-inch battens nailed side by side. Not

one of the battens is broken; and each one is foursquare perfectly.

Feeling ashamed of himself for this surly barring up of his house, he

fills one-half the frontage with oiled paper stretched upon quarter-inch

framing. Not a single square of oil paper has a hole in it, and not one

of the squares, which in more uncivilised countries would hold a pane of

glass if strong enough, is out of line. And the \_bunnia\_, clothed in a

blue dressing-gown, with thick white stockings on his feet, sits behind,

not among his wares, on a pale gold-coloured mat of soft rice straw

bound with black list at the edges. This mat is two inches thick, three

feet wide and six long. You might, if you were a sufficient pig, eat

your dinner off any portion of it. The \_bunnia\_ lies with one wadded

blue arm round a big brazier of hammered brass on which is faintly

delineated in incised lines a very terrible dragon. The brazier is full

of charcoal ash, but there is no ash on the mat. By the \_bunnia's\_ side

is a pouch of green leather tied with a red silk cord, holding tobacco

cut fine as cotton. He fills a long black and red lacquered pipe, lights

it at the charcoal in the brazier, takes two whiffs, and the pipe is

empty. Still there is no speck on the mat. Behind the \_bunnia\_ is a

shadow-screen of bead and bamboo. This veils a room floored with pale

gold and roofed with panels of grained cedar. There is nothing in the

room save a blood-red blanket laid out smoothly as a sheet of paper.

Beyond the room is a passage of polished wood, so polished that it gives

back the reflections of the white paper wall. At the end of the passage

and clearly visible to this unique \_bunnia\_ is a dwarfed pine two feet

high in a green glazed pot, and by its side is a branch of azalea, blood

red as the blanket, set in a pale grey crackle-pot. The \_bunnia\_ has put

it there for his own pleasure, for the delight of his eyes, because he

loves it. The white man has nothing whatever to do with his tastes, and

he keeps his house specklessly pure because he likes cleanliness and

knows it is artistic. What shall we say to such a \_bunnia\_?

[9] grain-dealer's.

His brother in Northern India may live behind a front of time-blackened

open-work wood, but ... I do not think he would grow anything save

\_tulsi\_[10] in a pot, and that only to please the Gods and his

womenfolk.

[10] A sacred herb of the Hindus.

Let us not compare the two men, but go on through Nagasaki.

Except for the horrible policemen who insist on being Continental, the

people--the common people, that is--do not run after unseemly costumes

of the West. The young men wear round felt hats, occasionally coats and

trousers, and semi-occasionally boots. All these are vile. In the more

metropolitan towns men say Western dress is rather the rule than the

exception. If this be so, I am disposed to conclude that the sins of

their forefathers in making enterprising Jesuit missionaries into

beefsteak have been visited on the Japanese in the shape of a partial

obscuration of their artistic instincts. Yet the punishment seems rather

too heavy for the offence.

Then I fell admiring the bloom on the people's cheeks, the

three-cornered smiles of the fat babes, and the surpassing "otherness"

of everything round me. It is so strange to be in a clean land, and

stranger to walk among doll's houses. Japan is a soothing place for a

small man. Nobody comes to tower over him, and he looks down upon all

the women, as is right and proper. A dealer in curiosities bent himself

double on his own door-mat, and I passed in, feeling for the first time

that I was a barbarian, and no true Sahib. The slush of the streets was

thick on my boots, and he, the immaculate owner, asked me to walk across

a polished floor and white mats to an inner chamber. He brought me a

foot-mat, which only made matters worse, for a pretty girl giggled round

the corner as I toiled at it. Japanese shopkeepers ought not to be so

clean. I went into a boarded passage about two feet wide, found a gem of

a garden of dwarfed trees, in the space of half a tennis court, whacked

my head on a fragile lintel, and arrived at a four-walled daintiness

where I involuntarily lowered my voice. Do you recollect Mrs.

Molesworth's \_Cuckoo Clock\_, and the big cabinet that Griselda entered

with the cuckoo? I was not Griselda, but my low-voiced friend, in his

long, soft wraps, was the cuckoo, and the room was the cabinet. Again I

tried to console myself with the thought that I could kick the place to

pieces; but this only made me feel large and coarse and dirty,--a most

unfavourable mood for bargaining. The cuckoo-man caused pale tea to be

brought,--just such tea as you read of in books of travel,--and the tea

completed my embarrassment. What I wanted to say was, "Look here, you

person. You're much too clean and refined for this life here below, and

your house is unfit for a man to live in until he has been taught a lot

of things which I have never learned. Consequently I hate you because I

feel myself your inferior, and you despise me and my boots because you

know me for a savage. Let me go, or I'll pull your house of cedar-wood

over your ears." What I really said was, "Oh, ah yes. Awf'ly pretty.

Awful queer way of doing business."

The cuckoo-man proved to be a horrid extortioner; but I was hot and

uncomfortable till I got outside, and was a bog-trotting Briton once

more. You have never blundered into the inside of a three-hundred-dollar

cabinet, therefore you will not understand me.

We came to the foot of a hill, as it might have been the hill on which

the Shway Dagon stands, and up that hill ran a mighty flight of grey,

weather-darkened steps, spanned here and there by monolithic \_torii\_.

Every one knows what a \_torii\_ is. They have them in Southern India. A

great King makes a note of the place where he intends to build a huge

arch, but being a King does so in stone, not ink--sketches in the air

two beams and a cross-bar, forty or sixty feet high, and twenty or

thirty wide. In Southern India the cross-bar is humped in the middle. In

the Further East it flares up at the ends. This description is hardly

according to the books, but if a man begins by consulting books in a new

country he is lost. Over the steps hung heavy blue-green or green-black

pines, old, gnarled, and bossed. The foliage of the hillside was a

lighter green, but the pines set the keynote of colour, and the blue

dresses of the few folk on the steps answered it. There was no sunshine

in the air, but I vow that sunshine would have spoilt all. We climb for

five minutes,--I and the Professor and the camera,--and then we turned,

and saw the roofs of Nagasaki lying at our feet--a sea of lead and

dull-brown, with here and there a smudge of creamy pink to mark the

bloom of the cherry trees. The hills round the town were speckled with

the resting-places of the dead, with clumps of pine and feathery bamboo.

"What a country!" said the Professor, unstrapping his camera. "And have

you noticed, wherever we go there's always some man who knows how to

carry my kit? The \_gharri\_ driver at Moulmein handed me my stops; the

fellow at Penang knew all about it, too; and the 'rickshaw coolie has

seen a camera before. Curious, isn't it?"

"Professor," said I, "it's due to the extraordinary fact that we are not

the only people in the world. I began to realise it at Hong-Kong. It's

getting plainer now. I shouldn't be surprised if we turned out to be

ordinary human beings, after all."

We entered a courtyard where an evil-looking bronze horse stared at two

stone lions, and a company of children babbled among themselves. There

is a legend connected with the bronze horse, which may be found in the

guide-books. But the real true story of the creature is that he was made

long ago out of the fossil ivory of Siberia by a Japanese Prometheus,

and got life and many foals, whose descendants closely resemble their

father. Long years have almost eliminated the ivory in the blood, but it

crops out in creamy mane and tail; and the pot-belly and marvellous feet

of the bronze horse may be found to this day among the pack-ponies of

Nagasaki, who carry pack-saddles adorned with velvet and red cloth, who

wear grass shoes on their hind feet, and who are made like to horses in

a pantomime.

We could not go beyond this courtyard because a label said, "No

admittance," and thus all we saw of the temple was rich-brown high roofs

of blackened thatch, breaking back and back in wave and undulation till

they were lost in the foliage. The Japanese can play with thatch as men

play with modelling clay, but how their light underpinnings can carry

the weight of the roof is a mystery to the lay eye.

We went down the steps to tiffin, and a half-formed resolve was shaping

itself in my heart the while. Burma was a very nice place, but they eat

\_gnapi\_ there, and there were smells, and after all, the girls weren't

so pretty as some others--

"You must take off your boots," said Y-Tokai.

I assure you there is no dignity in sitting down on the steps of a

tea-house and struggling with muddy boots. And it is impossible to be

polite in your stockinged feet when the floor under you is as smooth as

glass and a pretty girl wants to know where you would like tiffin. Take

at least one pair of beautiful socks with you when you come this way.

Get them made of embroidered \_sambhur\_ skin, of silk if you like; but do

not stand as I did in cheap striped brown things with a darn at the

heel, and try to talk to a tea-girl.

They led us--three of them and all fresh and pretty--into a room

furnished with a golden-brown bearskin. The \_tokonoma\_, recess

aforementioned, held one scroll-picture of bats wheeling in the

twilight, a bamboo flower-holder, and yellow flowers. The ceiling was of

panelled wood, with the exception of one strip at the side nearest the

window, and this was made of plaited shavings of cedar-wood, marked off

from the rest of the ceiling by a wine-brown bamboo so polished that it

might have been lacquered. A touch of the hand sent one side of the room

flying back, and we entered a really large room with another \_tokonoma\_

framed on one side by eight or ten feet of an unknown wood, bearing the

same grain as a Penang lawyer, and above by a stick of unbarked tree set

there purely because it was curiously mottled. In this second \_tokonoma\_

was a pearl-grey vase, and that was all. Two sides of the room were of

oiled paper, and the joints of the beams were covered by the brazen

images of crabs, half life-size. Save for the sill of the \_tokonoma\_,

which was black lacquer, every inch of wood in the place was natural

grain without flaw. Outside was the garden, fringed with a hedge of

dwarf-pines and adorned with a tiny pond, water-smoothed stones sunk in

the soil, and a blossoming cherry tree.

They left us alone in this paradise of cleanliness and beauty, and being

only a shameless Englishman without his boots--a white man is always

degraded when he goes barefoot--I wandered round the wall, trying all

the screens. It was only when I stooped to examine the sunk catch of a

screen that I saw it was a plaque of inlay work representing two white

cranes feeding on fish. The whole was about three inches square and in

the ordinary course of events would never be looked at. The screens hid

a cupboard in which all the lamps and candlesticks and pillows and

sleeping-bags of the household seemed to be stored. An Oriental nation

that can fill a cupboard tidily is a nation to bow down to. Upstairs I

went by a staircase of grained wood and lacquer, into rooms of rarest

device with circular windows that opened on nothing, and so were filled

with bamboo tracery for the delight of the eye. The passages floored

with dark wood shone like ice, and I was ashamed.

"Professor," said I, "they don't spit; they don't eat like pigs; they

can't quarrel, and a drunken man would reel straight through every

portion in the house and roll down the hill into Nagasaki. They can't

have any children." Here I stopped. Downstairs was full of babies.

The maidens came in with tea in blue china and cake in a red lacquered

bowl--such cake as one gets at one or two houses in Simla. We sprawled

ungracefully on red rugs over the mats, and they gave us chopsticks to

separate the cake with. It was a long task.

"Is that all?" growled the Professor. "I'm hungry, and cake and tea

oughtn't to come till four o'clock." Here he took a wedge of cake

furtively with his hands.

They returned--five of them this time--with black lacquer stands a foot

square and four inches high. Those were our tables. They bore a red

lacquered bowlful of fish boiled in brine, and sea-anemones. At least

they were not mushrooms. A paper napkin tied with gold thread enclosed

our chopsticks; and in a little flat saucer lay a smoked crayfish, a

slice of a compromise that looked like Yorkshire pudding and tasted like

sweet omelette, and a twisted fragment of some translucent thing that

had once been alive but was now pickled. They went away, but not empty

handed, for thou, oh, O-Toyo, didst take away my heart--same which I

gave to the Burmese girl in the Shway Dagon pagoda!

The Professor opened his eyes a little, but said no word. The chopsticks

demanded all his attention, and the return of the girls took up the

rest. O-Toyo, ebon-haired, rosy-cheeked, and made throughout of delicate

porcelain, laughed at me because I devoured all the mustard sauce that

had been served with my raw fish, and wept copiously till she gave me

\_saki\_ from a lordly bottle about four inches high. If you took some

very thin hock, and tried to mull it and forgot all about the brew till

it was half cold, you would get \_saki\_. I had mine in a saucer so tiny

that I was bold to have it filled eight or ten times and loved O-Toyo

none the less at the end.

After raw fish and mustard sauce came some other sort of fish cooked

with pickled radishes, and very slippery on the chopsticks. The girls

knelt in a semicircle and shrieked with delight at the Professor's

clumsiness, for indeed it was not I that nearly upset the dinner table

in a vain attempt to recline gracefully. After the bamboo-shoots came a

basin of white beans in sweet sauce--very tasty indeed. Try to convey

beans to your mouth with a pair of wooden knitting-needles and see what

happens. Some chicken cunningly boiled with turnips, and a bowlful of

snow-white boneless fish and a pile of rice, concluded the meal. I have

forgotten one or two of the courses, but when O-Toyo handed me the tiny

lacquered Japanese pipe full of hay-like tobacco, I counted nine dishes

in the lacquer stand--each dish representing a course. Then O-Toyo and I

smoked by alternate pipefuls.

My very respectable friends at all the clubs and messes, have you ever

after a good tiffin lolled on cushions and smoked, with one pretty girl

to fill your pipe and four to admire you in an unknown tongue? You do

not know what life is. I looked round me at that faultless room, at the

dwarf pines and creamy cherry blossoms without, at O-Toyo bubbling with

laughter because I blew smoke through my nose, and at the ring of

\_Mikado\_ maidens over against the golden-brown bearskin rug. Here was

colour, form, food, comfort, and beauty enough for half a year's

contemplation. I would not be a Burman any more. I would be a

Japanese--always with O-Toyo--in a cabinet workhouse on a

camphor-scented hillside.

"Heigho!" said the Professor. "There are worse places than this to live

and die in. D'you know our steamer goes at four? Let's ask for the bill

and get away."

Now I have left my heart with O-Toyo under the pines. Perhaps I shall

get it back at KobÃ©.

No. XII

A FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF JAPAN. THE INLAND SEA, AND GOOD COOKERY. THE

MYSTERY OF PASSPORTS AND CONSULATES, AND CERTAIN OTHER MATTERS.

"Rome! Rome! Wasn't that the place where I got the good cigars?"

--\_Memoirs of a Traveller.\_

Alas for the incompleteness of the written word! There was so much more

that I meant to tell you about Nagasaki and the funeral procession that

I found in her streets. You ought to have read about the wailing women

in white who followed the dead man shut up in a wooden sedan chair that

rocked on the shoulders of the bearers, while the bronze-hued Buddhist

priest tramped on ahead, and the little boys ran alongside.

I had prepared in my mind moral reflections, purviews of political

situations, and a complete essay on the future of Japan. Now I have

forgotten everything except O-Toyo in the tea-garden.

From Nagasaki we--the P. and O. Steamer--are going to KobÃ© by way of the

Inland Sea. That is to say, we have for the last twenty hours been

steaming through a huge lake, studded as far as the eye can reach with

islands of every size, from four miles long and two wide to little

cocked-hat hummocks no bigger than a decent hayrick. Messrs. Cook and

Son charge about one hundred rupees extra for the run through this part

of the world, but they do not know how to farm the beauties of nature.

Under any skies the islands--purple, amber, grey, green, and black--are

worth five times the money asked. I have been sitting for the last

half-hour among a knot of whooping tourists, wondering how I could give

you a notion of them. The tourists, of course, are indescribable. They

say, "Oh my!" at thirty-second intervals, and at the end of five minutes

call one to another: "Sa-ay, don't you think it's vurry much the same

all along?" Then they play cricket with a broomstick till an unusually

fair prospect makes them stop and shout "Oh my!" again. If there were a

few more oaks and pines on the islands, the run would be three hundred

miles of Naini Tal lake. But we are not near Naini Tal; for as the big

ship drives down the alleys of water, I can see the heads of the

breakers flying ten feet up the side of the echoing cliffs, albeit the

sea is dead-still.

Now we have come to a stretch so densely populated with islands that all

looks solid ground. We are running through broken water thrown up by the

race of the tide round an outlying reef, and apparently are going to hit

an acre of solid rock. Somebody on the bridge saves us, and we head out

for another island, and so on, and so on, till the eye wearies of

watching the nose of the ship swinging right and left, and the finite

human soul, which, after all, cannot repeat "Oh my!" through a chilly

evening, goes below. When you come to Japan--it can be done comfortably

in three months, or even ten weeks--sail through this marvellous sea,

and see how quickly wonder sinks to interest, and interest to apathy. We

brought oysters with us from Nagasaki. I am much more interested in

their appearance at dinner to-night than in the shag-backed starfish of

an islet that has just slidden by like a ghost upon the silver-grey

waters, awakening under the touch of the ripe moon. Yes, it is a sea of

mystery and romance, and the white sails of the junks are silver in the

moonlight. But if the steward curries those oysters instead of serving

them on the shell, all the veiled beauties of cliff and water-carven

rock will not console me. To-day being the seventeenth of April, I am

sitting in an ulster under a thick rug, with fingers so cold I can

barely hold the pen. This emboldens me to ask how your thermantidotes

are working. A mixture of steatite and kerosene is very good for

creaking cranks, I believe, and if the coolie falls asleep, and you wake

up in Hades, try not to lose your temper. I go to my oysters.

\_Two days later.\_ This comes from KobÃ© (thirty hours from Nagasaki), the

European portion of which is a raw American town. We walked down the

wide, naked streets between houses of sham stucco, with Corinthian

pillars of wood, wooden verandahs and piazzas, all stony grey beneath

stony grey skies, and keeping guard over raw green saplings miscalled

shade trees. In truth, KobÃ© is hideously American in externals. Even I,

who have only seen pictures of America, recognised at once that it was

Portland, Maine. It lives among hills, but the hills are all scalped,

and the general impression is of out-of-the-wayness. Yet, ere I go

further, let me sing the praises of the excellent M. Begeux, proprietor

of the Oriental Hotel, upon whom be peace. His is a house where you can

dine. He does not merely feed you. His coffee is the coffee of the

beautiful France. For tea he gives you Peliti cakes (but better) and

the \_vin ordinaire\_ which is \_compris\_, is good. Excellent Monsieur and

Madame Begeux! If the \_Pioneer\_ were a medium for puffs, I would write a

leading article upon your potato salad, your beefsteaks, your fried

fish, and your staff of highly trained Japanese servants in blue tights,

who looked like so many small Hamlets without the velvet cloak, and who

obeyed the unspoken wish. No, it should be a poem--a ballad of good

living. I have eaten curries of the rarest at the Oriental at Penang,

the turtle steaks of Raffles's at Singapur still live in my regretful

memory, and they gave me chicken liver and sucking-pig in the Victoria

at Hong-Kong which I will always extol. But the Oriental at KobÃ© was

better than all three. Remember this, and so shall you who come after

slide round a quarter of the world upon a sleek and contented stomach.

We are going from KobÃ© to Yokohama by various roads. This necessitates a

passport, because we travel in the interior and do not run round the

coast on shipboard. We take a railroad, which may or may not be complete

as to the middle, and we branch off from that railroad, complete or not,

as the notion may prompt. This will be an affair of some twenty days,

and ought to include forty or fifty miles by 'rickshaw, a voyage on a

lake, and, I believe, bedbugs. \_Nota bene.\_--When you come to Japan stop

at Hong-Kong and send on a letter to the "Envoy Extraordinary and

Minister Plenipotentiary at Tokio," if you want to travel in the

interior of this Fairyland. Indicate your route as roughly as ever you

choose, but for your own comfort give the two extreme towns you intend

to touch. Throw in any details about your age, profession, colour of

hair, and the like that may occur to you, and ask to have a passport

sent to the British Consulate at KobÃ© to meet you. Allow the man with a

long title a week's time to prepare the passport, and you will find it

at your service when you land. Only write distinctly, to save your

vanity. My papers are addressed to a Mister Kyshrig--Radjerd Kyshrig.

As in Nagasaki, the town was full of babies, and as in Nagasaki, every

one smiled except the Chinamen. I do not like Chinamen. There was

something in their faces which I could not understand, though it was

familiar enough.

"The Chinaman's a native," I said. "That's the look on a native's face,

but the Jap isn't a native, and he isn't a sahib either. What is it?"

The Professor considered the surging street for a while.

"The Chinaman's an old man when he's young, just as a native is, but the

Jap is a child all his life. Think how grown-up people look among

children. That's the look that's puzzling you."

I dare not say that the Professor is right, but to my eyes it seemed he

spoke sooth. As the knowledge of good and evil sets its mark upon the

face of a grown man of Our people, so something I did not understand had

marked the faces of the Chinamen. They had no kinship with the crowd

beyond that which a man has to children.

"They are the superior race," said the Professor, ethnologically.

"They can't be. They don't know how to enjoy life," I answered

immorally. "And, anyway, their art isn't human."

"What does it matter?" said the Professor. "Here's a shop full of the

wrecks of old Japan. Let's go in and look." We went in, but I want

somebody to solve the Chinese question for me. It's too large to handle

alone.

We entered the curio-shop aforementioned, with our hats in our hands,

through a small avenue of carved stone lanterns and wooden sculptures of

devils unspeakably hideous, to be received by a smiling image who had

grown grey among \_netsukes\_ and lacquer. He showed us the banners and

insignia of daimios long since dead, while our jaws drooped in ignorant

wonder. He showed us a sacred turtle of mammoth size, carven in wood

down to minutest detail. Through room after room he led us, the light

fading as we went, till we reached a tiny garden and a woodwork cloister

that ran round it. Suits of old-time armour made faces at us in the

gloom, ancient swords clicked at our feet, quaint tobacco pouches as old

as the swords swayed to and fro from some invisible support, and the

eyes of a score of battered Buddhas, red dragons, Jain \_tirthankars\_,

and Burmese \_beloos\_ glared at us from over the fence of tattered gold

brocade robes of state. The joy of possession lives in the eye. The old

man showed us his treasures, from crystal spheres mounted in sea-worn

wood to cabinet on cabinet full of ivory and wood carvings, and we were

as rich as though we owned all that lay before us. Unfortunately the

merest scratch of Japanese characters is the only clew to the artist's

name, so I am unable to say who conceived, and in creamy ivory executed,

the old man horribly embarrassed by a cuttle-fish; the priest who made

the soldier pick up a deer for him and laughed to think that the brisket

would be his and the burden his companion's; or the dry, lean snake

coiled in derision on a jawless skull mottled with the memories of

corruption; or the Rabelaisan badger who stood on his head and made you

blush though he was not half an inch long; or the little fat boy

pounding his smaller brother; or the rabbit that had just made a joke;

or--but there were scores of these notes, born of every mood of mirth,

scorn, and experience that sways the heart of man; and by this hand that

has held half a dozen of them in its palm I winked at the shade of the

dead carver! He had gone to his rest, but he had worked out in ivory

three or four impressions that I had been hunting after in cold print.

The Englishman is a wonderful animal. He buys a dozen of these things

and puts them on the top of an overcrowded cabinet, where they look like

blobs of ivory, and forgets them in a week. The Japanese hides them in a

beautiful brocaded bag or a quiet lacquer box till three congenial

friends come to tea. Then he takes them out slowly, and they are looked

over with appreciation amid quiet chuckles to the deliberative clink of

cups, and put back again till the mood for inspection returns. That is

the way to enjoy what we call curios. Every man with money is a

collector in Japan, but you shall find no crowds of "things" outside the

best shops.

We stayed long in the half-light of that quaint place, and when we went

away we grieved afresh that such a people should have a "constitution"

or should dress every tenth young man in European clothes, put a white

ironclad in KobÃ© harbour, and send a dozen myoptic lieutenants in baggy

uniforms about the streets.

"It would pay us," said the Professor, his head in a clog-shop, "it

would pay us to establish an international suzerainty over Japan to

take, away any fear of invasion or annexation, and pay the country as

much as ever it chose, on condition that it simply sat still and went on

making beautiful things while our men learned. It would pay us to put

the whole Empire in a glass case and mark it, '\_Hors concours\_,' Exhibit

A."

"H'mm," said I. "Who's us?"

"Oh, we generally--the \_Sahib log\_ all the world over. Our workmen--a

few of them--can do as good work in certain lines, but you don't find

whole towns full of clean, capable, dainty, designful people in Europe."

"Let's go to Tokio and speak to the Emperor about it," I said.

"Let's go to a Japanese theatre first," said the Professor. "It's too

early in the tour to start serious politics."

No. XIII

THE JAPANESE THEATRE AND THE STORY OF THE THUNDER CAT. TREATING ALSO OF

THE QUIET PLACES AND THE DEAD MAN IN THE STREET.

To the theatre we went, through the mud and much rain. Internally it was

nearly dark, for the deep blue of the audience's dress soaked up the

scanty light of the kerosene lamps. There was no standing room anywhere

except next to the Japanese policeman, who in the cause of morals and

the Lord Chamberlain had a corner in the gallery and four chairs all to

himself. He was quite four feet eight inches high, and Napoleon at St.

Helena could not have folded his arms more dramatically. After some

grunting--I fear we were upsetting the principles of the

Constitution--he consented to give us one chair, receiving in return a

Burma cheroot which I have every reason to believe blew his little head

off. A pit containing fifty rows of fifty people and a bonding layer of

babies, with a gallery which might have held twelve hundred, made up the

house. The building was as delicate a piece of cabinet work as any of

the houses; roof, floor, beams, props, verandahs, and partitions were of

naked wood, and every other person in the house was smoking a tiny pipe

and knocking out the ashes every two minutes. Then I wished to fly;

death by the \_auto da fe\_ not being anywhere paid for in the tour; but

there was no escape by the one little door where pickled fish was being

sold between the acts.

"Yes, it's not exactly safe," said the Professor, as the matches winked

and sputtered all round and below. "But if that curtain catches that

naked light on the stage, or you see this matchwood gallery begin to

blaze, I'll kick out the back of the refreshment buffet, and we can walk

away."

With this warm comfort the drama began. The green curtain dropped from

above and was whisked away, and three gentlemen and a lady opened the

ball by a dialogue conducted in tones between a "burble" and a falsetto

whisper. If you wish to know their costumes, look at the nearest

Japanese fan. Real Japs of course are like men and women, but stage Japs

in their stiff brocades are line for line as Japs are drawn. When the

four sat down, a little boy ran among them and settled their draperies,

pulling out a sash bow here, displaying a skirt-fold there. The costumes

were as gorgeous as the plot was incomprehensible. But we will call the

play "\_The Thunder Cat\_, or \_Harlequin Bag o' Bones and the Amazing Old

Woman\_, or \_The Mammoth Radish\_, or \_The Superfluous Badger and the

Swinging Lights\_."

A two-sworded man in the black and gold brocade rose up and imitated the

gait of an obscure actor called Henry Irving, whereat, not knowing that

he was serious, I cackled aloud till the Japanese policeman looked at me

austerely. Then the two-sworded man wooed the Japanese-fan lady, the

other characters commenting on his proceedings like a Greek chorus till

something--perhaps a misplaced accent--provoked trouble, and the

two-sworded man and a vermilion splendour enjoyed a Vincent Crummles

fight to the music of all the orchestra--one guitar and something that

clicked--not castanets. The small boy removed their weapons when the men

had sufficiently warred, and, conceiving that the piece wanted light,

fetched a ten-foot bamboo with a naked candle at the end, and held this

implement about a foot from the face of the two-sworded man, following

his every movement with the anxious eye of a child intrusted with a

typewriter. Then the Japanese-fan girl consented to the wooing of the

two-sworded man, and with a scream of eldritch laughter turned into a

hideous old woman--a boy took off her hair, but she did the rest

herself. At this terrible moment a gilded Thunder Cat, which is a cat

issuing from a cloud, ran on wires from the flies to the centre of the

gallery, and a boy with a badger's tail mocked at the two-sworded man.

Then I knew that the two-sworded man had offended a cat and a badger,

and would have a very bad time of it, for these two animals and the fox

are to this day black sorcerers. Fearful things followed, and the

scenery was changed once every five minutes. The prettiest effect was

secured by a double row of candles hung on strings behind a green gauze

far up the stage and set swinging with opposite motions. This, besides

giving a fine idea of uncanniness, made one member of the audience

sea-sick.

But the two-sworded man was far more miserable than I. The bad Thunder

Cat cast such spells upon him that I gave up trying to find out what he

meant to be. He was a fat-faced low comedian King of the Rats, assisted

by other rats, and he ate a magic radish with side-splitting pantomime

till he became a man once more. Then all his bones were taken

away,--still by the Thunder Cat,--and he fell into a horrid heap,

illuminated by the small boy with the candle--and would not recover

himself till somebody spoke to a magic parrot, and a huge hairy villain

and several coolies had walked over him. Then he was a girl, but, hiding

behind a parasol, resumed his shape, and then the curtain came down and

the audience ran about the stage and circulated generally. One small boy

took it into his head that he could turn head-over-heels from the Prompt

side across. With great gravity, before the unregarding house, he set to

work; but rolled over sideways with a flourish of chubby legs. Nobody

cared, and the polite people in the gallery could not understand why the

Professor and I were helpless with laughter when the child, with a clog

for a sword, imitated the strut of the two-sworded man. The actors

changed in public, and any one who liked might help shift scenes. Why

should not a baby enjoy himself if he liked?

A little later we left. The Thunder Cat was still working her wicked

will on the two-sworded man, but all would be set right next day. There

was a good deal to be done, but Justice was at the end of it. The man

who sold pickled fish and tickets said so.

"Good school for a young actor," said the Professor. "He'd see what

unpruned eccentricities naturally develop into. There's every trick and

mannerism of the English stage in that place, magnified thirty

diameters, but perfectly recognisable. How do you intend to describe

it?"

"The Japanese comic opera of the future has yet to be written," I

responded, grandiloquently. "Yet to be written in spite of the \_Mikado\_.

The badger has not yet appeared on an English stage, and the artistic

mask as an accessory to the legitimate drama has never been utilised.

Just imagine the \_Thunder Cat\_ as a title for a serio-comic opera. Begin

with a domestic cat possessed of magic powers, living in the house of a

London tea-merchant who kicks her. Consider--"

"The lateness of the hour," was the icy answer. "To-morrow we will go

and write operas in the temple close to this place."

\* \* \* \* \*

To-morrow brought fine drizzling rain. The sun, by the way, has been

hidden now for more than three weeks. They took us to what must be the

chief temple of KobÃ© and gave it a name which I do not remember. It is

an exasperating thing to stand at the altars of a faith that you know

nothing about. There be rites and ceremonies of the Hindu creed that all

have read of and must have witnessed, but in what manner do they pray

here who look to Buddha, and what worship is paid at the Shinto shrines?

The books say one thing; the eyes, another.

The temple would seem to be also a monastery and a place of great peace

disturbed only by the babble of scores of little children. It stood back

from the road behind a sturdy wall, an irregular mass of steep pitched

roofs bound fantastically at the crown, copper-green where the thatch

had ripened under the touch of time, and dull grey-black where the tiles

ran. Under the eaves a man who believed in his God, and so could do good

work, had carved his heart into wood till it blossomed and broke into

waves or curled with the ripple of live flames. Somewhere on the

outskirts of Lahore city stands a mazy gathering of tombs and cloister

walks called Chajju Bhagat's Chubara, built no one knows when and

decaying no one cares how soon. Though this temple was large and

spotlessly clean within and without, the silence and rest of the place

were those of the courtyards in the far-off Punjab. The priests had made

many gardens in corners of the wall--gardens perhaps forty feet long by

twenty wide, and each, though different from its neighbour, containing a

little pond with goldfish, a stone lantern or two, hummocks of rock,

flat stones carved with inscriptions, and a cherry or peach tree all

blossom.

Stone-paved paths ran across the courtyard and connected building with

building. In an inner enclosure, where lay the prettiest garden of all,

was a golden tablet ten or twelve feet high, against which stood in high

relief of hammered bronze the figure of a goddess in flowing robes. The

space between the paved paths here was strewn with snowy-white pebbles,

and in white pebbles on red they had written on the ground, "How happy."

You might take them as you pleased--for the sigh of contentment or the

question of despair.

The temple itself, reached by a wooden bridge, was nearly dark, but

there was light enough to show a hundred subdued splendours of brown and

gold, of silk and faithfully painted screen. If you have once seen a

Buddhist altar where the Master of the Law sits among golden bells,

ancient bronzes, flowers in vases, and banners of tapestry, you will

begin to understand why the Roman Catholic Church once prospered so

mightily in this country, and will prosper in all lands where it finds

an elaborate ritual already existing. An art-loving folk will have a God

who is to be propitiated with pretty things as surely as a race bred

among rocks and moors and driving clouds will enshrine their deity in

the storm, and make him the austere recipient of the sacrifice of the

rebellious human spirit. Do you remember the story of the Bad People of

Iquique? The man who told me that yarn told me another--of the Good

People of Somewhere Else. They also were simple South Americans with

nothing to wear, and had been conducting a service of their own in

honour of their God before a black-jowled Jesuit father. At a critical

moment some one forgot the ritual, or a monkey invaded the sanctity of

that forest shrine and stole the priest's only garment. Anyhow, an

absurdity happened, and the Good People burst into shouts of laughter

and broke off to play for a while.

"But what will your God say?" asked the Jesuit, scandalised at the

levity.

"Oh! he knows everything. He knows that we forget, and can't attend, and

do it all wrong, but He is very wise and very strong," was the reply.

"Well, that doesn't excuse you."

"Of course it does. He just lies back and laughs," said the Good People

of Somewhere Else, and fell to pelting each other with blossoms.

I forget what is the precise bearing of this anecdote. But to return to

the temple. Hidden away behind a mass of variegated gorgeousness was a

row of very familiar figures with gold crowns on their heads. One does

not expect to meet Krishna the Butter Thief and Kali the husband beater

so far east as Japan.

"What are these?"

"They are other gods," said a young priest, who giggled deprecatingly at

his own creed every time he was questioned about it. "They are very old.

They came from India in the past. I think they are Indian gods, but I do

not know why they are here."

I hate a man who is ashamed of his faith. There was a story connected

with those gods, and the priest would not tell it to me. So I sniffed at

him scornfully, and went my way. It led me from the temple straight into

the monastery, which was all made of delicate screens, polished floors,

and brown wood ceilings. Except for my tread on the boards there was no

sound in the place till I heard some one breathing heavily behind a

screen. The priest slid back what had appeared to me a dead wall, and we

found a very old priest half-asleep over his charcoal handwarmer. This

was the picture. The priest in olive-green, his bald head, pure silver,

bowed down before a sliding screen of white oiled paper which let in

dull silver light. To his right a battered black lacquer stand

containing the Indian ink and brushes with which he feigned to work. To

the right of these, again, a pale yellow bamboo table holding a vase of

olive-green crackle, and a sprig of almost black pine. There were no

blossoms in this place. The priest was too old. Behind the sombre

picture stood a gorgeous little Buddhist shrine,--gold and vermilion.

"He makes a fresh picture for the little screen here every day," said

the young priest, pointing first to his senior, and then to a blank

little tablet on the wall. The old man laughed pitifully, rubbed his

head, and handed me his picture for the day. It represented a flood

over rocky ground; two men in a boat were helping two others on a tree

half-submerged by the water. Even I could tell that the power had gone

from him. He must have drawn well in his manhood, for one figure in the

boat had action and purpose as it leaned over the gunwale; but the rest

was blurred, and the lines had wandered astray as the poor old hand had

quavered across the paper. I had no time to wish the artist a pleasant

old age, and an easy death in the great peace that surrounded him,

before the young man drew me away to the back of the shrine, and showed

me a second smaller altar facing shelves on shelves of little gold and

lacquer tablets covered with Japanese characters.

"These are memorial tablets of the dead," he giggled. "Once and again

the priest he prays here--for those who are dead, you understand?"

"Perfectly. They call 'em masses where I come from. I want to go away

and think about things. You shouldn't laugh, though, when you show off

your creed."

"Ha, ha!" said the young priest, and I ran away down the dark polished

passages with the faded screens on either hand, and got into the main

courtyard facing the street, while the Professor was trying to catch

temple fronts with his camera.

A procession passed, four abreast tramping through the sloshy mud. They

did not laugh, which was strange, till I saw and heard a company of

women in white walking in front of a little wooden palanquin carried on

the shoulders of four bearers and suspiciously light. They sang a song,

half under their breaths--a wailing, moaning song that I had only heard

once before, from the lips of a native far away in the north of India,

who had been clawed past hope of cure by a bear, and was singing his

own death-song as his friends bore him along.

"Have makee die," said my 'rickshaw coolie. "Few-yu-ne-ral."

I was aware of the fact. Men, women, and little children poured along

the streets, and when the death-song died down, helped it forward. The

half-mourners wore only pieces of white cloth about their shoulders. The

immediate relatives of the dead were in white from head to foot. "Aho!

Ahaa! Aho!" they wailed very softly, for fear of breaking the cadence of

the falling rain, and they disappeared. All except one old woman, who

could not keep pace with the procession, and so came along alone,

crooning softly to herself. "Aho! Ahaa! Aho!" she whispered.

The little children in the courtyard were clustered round the

Professor's camera. But one child had a very bad skin disease on his

innocent head,--so bad that none of the others would play with him,--and

he stood in a corner and sobbed and sobbed as though his heart would

break. Poor little Gehazi!

No. XIV

EXPLAINS IN WHAT MANNER I WAS TAKEN TO VENICE IN THE RAIN, AND CLIMBED

INTO A DEVIL FORT; A TIN-POT EXHIBITION, AND A BATH. OF THE MAIDEN AND

THE BOLTLESS DOOR, THE CULTIVATOR AND HIS FIELDS, AND THE MANUFACTURE OF

ETHNOLOGICAL THEORIES AT RAILROAD SPEED. ENDS WITH KIOTO.

"There's a deal o' fine confused feedin' about sheep's head."

--\_Christopher North.\_

"Come along to Osaka," said the Professor.

"Why? I'm quite comfy here, and we shall have lobster cutlets for

tiffin; and, anyhow, it is raining heavily, and we shall get wet."

Sorely against my will--for it was in my mind to fudge Japan from a

guide-book while I enjoyed the cookery of the Oriental at KobÃ©--I was

dragged into a 'rickshaw and the rain, and conveyed to a railway

station. Even the Japanese cannot make their railway stations lovely,

though they do their best. Their system of baggage-booking is borrowed

from the Americans; their narrow-gauge lines, locos, and rolling stock

are English; their passenger-traffic is regulated with the precision of

the Gaul, and the uniforms of their officials come from the nearest

ragbag. The passengers themselves were altogether delightful. A large

number of them were modified Europeans, and resembled nothing more than

Tenniel's picture of the White Rabbit on the first page of \_Alice in

Wonderland\_. They were dressed in neat little tweed suits with

fawn-coloured overcoats, and they carried ladies' reticules of black

leather and nickel platings. They wore paper and celluloid stuck-up

collars which must have been quite thirteen inches round the neck, and

their boots were number fours. On their hands--their wee-wee hands--they

had white cotton gloves, and they smoked cigarettes from fairy little

cigarette cases. That was young Japan--the Japan of the present day.

"Wah, wah, God is great," said the Professor. "But it isn't in human

nature for a man who sprawls about on soft mats by instinct to wear

Europe clothes as though they belonged to him. If you notice, the last

thing that they take to is shoes."

A lapis-lazuli coloured locomotive which, by accident, had a mixed train

attached to it happened to loaf up to the platform just then, and we

entered a first-class English compartment. There was no stupid double

roof, window shade, or abortive thermantidote. It was a London and

South-Western carriage. Osaka is about eighteen miles from KobÃ©, and

stands at the head of the bay of Osaka. The train is allowed to go as

fast as fifteen miles an hour and to play at the stations all along the

line. You must know that the line runs between the hills and the shore,

and the drainage-fall is a great deal steeper than anything we have

between Saharunpur and Umballa. The rivers and the hill torrents come

down straight from the hills on raised beds of their own formation,

which beds again have to be bunded and spanned with girder bridges

or--here, perhaps, I may be wrong--tunnelled.

The stations are black-tiled, red-walled, and concrete-floored, and all

the plant from signal levers to goods-truck is English. The official

colour of the bridges is a yellow-brown most like unto a faded

chrysanthemum. The uniform of the ticket-collectors is a peaked forage

cap with gold lines, black frock-coat with brass buttons, very long in

the skirt, trousers with black mohair braid, and buttoned kid boots. You

cannot be rude to a man in such raiment.

But the countryside was the thing that made us open our eyes. Imagine a

land of rich black soil, very heavily manured, and worked by the spade

and hoe almost exclusively, and if you split your field (of vision) into

half-acre plots, you will get a notion of the raw material the

cultivator works on. But all I can write will give you no notion of the

wantonness of neatness visible in the fields, of the elaborate system of

irrigation, and the mathematical precision of the planting. There was no

mixing of crops, no waste of boundary in footpath, and no difference of

value in the land. The water stood everywhere within ten feet of the

surface, as the well-sweeps attested. On the slopes of the foot-hills

each drop between the levels was neatly riveted with unmortared stones,

and the edges of the watercuts were faced in like manner. The young rice

was transplanted very much as draughts are laid on the board; the tea

might have been cropped garden box; and between the lines of the mustard

the water lay in the drills as in a wooden trough, while the purple of

the beans ran up to the mustard and stopped as though cut with a rule.

On the seaboard we saw an almost continuous line of towns variegated

with factory chimneys; inland, the crazy-quilt of green, dark-green and

gold. Even in the rain the view was lovely, and exactly as Japanese

pictures had led me to hope for. Only one drawback occurred to the

Professor and myself at the same time. Crops don't grow to the full

limit of the seed on heavily worked ground dotted with villages except

at a price.

"Cholera?" said I, watching a stretch of well-sweeps.

"Cholera," said the Professor. "Must be, y'know. It's all sewage

irrigation."

I felt that I was friends with the cultivators at once. These

broad-hatted, blue-clad gentlemen who tilled their fields by

hand--except when they borrowed the village buffalo to drive the share

through the rice-slough--knew what the scourge meant.

"How much do you think the Government takes in revenue from vegetable

gardens of that kind?" I demanded.

"Bosh," said he, quietly, "you aren't going to describe the land-tenure

of Japan. Look at the yellow of the mustard!"

It lay in sheets round the line. It ran up the hills to the dark pines.

It rioted over the brown sandbars of the swollen rivers, and faded away

by mile after mile to the shores of the leaden sea. The high-peaked

houses of brown thatch stood knee-deep in it, and it surged up to the

factory chimneys of Osaka.

"Great place, Osaka," said the guide. "All sorts of manufactures there."

Osaka is built into and over and among one thousand eight hundred and

ninety-four canals, rivers, dams, and watercuts. What the multitudinous

chimneys mean I cannot tell. They have something to do with rice and

cotton; but it is not good that the Japs should indulge in trade, and I

will not call Osaka a "great commercial \_entrepot\_." "People who live in

paper houses should never sell goods," as the proverb says.

Because of his many wants there is but one hotel for the Englishman in

Osaka, and they call it Juter's. Here the views of two civilisations

collide and the result is awful. The building is altogether Japanese;

wood and tile and sliding screen from top to bottom; but the fitments

are mixed. My room, for instance, held a \_tokonoma\_, made of the

polished black stem of a palm and delicate woodwork, framing a scroll

picture representing storks. But on the floor over the white mats lay a

Brussels carpet that made the indignant toes tingle. From the back

verandah one overhung the river which ran straight as an arrow between

two lines of houses. They have cabinet-makers in Japan to fit the rivers

to the towns. From my verandah I could see three bridges--one a hideous

lattice-girder arrangement--and part of a fourth. We were on an island

and owned a watergate if we wanted to take a boat.

\_Apropos\_ of water, be pleased to listen to a Shocking Story. It is

written in all the books that the Japanese though cleanly are somewhat

casual in their customs. They bathe often with nothing on and together.

This notion my experience of the country, gathered in the seclusion of

the Oriental at KobÃ©, made me scoff at. I demanded a tub at Juter's. The

infinitesimal man led me down verandahs and upstairs to a beautiful

bath-house full of hot and cold water and fitted with cabinet-work,

somewhere in a lonely out-gallery. There was naturally no bolt to the

door any more than there would be a bolt to a dining-room. Had I been

sheltered by the walls of a big Europe bath, I should not have cared,

but I was preparing to wash when a pretty maiden opened the door, and

indicated that she also would tub in the deep, sunken Japanese bath at

my side. When one is dressed only in one's virtue and a pair of

spectacles it is difficult to shut the door in the face of a girl. She

gathered that I was not happy, and withdrew giggling, while I thanked

heaven, blushing profusely the while, that I had been brought up in a

society which unfits a man to bathe \_Ã  deux\_. Even an experience of the

Paddington Swimming Baths would have helped me; but coming straight from

India Lady Godiva was a ballet-girl in sentiment compared to this

ActÃ¦on.

It rained monsoonishly, and the Professor discovered a castle which he

needs must see. "It's Osaka Castle," he said, "and it has been fought

over for hundreds of years. Come along."

"I've seen castles in India. Raighur, Jodhpur--all sorts of places.

Let's have some more boiled salmon. It's good in this station."

"Pig," said the Professor.

We threaded our way over the four thousand and fifty-two canals, etc.,

where the little children played with the swiftly running water, and

never a mother said "don't," till our 'rickshaw stopped outside a fort

ditch thirty feet deep, and faced with gigantic granite slabs. On the

far side uprose the walls of a fort. But such a fort! Fifty feet was the

height of the wall, and never a pinch of mortar in the whole. Nor was

the face perpendicular, but curved like the ram of a man-of-war. They

know the curve in China, and I have seen French artists, introduce it

into books describing a devil-besieged city of Tartary. Possibly

everybody else knows it too, but that is not my affair; life as I have

said being altogether new to me. The stone was granite, and the men of

old time had used it like mud. The dressed blocks that made the profile

of the angles were from twenty feet long, ten or twelve feet high, and

as many in thickness. There was no attempt at binding, but there was no

fault in the jointing.

"And the little Japs built this!" I cried, awe-stricken at the quarries

that rose round me.

"Cyclopean masonry," grunted the Professor, punching with a stick a

monolith of seventeen feet cube. "Not only did they build it, but they

took it. Look at this. Fire!"

The stones had been split and bronzed in places, and the cleavage was

the cleavage of fire. Evil must it have been for the armies that led the

assault on these monstrous walls. Castles in India I know, and the forts

of great Emperors I had seen, but neither Akbar in the north, nor

Scindia in the south, had built after this fashion--without ornament,

without colour, but with a single eye to savage strength and the utmost

purity of line. Perhaps the fort would have looked less forbidding in

sunlight. The grey, rain-laden atmosphere through which I saw it suited

its spirit. The barracks of the garrison, the commandant's very dainty

house, a peach-garden, and two deer were foreign to the place. They

should have peopled it with giants from the mountains, instead

of--Gurkhas! A Jap infantryman is not a Gurkha, though he might be

mistaken for one as long as he stood still. The sentry at the

quarter-guard belonged, I fancy, to the 4th Regiment. His uniform was

black or blue, with red facings, and shoulder-straps carrying the number

of the regiment in cloth. The rain necessitated an overcoat, but why he

should have carried knapsack, blanket, boots, \_and\_ binoculars I could

not fathom. The knapsack was of cowskin with the hair on, the boots were

strapped soles, cut on each side, while a heavy country blanket was

rolled U-shape over the head of the knapsack, fitting close to the back.

In the place usually occupied by the mess-tin was a black leather case

shaped like a field-glass. This must be a mistake of mine, but I can

only record as I see. The rifle was a side-bolt weapon of some kind, and

the bayonet an uncommonly good sword one, locked to the muzzle, English

fashion. The ammunition pouches, as far as I could see under the

greatcoat, ran on the belt in front, and were double-strapped down.

White spatterdashes--very dirty--and peaked cap completed the outfit. I

surveyed the man with interest, and would have made further examination

of him but for fear of the big bayonet. His arms were well kept,--not

speckless by any means,--but his uniform would have made an English

colonel swear. There was no portion of his body except the neck that it

pretended to fit. I peeped into the quarter-guard. Fans and dainty

tea-sets do not go with one's notions of a barrack. One drunken

defaulter of certain far-away regiments that I could name would not only

have cleared out that quarter-guard, but brought away all its fittings

except the rifle-racks. Yet the little men, who were always gentle, and

never got drunk, were mounting guard over a pile that, with a blue fire

on the bastions, might have served for the guard-gates of Hell.

I climbed to the top of the fort and was rewarded by a view of thirty

miles of country, chiefly pale yellow mustard and blue-green pine, and

the sight of the very large city of Osaka fading away into mist. The

guide took most pleasure in the factory chimneys. "There is an

exposition here--an exposition of industrialities. Come and see," said

he. He took us down from that high place and showed us the glory of the

land in the shape of corkscrews, tin mugs, egg-whisks, dippers, silks,

buttons, and all the trumpery that can be stitched on a card and sold

for five-pence three farthings. The Japanese unfortunately make all

these things for themselves, and are proud of it. They have nothing to

learn from the West as far as finish is concerned, and by intuition know

how to case and mount wares tastefully. The exposition was in four large

sheds running round a central building which held only screens, pottery,

and cabinet-ware loaned for the occasion. I rejoiced to see that the

common people did not care for the penknives, and the pencils, and the

mock jewellery. They left those sheds alone and discussed the screens,

first taking off their clogs that the inlaid floor of the room might not

suffer. Of all the gracious things I beheld, two only remain in my

memory,--one a screen in grey representing the heads of six devils

instinct with malice and hate; the other, a bold sketch in monochrome of

an old woodcutter wrestling with the down-bent branch of a tree. Two

hundred years have passed since the artist dropped his pencil, but you

may almost hear the tough wood jar under the stroke of the chopper, as

the old man puts his back into the task and draws in the labouring

breath. There is a picture by Legros of a beggar dying in a ditch, which

might have been suggested by that screen.

Next morning, after a night's rain, which sent the river racing under

the frail balconies at eight miles an hour, the sun broke through the

clouds. Is this a little matter to you who can count upon him daily? I

had not seen him since March, and was beginning to feel anxious. Then

the land of peach blossom spread its draggled wings abroad and rejoiced.

All the pretty maidens put on their loveliest crÃªpe sashes,--fawn

colour, pink, blue, orange, and lilac,--all the little children picked

up a baby each, and went out to be happy. In a temple garden full of

blossom I performed the miracle of Deucalion with two cents' worth of

sweets. The babies swarmed on the instant, till, for fear of raising all

the mothers too, I forbore to give them any more. They smiled and nodded

prettily, and trotted after me, forty strong, the big ones helping the

little, and the little ones skipping in the puddles. A Jap child never

cries, never scuffles, never fights, and never makes mud pies except

when it lives on the banks of a canal. Yet, lest it should spread its

sash-bow and become a bald-headed angel ere its time, Providence has

decreed that it should never, never blow its little nose.

Notwithstanding the defect, I love it.

There was no business in Osaka that day because of the sunshine and the

budding of the trees. Everybody went to a tea-house with his friends. I

went also, but first ran along a boulevard by the side of the river,

pretending to look at the Mint. This was only a common place of solid

granite where they turn out dollars and rubbish of that kind. All along

the boulevard the cherry, peach, and plum trees, pink, white, and red,

touched branches and made a belt of velvety soft colour as far as the

eye could reach. Weeping willows were the normal ornaments of the

waterside, this revel of bloom being only part of the prodigality of

Spring. The Mint may make a hundred thousand dollars a day, but all the

silver in its keeping will not bring again the three weeks of the peach

blossom which, even beyond the chrysanthemum, is the crown and glory of

Japan. For some act of surpassing merit performed in a past life I have

been enabled to hit those three weeks in the middle.

"Now is the Japanese festival of the cherry blossom," said the guide.

"All the people will be festive. They will pray too and go to the

tea-gardens."

Now you might wall an Englishman about with cherry trees in bloom from

head to heel, and after the first day he would begin to complain of the

smell. As you know, the Japanese arrange a good many of their festivals

in honour of flowers, and this is surely commendable, for blossoms are

the most tolerant of gods.

The tea-house system of the Japanese filled me with pleasure at a

pleasure that I could not fully comprehend. It pays a company in Osaka

to build on the outskirts of the town a nine-storied pagoda of wood and

iron, to lay out elaborate gardens round it, and to hang the whole with

strings of blood-red lanterns, because the Japanese will come wherever

there is a good view to sit on a mat and discuss tea and sweetmeats and

\_saki\_. This Eiffel Tower is, to tell the truth, anything but pretty,

yet the surroundings redeem it. Although it was not quite completed,

the lower storeys were full of tea-stalls and tea-drinkers. The men and

women were obviously admiring the view. It is an astounding thing to see

an Oriental so engaged; it is as though he had stolen something from a

sahib.

From Osaka--canal-cut, muddy, and fascinating Osaka--the Professor,

Mister Yamagutchi,--the guide,--and I took train to Kioto, an hour from

Osaka. On the road I saw four buffaloes at as many rice-ploughs--which

was noticeable as well as wasteful. A buffalo at rest must cover the

half of a Japanese field; but perhaps they are kept on the mountain

ledges and only pulled down when wanted. The Professor says that what I

call buffalo is really bullock. The worst of travelling with an accurate

man is his accuracy. We argued about the Japanese in the train, about

his present and his future, and the manner in which he has ranged

himself on the side of the grosser nations of the earth.

"Did it hurt his feelings very much to wear our clothes? Didn't he rebel

when he put on a pair of trousers for the first time? Won't he grow

sensible some day and drop foreign habits?" These were some of the

questions I put to the landscape and the Professor.

"He was a baby," said the latter, "a big baby. I think his sense of

humour was at the bottom of the change, but he didn't know that a nation

which once wears trousers never takes 'em off. You see 'enlightened'

Japan is only one-and-twenty years old, and people are not very wise at

one-and-twenty. Read Reed's \_Japan\_ and learn how the change came about.

There was a Mikado and a \_Shogun\_ who was Sir Frederick Roberts, but he

tried to be the Viceroy and--"

"Bother the \_Shogun\_! I've seen something like the Babu class, and

something like the farmer class. What I want to see is the Rajput

class--the man who used to wear the thousands and thousands of swords in

the curio-shops. Those swords were as much made for use as a Rajputana

sabre. Where are the men who used 'em? Show me a Samurai."

The Professor answered not a word, but scrutinised heads on the wayside

platforms. "I take it that the high-arched forehead, club nose, and eyes

close together--the Spanish type--are from Rajput stock, while the

German-faced Jap is the Khattri--the lower class."

Thus we talked of the natures and dispositions of men we knew nothing

about till we had decided (1) that the painful politeness of the

Japanese nation rose from the habit, dropped only twenty years ago, of

extended and emphatic sword-wearing, even as the Rajput is the pink of

courtesy because his friend goes armed; (2) that this politeness will

disappear in another generation, or will at least be seriously impaired;

(3) that the cultured Japanese of the English pattern will corrupt and

defile the tastes of his neighbours till (4) Japan altogether ceases to

exist as a separate nation and becomes a button-hook manufacturing

appanage of America; (5) that these things being so, and sure to happen

in two or three hundred years, the Professor and I were lucky to reach

Japan betimes; and (6) that it was foolish to form theories about the

country until we had seen a little of it.

So we came to the city of Kioto in regal sunshine, tempered by a breeze

that drove the cherry blossoms in drifts about the streets. One

Japanese town, in the southern provinces at least, is very like another

to look at--a grey-black sea of house roofs, speckled with the white

walls of the fire-proof godowns where merchants and rich men keep their

chief treasures. The general level is broken by the temple roofs, which

are turned up at the edges, and remotely resemble so many terai-hats.

Kioto fills a plain almost entirely surrounded by wooded hills, very

familiar in their aspect to those who have seen the Siwaliks. Once upon

a time it was the capital of Japan, and to-day numbers two hundred and

fifty thousand people. It is laid out like an American town. All the

streets run at right angles to each other. That, by the way, is exactly

what the Professor and I are doing. We are elaborating the theory of the

Japanese people, and we can't agree.

No. XV

KIOTO AND HOW I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE CHIEF BELLE THERE AFTER I HAD

CONFERRED WITH CERTAIN CHINA MERCHANTS WHO TRAFFICKED IN TEA. SHOWS

FURTHER HOW, IN A GREAT TEMPLE, I BROKE THE TENTH COMMANDMENT IN

FIFTY-THREE PLACES AND BOWED DOWN BEFORE KANO AND A CARPENTER. TAKES ME

TO ARASHIMA.

"Could I but write the things I see,

My world would haste to gaze with me.

But since the traitor Pen hath failed

To paint earth's loveliness unveiled,

I can but pray my folk who read:--

'For lavish Will take starveling Deed.'"

We are consorting with sixty of the \_Sahib-log\_ in the quaintest hotel

that ever you saw. It stands on the hillside overlooking the whole town

of Kioto, and its garden is veritable Japanese. Fantastically trimmed

tea trees, junipers, dwarfed pine, and cherry, are mixed up with ponds

of goldfish, stone lanterns, quaint rock-work, and velvety turf all at

an angle of thirty-five degrees. Behind us the pines, red and black,

cover the hill and run down in a long spur to the town. But an

auctioneer's catalogue cannot describe the charms of the place or deal

justly with the tea-garden full of cherry trees that lies a hundred

yards below the hotel. We were solemnly assured that hardly any one

came to Kioto. That is why we meet every soul in the ship that had

brought us to Nagasaki; and that is why our ears are constantly assailed

with the clamour of people who are discussing places which must be

"done." An Englishman is a very horrible person when he is on the

war-path; so is an American, a Frenchman, or a German.

I had been watching the afternoon sunlight upon the trees and the town,

the shift and play of colour in the crowded street of the cherry, and

crooning to myself because the sky was blue and I was alive beneath it

with a pair of eyes in my head.

Immediately the sun went down behind the hills the air became bitterly

cold, but the people in crÃªpe sashes and silk coats never ceased their

sober frolicking. There was to be a great service in honour of the

cherry blossom the next day at the chief temple of Kioto, and they were

getting ready for it. As the light died in a wash of crimson, the last

thing I saw was a frieze of three little Japanese babies with fuzzy

top-knots and huge sashes trying to hang head downwards from a bamboo

rail. They did it, and the closing eye of day regarded them solemnly as

it shut. The effect in \_silhouette\_ was immense!

A company of China tea-merchants were gathered in the smoking-room after

dinner, and by consequence talked their own "shop," which was

interesting. Their language is not Our language, for they know nothing

of the tea-gardens, of drying and withering and rolling, of the

assistant who breaks his collar-bone in the middle of the busiest

season, or of the sickness that smites the coolie lines at about the

same time. They are happy men who get their tea by the break of a

thousand chests from the interior of the country and play with it upon

the London markets. None the less they have a very wholesome respect for

Indian tea, which they cordially detest. Here is the sort of argument

that a Foochow man, himself a very heavy buyer, flung at me across the

table.

"You may talk about your Indian teas,--Assam and Kangra, or whatever you

call them,--but I tell \_you\_ that if ever they get a strong hold in

England, the doctors will be down on them, Sir. They'll be medically

forbidden. See if they aren't. They shatter your nerves to pieces. Unfit

for human consumption--that's what they are. Though I don't deny they

\_are\_ selling at Home. They don't keep, though. After three months, the

sorts that I've seen in London turn to hay."

"I think you are wrong there," said a Hankow man. "My experience is that

the Indian teas keep better than ours by a long way. But"--turning to

me--"if we could only get the China Government to take off the duties,

we could smash Indian tea and every one connected with it. We could lay

down tea in Mincing Lane at threepence a pound. No, we do not adulterate

our teas. That's one of \_your\_ tricks in India. We get it as pure as

yours--every chest in the break equal to sample."

"You can trust your native buyers then?" I interrupted.

"Trust 'em? Of course we can," cut in the Foochow merchant. "There are

no tea-gardens in China as you understand them. The peasantry cultivate

the tea, and the buyers buy from them for cash each season. You can

give a Chinaman a hundred thousand dollars and tell him to turn it into

tea of your own particular chop--up to sample. Of course the man may be

a thorough-paced rogue in many ways, but he knows better than to play

the fool with an English house. Back comes your tea--a thousand

half-chests, we'll say. You open perhaps five, and the balance go home

untried. But they are all equal to sample. That's business, that is. The

Chinaman's a born merchant and full of backbone. I like him for business

purposes. The Jap's no use. He isn't man enough to handle a hundred

thousand dollars. Very possibly he'd run off with it--or try to."

"The Jap has no business savvy. God knows I hate the Chinamen," said a

bass voice behind the tobacco smoke, "but you can do business with him.

The Jap's a little huckster who can't see beyond his nose."

They called for drinks and told tales, these merchants of China,--tales

of money and bales and boxes,--but through all their stories there was

an implied leaning upon native help which, even allowing for the

peculiarities of China, was rather startling. "The compradore did this:

Ho Whang did that: a syndicate of Pekin bankers did the other

thing"--and so on. I wondered whether a certain lordly indifference as

to details had anything to do with eccentricities in the China

tea-breaks and fluctuations of quality, which do occur in spite of all

the men said to the contrary. Again, the merchants spoke of China as a

place where fortunes are made--a land only waiting to be opened up to

pay a hundredfold. They told me of the Home Government helping private

trade, in kind and unobtrusive ways, to get a firmer hold on the Public

Works Department contracts that are now flying abroad. This was

pleasant hearing. But the strangest thing of all was the tone of hope

and almost contentment that pervaded their speech. They were well-to-do

men making money, and they liked their lives. You know how, when two or

three of Us are gathered together in our own barren pauper land, we

groan in chorus and are disconsolate. The civilian, the military man,

and the merchant, they are all alike. The one overworked and broken by

exchange, the second a highly organised beggar, and the third a nobody

in particular, always at loggerheads with what he considers an

academical Government. I knew in a way that We were a grim and miserable

community in India, but I did not know the measure of Our fall till I

heard men talking about fortunes, success, money, and the pleasure, good

living, and frequent trips to England that money brings. Their friends

did not seem to die with unnatural swiftness, and their wealth enabled

them to endure the calamity of Exchange with calm. Yes, we of India are

a wretched folk.

Very early in the dawn, before the nesting sparrows were awake, there

was a sound in the air which frightened me out of my virtuous sleep. It

was a lisping mutter--very deep and entirely strange. "That's an

earthquake, and the hillside is beginning to slide," quoth I, taking

measures of defence. The sound repeated itself again and again, till I

argued, that if it were the precursor of an earthquake, the affair had

stuck half-way. At breakfast men said: "That was the great bell of Kioto

just next door to the hotel a little way up the hillside. As a bell,

y'know, it's rather a failure, from an English point of view. They

don't ring it properly, and the volume of sound is comparatively

insignificant."

"So I fancied when I first heard it," I said casually, and went out up

the hill under sunshine that filled the heart and trees, that filled the

eye with joy. You know the unadulterated pleasure of that first clear

morning in the Hills when a month's solid idleness lies before the

loafer, and the scent of the deodars mixes with the scent of the

meditative cigar. That was my portion when I stepped through the

violet-studded long grass into forgotten little Japanese cemeteries--all

broken pillars and lichened tablets--till I found, under a cut in the

hillside, the big bell of Kioto--twenty feet of green bronze hung inside

a fantastically roofed shed of wooden beams. A beam, by the way, \_is\_ a

beam in Japan; anything under a foot thick is a stick. These beams were

the best parts of big trees, clamped with bronze and iron. A knuckle

rapped lightly on the lip of the bell--it was not more than five feet

from the ground--made the great monster breathe heavily, and the blow of

a stick started a hundred shrill-voiced echoes round the darkness of its

dome. At one side, guyed by half a dozen small hawsers, hung a

battering-ram, a twelve-foot spar bound with iron, its nose pointing

full-butt at a chrysanthemum in high relief on the belly of the bell.

Then, by special favour of Providence, which always looks after the

idle, they began to sound sixty strokes. Half a dozen men swung the ram

back and forth with shoutings and outcries, till it had gathered

sufficient way, and the loosened ropes let it hurl itself against the

chrysanthemum. The boom of the smitten bronze was swallowed up by the

earth below and the hillside behind, so that its volume was not

proportionate to the size of the bell, exactly as the men had said. An

English ringer would have made thrice as much of it. But then he would

have lost the crawling jar that ran through rock-stone and pine for

twenty yards round, that beat through the body of the listener and died

away under his feet like the shock of a distant blasting. I endured

twenty strokes and removed myself, not in the least ashamed of mistaking

the sound for an earthquake. Many times since I have heard the bell

speak when I was far off. It says \_B-r-r-r\_ very deep down in its

throat, but when you have once caught the noise you will never forget

it. And so much for the big bell of Kioto.

From its house a staircase of cut stone takes you down to the temple of

Chion-in, where I arrived on Easter Sunday just before service, and in

time to see the procession of the Cherry Blossom. They had a special

service at a place called St. Peter's at Rome about the same time, but

the priests of Buddha excelled the priests of the Pope. Thus it

happened. The main front of the temple was three hundred feet long, a

hundred feet deep, and sixty feet high. One roof covered it all, and

saving for the tiles there was no stone in the structure; nothing but

wood three hundred years old, as hard as iron. The pillars that upheld

the roof were three feet, four feet, and five feet in diameter, and

guiltless of any paint. They showed the natural grain of the wood till

they were lost in the rich brown darkness far overhead. The cross-beams

were of grained wood of great richness; cedar-wood and camphor-wood and

the hearts of gigantic pine had been put under requisition for the great

work. One carpenter--they call him only a carpenter--had designed the

whole, and his name is remembered to this day. A half of the temple was

railed off for the congregation by a two-foot railing, over which silks

of ancient device had been thrown. Within the railing were all the

religious fittings, but these I cannot describe. All I remember was row

upon row of little lacquered stands each holding a rolled volume of

sacred writings; an altar as tall as a cathedral organ where gold strove

with colour, colour with lacquer, and lacquer with inlay, and candles

such as Holy Mother Church uses only on her greatest days, shed a yellow

light that softened all. Bronze incense-burners in the likeness of

dragons and devils fumed under the shadow of silken banners, behind

which, wood tracery, as delicate as frost on a window-pane, climbed to

the ridge-pole. Only there was no visible roof to this temple. The light

faded away under the monstrous beams, and we might have been in a cave a

hundred fathoms below the earth but for the sunshine and blue sky at the

portals where the little children squabbled and shouted.

On my word, I tried to note down soberly what lay before me, but the eye

tired, and the pencil ran off into fragmentary ejaculations. But what

would you have done if you had seen what I saw when I went round the

temple verandah to what we must call a vestry at the back? It was a big

building connected with the main one by a wooden bridge of deepest

time-worn brown. Down the bridge ran a line of saffron-coloured matting,

and down the matting, very slowly and solemnly, as befitted their high

office, filed three and fifty priests, each one clad in at least four

garments of brocade, crÃªpe, and silk. There were silks that do not see

the light of the markets, and brocades that only temple wardrobes know.

There was sea-green watered silk with golden dragons; terra-cotta crÃªpe

with ivory-white chrysanthemums clustering upon it; black-barred silk

shot with yellow flames; lapis-lazuli silk and silver fishes; avanturine

silk with plaques of grey-green let in; cloth of gold over dragon's

blood; and saffron and brown silk stiff as a board with embroidery. We

returned to the temple now filled with the gorgeous robes. The little

lacquer stands were the priests' book-racks. Some lay down among them,

while others moved very softly about the golden altars and the

incense-burners; and the high priest disposed himself, with his back to

the congregation, in a golden chair through which his robe winked like

the shards of a tiger-beetle.

In solemn calm the books were unrolled, and the priests began chanting

Pali texts in honour of the Apostle of Unworldliness, who had written

that they were not to wear gold or mixed colours, or touch the precious

metals. But for a few unimportant accessories in the way of half-seen

images of great men--but these could have been called saints--the scene

before me might have been unrolled in a Roman Catholic cathedral, say

the rich one at Arundel. The same thought was in other minds, for in a

pause of the slow chant a voice behind me whispered:--

"To hear the blessed mutter of the mass

And see God made and eaten all day long."

It was a man from Hong-Kong, very angry that he too had not been

permitted to photograph an interior. He called all this splendour of

ritual and paraphernalia just "an interior," and revenged himself by

spitting Browning at it.

The chant quickened as the service drew to an end, and the candles

burned low.

We went away to other parts of the temple pursued by the chorus of the

devout till we were out of earshot in a paradise of screens. Two or

three hundred years ago there lived a painterman of the name of Kano.

Him the temple of Chion-in brought to beautify the walls of the rooms.

Since a wall is a screen, and a screen is a wall, Kano, R. A., had

rather a large job. But he was helped by pupils and imitators, and in

the end left a few hundred screens which are all finished pictures. As

you already know, the interior of a temple is very simple in its

arrangements. The priests live on white mats, in little rooms, with

brown ceilings, that can at pleasure be thrown into one large room. This

also was the arrangement at Chion-in, though the rooms were

comparatively large and gave on to sumptuous verandahs and passages.

Since the Emperor occasionally visited the place there was a room set

apart for him of more than ordinary splendour. Twisted silk tassels of

intricate design served in lieu of catches to pull back the sliding

screens, and the woodwork was lacquered. These be only feeble words, but

it is not in my grip to express the restfulness of it all, or the power

that knew how to secure the desired effect with a turn of the wrist. The

great Kano drew numbed pheasants huddled together on the snow-covered

bough of a pine; or a peacock in his pride spreading his tail to delight

his womenfolk; or a riot of chrysanthemums poured out of a vase; or the

figures of toilworn countryfolk coming home from market; or a hunting

scene at the foot of Fujiyama. The equally great carpenter who built the

temple framed each picture with absolute precision under a ceiling that

was a miracle of device, and Time, the greatest artist of the three,

touched the gold so that it became amber, and the woodwork so that it

grew dark honey-colour, and the shining surface of the lacquer so that

it became deep and rich and semi-transparent. As in one room, so in all

the others. Sometimes we slid back the screens and discovered a tiny

bald-pated acolyte praying over an incense-burner, and sometimes a lean

priest eating his rice; but generally the rooms were empty, swept and

garnished.

Minor artists had worked with Kano the magnificent. These had been

allowed to lay brush upon panels of wood in the outer verandahs, and

very faithfully had they toiled. It was not till the guide called my

attention to them that I discovered scores of sketches in monochrome low

down on the verandah doors. An iris broken by the fall of a branch torn

off by a surly ape; a bamboo spray bowed before the wind that was

ruffling a lake; a warrior of the past ambushing his enemy in a thicket,

hand on sword, and mouth gathered into puckers of intensest

concentration, were among the many notes that met my eye. How long,

think you, would a sepia-drawing stand without defacement in the midst

of our civilisation were it put on the bottom panel of a door, or the

scantling of a kitchen passage? Yet in this gentle country a man may

stoop down and write his name in the very dust, certain that, if the

writing be craftily done, his children's children will reverently let it

stand.

"Of course there are no such temples made nowadays," I said, when we

regained the sunshine, and the Professor was trying to find out how

panel pictures and paper screens went so well with the dark dignity of

massive woodwork.

"They are building a temple on the other side of the city," said Mister

Yamagutchi. "Come along, and see the hair-ropes which hang there."

We came flying in our 'rickshaws across Kioto, till we saw netted in a

hundred cobwebs of scaffolding a temple even larger than the great

Chion-in.

"That was burned down long ago,--the old temple that was here, you know.

Then the people made a penny subscription from all parts of Japan, and

those who could not send money sent their hair to be made into rope.

They have been ten years building this new temple. It is all wood," said

the guide.

The place was alive with men who were putting the finishing touches to

the great tiled roof and laying down the floors. Wooden pillars as

gigantic, carving as wantonly elaborate, eaves as intricate in their

mouldings, and joinery as perfect as anything in the Chion-in temple met

me at every turn. But the fresh-cut wood was creamy white and lemon

where, in the older building, it had been iron-hard and brown. Only the

raw ends of the joists were stopped with white lacquer to prevent the

incursions of insects, and the deeper tracery was protected against

birds by fine wire netting. Everything else was wood--wood down to the

massive clamped and bolted beams of the foundation which I investigated

through gaps in the flooring.

Japan is a great people. Her masons play with stone, her carpenters

with wood, her smiths with iron, and her artists with life, death, and

all the eye can take in. Mercifully she has been denied the last touch

of firmness in her character which would enable her to play with the

whole round world. We possess that--We, the nation of the glass

flower-shade, the pink worsted mat, the red and green china puppy-dog,

and the poisonous Brussels carpet. It is our compensation....

"Temples!" said a man from Calcutta, some hours later as I raved about

what I had seen. "Temples! I'm sick of temples. If I've seen one, I've

seen fifty thousand of 'em--all exactly alike. But I tell you what is

exciting. Go down the rapids at Arashima,--eight miles from here. It's

better fun than any temple with a fat-faced Buddha in the middle."

But I took my friend's advice. Have I managed to convey the impression

that April is fine in Japan? Then I apologise. It is generally rainy,

and the rain is cold; but the sunshine when it comes is worth it all. We

shouted with joy of living when our fiery, untamed 'rickshaws bounded

from stone to stone of the vilely paved streets of the suburbs and

brought us into what ought to have been vegetable gardens but were

called fields. The face of the flat lands was cut up in every direction

by bunds, and all the roads seem to run on the top of them.

"Never," said the Professor, driving his stick into the black soil,

"never have I imagined irrigation so perfectly controlled as this is.

Look at the \_rajbahars\_ faced with stone and fitted with sluices; look

at the water-wheels and,--phew! but they manure their fields too well."

The first circle of fields round any town is always pretty rank, but

this superfluity of scent continued throughout the country. Saving a few

parts near Dacca and Patna, the face of the land was more thickly

populated than Bengal and was worked five times better. There was no

single patch untilled, and no cultivation that was not up to the full

limit of the soil's productiveness. Onions, barley, in little ridges

between the ridges of tea, beans, rice, and a half a dozen other things

that we did not know the names of, crowded the eye already wearied with

the glare of the golden mustard. Manure is a good thing, but manual

labour is better. We saw both even to excess. When a Japanese ryot has

done everything to his field that he can possibly think of, he weeds the

barley stalk by stalk with his finger and thumb. This is true. I saw a

man doing it.

We headed through the marvellous country straight across the plain on

which Kioto stands, till we reached the range of hills on the far side,

and found ourselves mixed up with half a mile of lumber-yard.

Cultivation and water-cuts were gone, and our tireless 'rickshaws were

running by the side of a broad, shallow river, choked with logs of every

size. I am prepared to believe anything of the Japanese, but I do not

see why Nature, which they say is the same pitiless Power all the world

over, should send them their logs unsplintered by rocks, neatly barked,

and with a slot neatly cut at the end of each pole for the reception of

a rope, I have seen timber fly down the Ravi in spate, and it was hooked

out as ragged as a tooth-brush. This material comes down clean.

Consequently the slot is another miracle.

"When the day is fine," said the guide, softly, "all the people of Kioto

come to Arashima to have picnics."

"But they are always having picnics in the cherry-tree gardens. They

picnic in the tea-houses. They--they--"

"Yes, when it is a fine day, they always go somewhere and picnic."

"But why? Man isn't made to picnic."

"But why? Because it is a fine day. Englishmen say that the money of the

Japanese comes from heaven, because they always do nothing--so you

think. But look now, here is a pretty place."

The river charged down a turn in the pine-grown hills, and broke in

silver upon the timber and the remains of a light bridge washed away

some days before. On our side, and arranged so as to face the fairest

view of the young maples, stood a row of tea-houses and booths built

over the stream. The sunlight that could not soften the gloom of the

pines dwelt tenderly among the green of the maples and touched the

reaches below where the cherry blossom broke in pink foam against the

black-roofed houses of a village across the water.

There I stopped.

No. XVI

THE PARTY IN THE PARLOUR WHO PLAYED GAMES. A COMPLETE HISTORY OF ALL

MODERN JAPANESE ART; A SURVEY OF THE PAST, AND A PROPHECY OF THE FUTURE,

ARRANGED AND COMPOSED IN THE KIOTO FACTORIES.

"Oh, brave new world that has such creatures in it,

How beautiful mankind is!"

How I got to the tea-house I cannot tell. Perhaps a pretty girl waved a

bough of cherry blossom at me, and I followed the invitation. I know

that I sprawled upon the mats and watched the clouds scudding across the

hills and the logs flying down the rapids, and smelt the smell of the

raw peeled timber, and listened to the grunts of the boatmen as they

wrestled with that and the rush of the river, and was altogether happier

than it is lawful for a man to be.

The lady of the tea-house insisted upon screening us off from the other

pleasure-parties who were tiffining in the same verandah. She brought

beautiful blue screens with storks on them and slid them into grooves. I

stood it as long as I could. There were peals of laughter in the next

compartment, the pattering of soft feet, the clinking of little dishes,

and at the chinks of the screens the twinkle of diamond eyes. A whole

family had come in from Kioto for the day's pleasuring. Mamma looked

after grandmamma, and the young aunt looked after a guitar, and the two

girls of fourteen and fifteen looked after a merry little tomboy of

eight, who, when she thought of it, looked after the baby who had the

air of looking after the whole party. Grandmamma was dressed in dark

blue, mamma in blue and grey, the girls had gorgeous dresses of lilac,

fawn, and primrose crÃªpe with silk sashes, the colour of apple blossom

and the inside of a newly cut melon; the tomboy was in old gold and

russet brown; but the baby tumbled his fat little body across the floor

among the dishes in the colours of the Japanese rainbow, which owns no

crude tints. They were all pretty, all except grandmamma, who was merely

good-humoured and very bald, and when they had finished their dainty

dinner, and the brown lanquer stands, the blue and white crockery, and

the jade-green drinking-cups had been taken away, the aunt played a

little piece on the \_samisen\_, and the girls played blindman's-buff all

round the tiny room.

Flesh and blood could not have stayed on the other side of the screens.

I wanted to play too, but I was too big and too rough, and so could only

sit in the verandah, watching these dainty bits of Dresden at their

game. They shrieked and giggled and chattered and sat down on the floor

with the innocent abandon of maidenhood, and broke off to kiss the baby

when he showed signs of being overlooked. They played

puss-in-the-corner, their feet tied with blue and white handkerchiefs

because the room did not allow unfettered freedom of limb, and when they

could play no more for laughing, they fanned themselves as they lay

propped up against the blue screens,--each girl a picture no painter

could reproduce,--and I shrieked with the best of them till I rolled

off the verandah and nearly dropped into the laughing street. Was I a

fool? Then I fooled in good company, for an austere man from India--a

person who puts his faith in race-horses and believes nothing except the

Civil Code--was also at Arashima that day. I met him flushed and

excited.

"'Had a lively time," he panted, with a hundred children at his heels.

"There's a sort of roulette table here where you can gamble for cakes. I

bought the owner's stock-in-trade for three dollars and ran the Monte

Carlo for the benefit of the kids--about five thousand of 'em. Never had

such fun in my life. It beats the Simla lotteries hollow. They were

perfectly orderly till they had cleared the tables of everything except

a big sugar-tortoise. Then they rushed the bank, and I ran away."

And he was a hard man who had not played with anything as innocent as

sweetmeats for many years!

When we were all weak with laughing, and the Professor's camera was

mixed up in a tangle of laughing maidens to the confusion of his

pictures, we too ran away from the tea-house and wandered down the river

bank till we found a boat of sewn planks which poled us across the

swollen river, and landed us on a little rocky path overhanging the

water where the iris and the violet ran riot together and jubilant

waterfalls raced through the undergrowth of pine and maple. We were at

the foot of the Arashima rapids, and all the pretty girls of Kioto were

with us looking at the view. Up-stream a lonely black pine stood out

from all its fellows to peer up the bend where the racing water ran

deep in oily swirls. Down-stream the river threshed across the rocks and

troubled the fields of fresh logs on its bosom, while men in blue drove

silver-white boats gunwale-deep into the foam of its onset and hooked

the logs away. Underfoot the rich earth of the hillside sent up the

breath of the turn of the year to the maples that had already caught the

message from the fire-winds of April. Oh! it was good to be alive, to

trample the stalks of the iris, to drag down the cherry-bloom spray in a

wash of dew across the face, and to gather the violets for the mere

pleasure of heaving them into the torrent and reaching out for fairer

flowers.

"What a nuisance it is to be a slave to the camera," said the Professor,

upon whom the dumb influences of the season were working though he knew

it not.

"What a nuisance it is to be a slave to the pen," I answered, for the

spring had come to the land. I had hated the spring for seven years

because to me it meant discomfort.

"Let us go straight home and see the flowers come out in the Parks."

"Let us enjoy what lies to our hand, you Philistine." And we did till a

cloud darkened and a wind ruffled the river reaches, and we returned to

our 'rickshaws sighing with contentment.

"How many people do you suppose the land supports to the square mile?"

said the Professor, at a turn in the homeward road. He had been reading

statistics.

"Nine hundred," I said at a venture. "It's thicker set with humans than

Sarun or Behar. Say one thousand."

"Two thousand two hundred and fifty odd. Can you believe it?"

"Looking at the landscape I can, but I don't suppose India will believe

it. S'pose I write fifteen hundred?"

"They'll say you exaggerate just the same. Better stick to the true

total. Two thousand two hundred and fifty-six to the square mile, and

not a sign of poverty in the houses. How do they do it?"

I should like to know the answer to that question. Japan of my limited

view is inhabited almost entirely by little children whose duty is to

prevent their elders from becoming too frivolous. The babies do a little

work occasionally, but their parents interfere by petting them. At

Yami's hotel the attendance is in the hands of ten-year-olds because

everybody else has gone out picnicing among the cherry trees. The little

imps find time to do a man's work and to scuffle on the staircase

between whiles. My special servitor, called "The Bishop" on account of

the gravity of his appearance, his blue apron, and gaiters, is the

liveliest of the lot, but even his energy cannot account for the

Professor's statistics of population....

I have seen one sort of work among the Japanese, but it was not the kind

that makes crops. It was purely artistic. A ward of the city of Kioto is

devoted to manufactures. A manufacturer in this part of the world does

not hang out a sign. He may be known in Paris and New York: that is the

concern of the two cities. The Englishman who wishes to find his

establishment in Kioto has to hunt for him up and down slums with the

aid of a guide. I have seen three manufactories. The first was of

porcelain-ware, the second of \_cloissonnÃ©e\_, and the third of lacquer,

inlay, and bronzes. The first was behind black wooden palings, and for

external appearance might just as well have been a tripe-shop. Inside

sat the manager opposite a tiny garden four feet square in which a

papery-looking palm grew out of a coarse stoneware pot and overshadowed

a dwarfed pine. The rest of the room was filled with pottery waiting to

be packed--modern Satsuma for the most part, the sort of thing you get

at an auction.

"This made send Europe--India--America," said the manager, calmly. "You

come to see?"

He took us along a verandah of polished wood to the kilns, to the clay

vats, and the yards where the tiny "saggers" were awaiting their

complement of pottery. There are differences many and technical between

Japanese and Burslem pottery in the making, but these are of no

consequence. In the moulding house, where they were making the bodies of

Satsuma vases, the wheels, all worked by hand, ran true as a hair. The

potter sat on a clean mat with his tea-things at his side. When he had

turned out a vase-body he saw that it was good, nodded appreciatively to

himself, and poured out some tea ere starting the next one. The potters

lived close to the kilns and had nothing pretty to look at. It was

different in the painting rooms. Here in a cabinet-like house sat the

men, women, and boys who painted the designs on the vases after the

first firing. That all their arrangements were scrupulously neat is only

saying that they were Japanese; that their surroundings were fair and

proper is only saying that they were artists. A sprig of a cherry

blossom stood out defiantly against the black of the garden paling; a

gnarled pine cut the blue of the sky with its spiky splinters as it

lifted itself above the paling, and in a little pond the iris and the

horsetail nodded to the wind. The workers when at fault had only to

lift their eyes, and Nature herself would graciously supply the missing

link of a design. Somewhere in dirty England men dream of craftsmen

working under conditions which shall help and not stifle the half-formed

thought. They even form guilds and write semi-rhythmical prayers to Time

and Chance and all the other gods that they worship, to bring about the

desired end. Would they have their dream realised, let them see how they

make pottery in Japan, each man sitting on a snowy mat with loveliness

of line and colour within arm's length of him, while with downcast eyes

he--splashes in the conventional diaper of a Satsuma vase as fast as he

can! The Barbarians want Satsuma and they shall have it, if it has to be

made in Kioto one piece per twenty minutes. So much for the baser forms

of the craft!

The owner of the second establishment lived in a blackwood cabinet--it

was profanation to call it a house--alone with a bronze of priceless

workmanship, a set of blackwood furniture, and all the medals that his

work had won for him in England, France, Germany, and America. He was a

very quiet and cat-like man, and spoke almost in a whisper. Would we be

pleased to inspect the manufactory? He led us through a garden--it was

nothing in his eyes, but we stopped to admire long. Stone lanterns,

green with moss, peeped through clumps of papery bamboos where bronze

storks were pretending to feed. A dwarfed pine, its foliage trimmed to

dish-like plaques, threw its arms far across a fairy pond where the fat,

lazy carp grubbed and rooted, and a couple of eared grebes squawked at

us from the protection of the--waterbutt. So perfect was the silence of

the place that we heard the cherry blossoms falling into the water and

the lisping of the fish against the stones. We were in the very heart of

the Willow-Pattern Plate and loath to move for fear of breaking it. The

Japanese are born bower-birds. They collect water-worn stones, quaintly

shaped rocks, and veined pebbles for the ornamentation of their homes.

When they shift house they take the garden away with them--pine trees

and all--and the incoming tenant has a free hand.

Half a dozen steps took us over the path of mossy stones to a house

where the whole manufactory was at work. One room held the enamel

powders all neatly arranged in jars of scrupulous cleanliness, a few

blank copper vases ready to be operated on, an invisible bird who

whistled and whooped in his cage, and a case of gaily painted

butterflies ready for reference when patterns were wanted. In the next

room sat the manufactory--three men, five women, and two boys--all as

silent as sleep. It is one thing to read of \_cloissonnÃ©e\_ making, but

quite another to watch it being made. I began to understand the cost of

the ware when I saw a man working out a pattern of sprigs and

butterflies on a plate about ten inches in diameter. With finest silver

ribbon wire, set on edge, less than the sixteenth of an inch high, he

followed the curves of the drawing at his side, pinching the wire into

tendrils and the serrated outlines of leaves with infinite patience. A

rough touch on the raw copper-plate would have sent the pattern flying

into a thousand disconnected threads. When all was put down on the

copper, the plate would be warmed just sufficiently to allow the wires

to stick firmly to the copper, the pattern then showing in raised

lines. Followed the colouring, which was done by little boys in

spectacles. With a pair of tiniest steel chopsticks they filled from

bowls at their sides each compartment of the pattern with its proper hue

of paste. There is not much room allowed for error in filling the spots

on a butterfly's wing with avanturine enamel when the said wings are

less than an inch across. I watched the delicate play of wrist and hand

till I was wearied, and the manager showed me his patterns--terrible

dragons, clustered chrysanthemums, butterflies, and diapers as fine as

frost on a window-pane--all drawn in unerring line. "Those things are

our subjects. I compile from them, and when I want some new colours I go

and look at those dead butterflies," said he. After the enamel has been

filled in, the pot or plate goes to be fired, and the enamel bubbles all

over the boundary lines of wires, and the whole comes from the furnace

looking like delicate majolica. It may take a month to put a pattern on

the plate in outline, another month to fill in the enamel, but the real

expenditure of time does not commence till the polishing. A man sits

down with the rough article, all his tea-things, a tub of water, a

flannel, and two or three saucers full of assorted pebbles from the

brook. He does not get a wheel with tripoli, or emery, or buff. He sits

down and rubs. He rubs for a month, three months, or a year. He rubs

lovingly, with his soul in his finger ends, and little by little the

efflorescence of the fired enamel gives way, and he comes down to the

lines of silver, and the pattern in all its glory is there waiting for

him. I saw a man who had only been a month over the polishing of one

little vase five inches high. He would go on for two months. When I am

in America he will be rubbing still, and the ruby-coloured dragon that

romped on a field of lazuli, each tiny scale and whisker a separate

compartment of enamel, will be growing more lovely.

"There is also cheap \_cloissonnÃ©e\_ to be bought," said the manager, with

a smile. "We cannot make that. The vase will be seventy dollars."

I respected him for saying "cannot" instead of "do not." There spoke the

artist.

Our last visit was paid to the largest establishment in Kioto, where

boys made gold inlay on iron, sitting in camphor-wood verandahs

overlooking a garden lovelier than any that had gone before. They had

been caught young, even as is the custom in India. A real grown-up man

was employed on the horrible story, in iron, gold, and silver, of two

priests who waked up a Rain-dragon and had to run for it, all round the

edge of a big shield; but the liveliest worker of the batch was a small

fat baby who had been given a tenpenny nail, a hammer, and a block of

metal to play with, that he might soak in the art by which he would

live, through the pores of his skin. He crowed and chuckled as he

whacked. There are not many five-year-olds in England who could hammer

anything without pulping their little pink fingers. The baby had learned

how to hit straight. On the wall of the room hung a Japanese painting of

the Apotheosis of Art. It represented with fidelity all the processes of

pottery from the digging of the clay to the last firing. But all the

pencilled scorn of the artist was reserved for the closing scene, where

an Englishman, his arm round his wife's waist, was inspecting a shop

full of curios. The Japanese are not impressed with the grace of our

clothing or the beauty of our countenances. Later we beheld the

manufacture of gold lacquer, which is laid on speck by speck from an

agate palette fitted on the artist's thumb; and the carving of ivory,

which is exciting until you begin to realise that the graver never

slips.

"A lot of their art is purely mechanical" said the Professor, when he

was safe back in the hotel.

"So's a lot of ours--'specially our pictures. Only we can't be

spiritedly mechanical," I answered. "Fancy a people like the Japanese

solemnly going in for a constitution. Observe! The only two nations with

constitution worth having are the English and the Americans. The English

can only be artistic in spots and by way of the art of other

nations--Sicilian tapestries, Persian saddle-bags, Khoten carpets, and

the sweepings of pawn-brokers' shops. The Americans are artistic so long

as a few of 'em can buy their Art to keep abreast of the times with.

Spain is artistic, but she is also disturbed at intervals; France is

artistic, but she must have her revolution every twenty years for the

sake of fresh material; Russia is artistic, but she occasionally wishes

to kill her Czar, and has no sort of Government; Germany is not

artistic, because she experienced religion; and Italy is artistic,

because she did very badly. India--"

"When you have finished your verdict on the world, perhaps you'll go to

bed."

"Consequently," I continued, with scorn, "I am of opinion that a

constitution is the worst thing in the world for a people who are

blessed with souls above the average. Now the first demand of the

artistic temperament is mundane uncertainty. The second is--"

"Sleep," said the Professor, and left the room.

No. XVII

OF THE NATURE OF THE TOKAIDO AND JAPANESE RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION. ONE

TRAVELLER EXPLAINS THE LIFE OF THE SAHIB-LOG, AND ANOTHER THE ORIGIN OF

DICE. OF THE BABIES IN THE BATH TUB AND THE MAN IN D. T.

"When I went to Hell I spoke to the man on the road."

--\_Old Saw.\_

You know the story of the miner who borrowed a dictionary and returned

it with the remark that the stories, though interesting in the main,

were too various. I have the same complaint to make against Japanese

scenery--twelve hours of it by train from Nagoya to Yokohama. About

seven hundred years ago the king of those days built a sea-road which he

called the Tokaido (or else all the sea-coast was called the Tokaido,

but it's of no importance), which road endures to the present. Later on,

when the English engineer appeared, he followed the Grand Trunk more or

less closely, and the result has been a railway that any nation might

take off their hat to. The last section of the through line from Kioto

to Yokohama was only opened five days before the Professor and I

honoured it with an unofficial inspection.

The accommodation of all kinds is arranged for the benefit of the

Japanese; and this is distressing to the foreigner, who expects in a

carriage remotely resembling E. I. R. rolling-stock the conveniences of

that pea-green and very dusty old line. But it suits the Japanese

admirably: they hop out at every other station--\_pro re nata\_--and

occasionally get left behind. Two days ago they managed to kill a

Government official of high standing between a footboard and a platform,

and to-day the Japanese papers are seriously discussing the advantages

of lavatories. Far be it from me to interfere with the arrangements of

an artistic empire; but for a twelve hours' run there might at least be

arrangements.

We had left the close-packed cultivation at the foot of the hills and

were running along the shores of a great lake, all steel-blue from one

end to the other, except where it was dotted with little islands. Then

the lake turned into an arm of the sea, and we ran across it on a

cut-stone causeway, and the profligacy of the pines ceased, as the trees

had to come down from clothing dank hills, and fight with bowed head,

outstretched arms, and firmly planted feet, against the sands of the

Pacific, whose breakers were spouting and blowing not a quarter of a

mile away from the causeway. The Japs know all about forestry. They

stake down wandering sand-torrents, which are still allowed to ruin our

crops in the Hoshiarpur district, and they plug a shifting sand-dune

with wattle dams and pine seedlings as cleverly as they would pin plank

to plank. Were their forest officers trained at Nancy, or are they local

products? The stake-binding used to hold the sand is of French pattern,

and the diagonal planting out of the trees is also French.

Half a minute after the train dropped this desolate, hardly controlled

beach it raced through four or five miles of the suburbs of Patna, but

a clean and glorified Patna bowered in bamboo plantations. Then it hit a

tunnel and sailed forth into a section of the London, Brighton, and

South Coast, or whatever the line is that wants to make the Channel

tunnel. At any rate, the embankment was on the beach, and the waves

lapped the foot of it, and there was a wall of cut rock to landward.

Then we disturbed many villages of fishermen, whose verandahs gave on to

the track, and whose nets lay almost under our wheels. The railway was

still a new thing in that particular part of the world, for mothers held

up their babes to see it.

Any one can keep pace with Indian scenery, arranged as it is in reaches

of five hundred miles. This blinding alternation of field, mountain,

sea-beach, forest, bamboo grove, and rolling moor covered with azalea

blossoms was too much for me, so I sought the society of a man who had

lived in Japan for twenty years.

"Yes, Japan's an excellent country as regards climate. The rains begin

in May or latter April. June, July, and August are hot months. I've

known the thermometer as high as 86Â° at night, but I'd defy the world to

produce anything more perfect than the weather between September and

May. When one gets seedy, one goes to the hot springs in the Hakone

mountains close to Yokohama. There are heaps of places to recruit in,

but we English are a healthy lot. Of course we don't have half as much

fun as you do in India. We are a small community, and all our amusements

are organised by ourselves for our own benefit--concerts, races, and

amateur theatricals and the like. You have heaps of 'em in India,

haven't you?"

"Oh, yes!" I said, "we enjoy ourselves awfully, 'specially about this

time of the year. I quite understand, though, that small communities

dependent on themselves for enjoyment are apt to feel a little slow and

isolated--almost bored, in fact. But you were saying--?"

"Well, living is not very dear, and house rent is. A hundred dollars a

month gets you a decent house and you can get one for sixty. But house

property is down just now in Yokohama. The races are on in Yokohama

to-day and Monday. Are you going? No? You ought to go and see all the

foreigners enjoying themselves. But I suppose you've seen much better

things in India, haven't you? You haven't anything better than old

Fuji--Fujiyama. There he is now to the left of the line. What do you

think of him?"

I turned and beheld Fujiyama across a sea of upward-sloping fields and

woods. It is about fourteen thousand feet high--not very much, according

to our ideas. But fourteen thousand feet above the sea when one stands

in the midst of sixteen-thousand-foot peaks, is quite another thing from

the same height noted at sea-level in a comparatively flat country. The

labouring eye crawls up every foot of the dead crater's smooth flank,

and at the summit confesses that it has seen nothing in all the

Himalayas to match the monster. I was satisfied. Fujiyama was exactly as

I had seen it on fans and lacquer boxes; I would not have sold my sight

of it for the crest of Kinchinjunga flushed with the morning. Fujiyama

is the keynote of Japan. When you understand the one you are in a

position to learn something about the other. I tried to get information

from my fellow-traveller.

"Yes, the Japanese are building railways all over the island. What I

mean to say is that the companies are started and financed by Japs, and

they make 'em pay. I can't quite tell you where the money comes from,

but it's all to be found in the country. Japan's neither rich nor poor,

but just comfortable. I'm a merchant myself. Can't say that I altogether

like the Jap way o' doing business. You can never be certain whether the

little beggar means what he says. Give me a Chinaman to deal with. Other

men have told you that, have they? You'll find that opinion at most of

the treaty ports. But what I will say is, that the Japanese Government

is about as enterprising a Government as you could wish, and a good one

to have dealings with. When Japan has finished reconstructing herself on

the new lines, she'll be quite a respectable little Power. See if she

isn't. Now we are coming into the Hakone mountains. Watch the railway.

It's rather a curiosity."

We came into the Hakone mountains by way of some Irish scenery, a Scotch

trout-stream, a Devonshire combe, and an Indian river running masterless

over half a mile of pebbles. This was only the prelude to a set of

geological illustrations, including the terraces formed by ancient

river-beds, denudation, and half a dozen other ations. I was so busy

telling the man from Yokohama lies about the height of the Himalayas

that I did not watch things closely, till we got to Yokohama, at eight

in the evening, and went to the Grand Hotel, where all the clean and

nicely dressed people who were just going in to dinner regarded us with

scorn, and men, whom we had met on steamers aforetime, dived into

photograph books and pretended not to see us. There's a deal of human

nature in a man--got up for dinner--when a woman is watching him--and

you look like a brick-layer--even in Yokohama.

The Grand is the Semi or Cottage Grand really, but you had better go

there unless a friend tells you of a better. A long course of good luck

has spoiled me for even average hotels. They are too fine and large at

the Grand, and they don't always live up to their grandeur; unlimited

electric bells, but no one in particular to answer 'em; printed menu,

but the first comers eat all the nice things, and so forth. None the

less there are points about the Grand not to be despised. It is modelled

on the American fashion, and is but an open door through which you may

catch the first gust from the Pacific slope. Officially, there are twice

as many English as Americans in the port. Actually, you hear no

languages but French, German, or American in the street. My experience

is sadly limited, but the American I have heard up to the present, is a

tongue as distinct from English as Patagonian.

A gentleman from Boston was kind enough to tell me something about it.

He defended the use of "I guess" as a Shakespearian expression to be

found in \_Richard the Third\_. I have learned enough never to argue with

a Bostonian.

"All right," I said, "I've never heard a real American say 'I guess';

but what about the balance of your extraordinary tongue? Do you mean to

say that it has anything in common with ours except the auxiliary verbs,

the name of the Creator, and Damn? Listen to the men at the next table."

"They are Westerners," said the man from Boston, as who should say

"observe this cassowary." "They are Westerners, and if you want to make

a Westerner mad tell him he is not like an Englishman. They think they

are like the English. They are awfully thin-skinned in the West. Now in

Boston it's different. \_We\_ don't care what the English people think of

us."

The idea of the English people sitting down to think about Boston, while

Boston on the other side of the water ostentatiously "didn't care," made

me snigger. The man told me stories. He belonged to a Republic. That was

why every man of his acquaintance belonged either "to one of the first

families in Boston" or else "was of good Salem stock, and his fathers

had come over in the \_Mayflower\_." I felt as though I were moving in the

midst of a novel. Fancy having to explain to the casual stranger the

blood and breeding of the hero of every anecdote. I wonder whether many

people in Boston are like my friend with the Salem families. I am going

there to see.

"There's no romance in America--it's all hard, business facts," said a

man from the Pacific slope, after I had expressed my opinion about some

rather curious murder cases which might have been called miscarriages of

justice. Ten minutes later, I heard him say slowly, \_apropos\_ of a game

called "Round the Horn" (this is a bad game. Don't play it with a

stranger.) "Well, it's a good thing for this game that Omaha came up.

Dice were invented in Omaha, and the man who invented 'em he made a

colossal fortune."

I said nothing. I began to feel faint. The man must have noticed it.

"Six-and-twenty years ago, Omaha came up," he repeated, looking me in

the eye, "and the number of dice that have been made in Omaha since

that time is incalculable."

"There is no romance in America," I moaned like a stricken ring-dove, in

the Professor's ear. "Nothing but hard business facts, and the first

families of Boston, Massachusetts, invented dice at Omaha when it first

came up, twenty-six years ago, and that's the solid truth. What am I to

do with a people like this?"

"Are you describing Japan or America? For goodness' sake, stick to one

or the other," said the Professor.

"It wasn't my fault. There's a bit of America in the bar-room, and on my

word it's rather more interesting than Japan. Let's go across to 'Frisco

and hear some more lies."

"Let's go and look at photographs, and refrain from mixing our countries

or our drinks."

By the way, wherever you go in the Further East be humble to the white

trader. Recollect that you are only a poor beast of a buyer with a few

dirty dollars in your pockets, and you can't expect a man to demean

himself by taking them. And observe humility not only in the shops, but

elsewhere. I was anxious to know how I should cross the Pacific to

'Frisco, and very foolishly went to an office where they might, under

certain circumstances, be supposed to attend to these things. But no

anxiety troubled the sprightly soul who happened to be in the

office-chair. "There's heaps of time for finding out later on," he said,

"and anyhow, I'm going to the races this afternoon. Come later on." I

put my head in the spittoon, and crawled out under the door.

When I am left behind by the steamer it will console me to know that

that young man had a good time, and won heavily. Everybody keeps horses

in Yokohama, and the horses are nice little fat little tubs, of the

circus persuasion. I didn't go to the races, but a Calcutta man did, and

returned saying that "they ran 13-2 cart-horses, and even time for a

mile was four minutes and twenty-seven seconds." Perhaps he had lost

heavily, but I can vouch for the riding of the few gentlemen I saw

outside the animals. It is very impartial and remarkably all round.

Just when the man from Boston was beginning to tell me some more stories

about first families, the Professor developed an unholy taste for hot

springs, and bore me off to a place called Myanoshita to wash myself.

"We'll come back and look at Yokohama later on, but we must go to this

because it's so beautiful."

"I'm getting tired of scenery. It's all beautiful and it can't be

described, but these men here tell you stories about America. Did you

ever hear how the people of Carmel lynched Edward M. Petree for

preaching the gospel without making a collection at the end of the

service? There's no romance in America--it's all hard business facts.

Edward M. Petree was--"

"\_Are\_ you going to see Japan or are you not?"

I went to see. First in a train for one hour in the company of a

carriageful of howling Globe-trotters, then in a 'rickshaw for four. You

cannot appreciate scenery unless you sit in a 'rickshaw. We struck after

seven miles of modified flat--the flattery of Nature that lures you to

her more rugged heart--a mountain river all black pools and boiling

foam. Him we followed into the hills along a road cut into the crumbling

volcanic rock and entirely unmetalled. It was as hard as the Simla

cartroad, but those far hills behind Kalka have no such pine and maple,

ash and willow. It was a land of green-clothed cliff and silver

waterfall, lovely beyond the defilement of the pen. At every turn in the

road whence a view could be commanded, stood a little tea-house full of

admiring Japanese. The Jap dresses in blue because he knows that it

contrasts well with the colour of the pines. When he dies he goes to a

heaven of his own because the colouring of ours is too crude to suit

him.

We kept the valley of the glorified stream till the waters sank out of

sight down the cliff side and we could but hear them calling to one

another through the tangle of the trees. Where the woodlands were

lovelier, the gorge deepest, and the colours of the young hornbeam most

tender, they had clapped down two vile hostelries of wood and glass, and

a village that lived by selling turned wood and glass inlay things to

the tourist.

Australians, Anglo-Indians, dwellers in London and the parts beyond the

Channel were running up and down the slopes of the hotel garden, and by

their strange dresses doing all they knew to deface the landscape. The

Professor and I slid down the cliff at the back and found ourselves back

in Japan once more. Rough steps took us five or six hundred feet down

through dense jungle to the bed of that stream we had followed all the

day. The air vibrated with the rush of a hundred torrents, and whenever

the eye could pierce the undergrowth it saw a headlong stream breaking

itself on a boulder. Up at the hotel we had left the gray chill of a

November day and cold that numbed the fingers; down in the gorge we

found the climate of Bengal with real steam thrown in. Green bamboo

pipes led the hot water to a score of bathing-houses in whose verandahs

Japanese in blue and white dressing-gowns lounged and smoked. From

unseen thickets came the shouts of those who bathed, and--oh shame!

round the corner strolled a venerable old lady chastely robed in a white

bathing towel, and not too much of that. Then we went up the gorge,

mopping our brows, and staring to the sky through arches of rampant

foliage.

Japanese maids of fourteen or fifteen are not altogether displeasing to

behold. I have not seen more than twenty or thirty of them. Of these

none were in the least disconcerted at the sight of the stranger. After

all, 'twas but Brighton beach without the bathing-gowns. At the head of

the gorge the heat became greater, and the hot water more abundant. The

joints of the water-pipes on the ground gave off jets of steam; there

was vapour rising from boulders on the river-bed, and the stab of a

stick into the warm, moist soil was followed by a little pool of warm

water. The existing supply was not enough for the inhabitants. They were

mining for more in a casual and disconnected fashion. I tried to crawl

down a shaft eighteen inches by two feet in the hillside, but the steam,

which had no effect on the Japanese hide, drove me out. What happens, I

wonder, when the pick strikes the liquid, and the miner has to run or be

parboiled?

In the twilight, when we had reached upper earth once more and were

passing through the one street of Myanoshita, we saw two small fat

cherubs about three years old taking their evening tub in a barrel sunk

under the eaves of a shop. They feigned great fear, peeping at us behind

outspread fingers, attempting futile dives, and trying to hide one

behind the other in a hundred poses of spankable chubbiness, while their

father urged them to splash us. It was the prettiest picture of the day,

and one worth coming even to the sticky, paint-reeking hotel to see.

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He was dressed in a black frock-coat, and at first I took him for a

missionary as he mooned up and down the empty corridor.

"I have been under a ban for three days," he whispered in a husky voice,

"through no fault of mine--no fault of mine. They told me to take the

third watch, but they didn't give me a printed notification which I

always require, and the manager of this place says that whisky would

hurt me. Through no fault of mine, God knows, no fault of mine!"

I do not like being shut up in an echoing wooden hotel next door to a

gentleman of the marine persuasion, who is just recovering from D. T.,

and who talks to himself all through the dark hours.

No. XVIII

CONCERNING A HOT-WATER TAP, AND SOME GENERAL CONVERSATION.

"Always speak to the stranger. If he doesn't shoot, the chances

are he'll answer you."--\_Western Proverb.\_

It is a far cry from Myanoshita to Michni and Mandalay. That is why we

have met men from both those stations, and have spent a cheerful time

talking about dacoits and the Black Mountain Expedition. One of the

advantages of foreign travel is that one takes such a keen interest in,

and hears so much about, Home. Truly, they change their trains, but not

their train of thought, who run across the sea.

"This is a most extraordinary place," said the Professor, red as a

boiled lobster. "You sit in your bath and turn on the hot or cold

spring, as you choose, and the temperature is phenomenal. Let's go and

see where it all comes from, and then let's go away."

There is a place called the Burning Mountain five miles in the hills.

There went we, through unbroken loveliness of bamboo-copse, pine wood,

grass downs, and pine wood again, while the river growled below. In the

end we found an impoverished and second-hand Hell, set out orderly on

the side of a raw and bleeding hillside. It looked as though a

match-factory had been whelmed by a landslip. Water, in which bad eggs

had been boiled, stood in blister-lipped pools, and puffs of thin white

smoke went up from the labouring under-earth. Despite the smell and the

sulphur incrustations on the black rocks, I was disappointed, till I

felt the heat of the ground, which was the heat of a boiler-sheathing.

They call the mountain extinct. If untold tons of power, cased in a few

feet of dirt, be the Japanese notion of extinction, glad I am that I

have not been introduced to a lively volcano. Indeed, it was not an

overweening notion of my own importance, but a tender regard for the

fire-crust below, and a dread of starting the machinery by accident,

that made me step so delicately, and urge return upon the Professor.

"Huh! It's only the boiler of your morning bath. All the sources of the

springs are here," said he.

"I don't care. Let 'em alone. Did you never hear of a boiler bursting?

Don't prod about with your stick in that amateur way. You'll turn on the

tap."

When you have seen a burning mountain you begin to appreciate Japanese

architecture. It is not solid. Every one is burned out once or twice

casually. A business isn't respectable until it has received its baptism

of fire. But fire is of no importance. The one thing that inconveniences

a Jap is an earthquake. Consequently, he arranges his house that it

shall fall lightly as a bundle of broom upon his head. Still further

safeguarding himself, he has no foundations, but the corner-posts rest

on the crowns of round stones sunk in the earth. The corner-posts take

the wave of the shock, and, though the building may give way like an

eel-trap, nothing very serious happens. This is what epicures of

earthquakes aver. I wait for mine own experiences, but not near a

suspected district such as the Burning Mountain.

It was only to escape from one terror to another that I fled Myanoshita.

A blue-breeched dwarf thrust me into a dwarf 'rickshaw on spidery

wheels, and down the rough road that we had taken four hours to climb

ran me clamorously in half an hour. Take all the parapets off the Simla

Road and leave it alone for ten years. Then run down the steepest four

miles of any section,--not steeper than the drop to the old Gaiety

Theatre,--behind one man!

"We couldn't get six hill-men to take us in this style," shouted the

Professor as he spun by, his wheels kicking like a duck's foot, and the

whole contraption at an angle of thirty. I am proud to think that not

even sixty hill-men would have gambolled with a sahib in that

disgraceful manner. Nor would any tramway company in the Real East have

run its cars to catch a train that used to start last year, but

now--rest its soul--is as dead as Queen Anne. This thing a queer little

seven-mile tramway accomplished with much dignity. It owned a

first-class car and a second-class car,--two horses to each,--and it ran

them with a hundred yards headway--the one all but empty, and the other

half full. When the very small driver could not control his horses,

which happened on the average once every two minutes, he did not waste

time by pulling them in. He screwed down the brake and laughed--possibly

at the company who had paid for the very elaborate car. Yet he was an

artistic driver. He wore no Philistine brass badge. Between the

shoulders of his blue jerkin were done in white, three railheads in a

circle, and on the skirts as many tram-wheels conventionalised. Only

the Japanese know how to conventionalise a tram-wheel or make a

key-pattern of railheads. Though we took twelve hours to cover the

thirty miles that separated us from Yokohama, we admitted this much

while we waited for our train in a village by the sea. A village of any

size is about three miles long in the main street. Villages with a

population of more than ten thousand souls take rank as towns.

"And yet," said a man at Yokohama that night, "you have not seen the

densest population. That's away in the western \_kens\_--districts, as you

call them. The folk really are crowded thereabouts, but virtually

poverty does not exist in the country. You see, an agricultural labourer

can maintain himself and his family, as far as rice goes, for four cents

a day, and the price of fish is nominal. Rice now costs a hundred pounds

to the dollar. What do you make it by Indian standards? From twenty to

twenty-five seers the rupee. Yes, that's about it. Well, he gets,

perhaps, three dollars and a-half a month. The people spend a good deal

in pleasuring. They must enjoy themselves. I don't think they save much.

How do they invest their savings? In jewellery? No, not exactly; though

you'll find that the women's hair-pins, which are about the only

jewellery they wear, cost a good deal. Seven and eight dollars are paid

for a good hair-pin, and of course jade may cost anything. What the

women really lock their money up in is in their \_obis\_--the things you

call sashes. An \_obi\_ is ten or twelve yards long, and I've known them

sold wholesale for fifty dollars each. Every woman above the poorest

class has at least one good dress of silk and an \_obi\_. Yes, all their

savings go in dress, and a handsome dress is always worth having. The

western \_kens\_ are the richest taken all round. A skilled mechanic there

gets a dollar or dollar and a-half a day, and, as you know,

lacquer-workers and inlayers--artists--get two. There's enough money in

Japan for all current expenses. They won't borrow any for railroads.

They raise it 'emselves. Most progressive people the Japanese are as

regards railways. They make them very cheaply, much more cheaply than

any European lines. I've some experience, and I take it that two

thousand pounds a mile is the average cost of construction. Not on the

Tokaido, of course--the line that you came up by. That's a Government

line, State built, and a very expensive one. I'm speaking of the

Japanese Railway Company with a mileage of three hundred, and the line

from KobÃ© south, and the Kinshin line in the Southern island. There are

lots of little companies with a few score miles of line, but all the

companies are extending. The reason why the construction is so cheap is

the nature of the land. There's no long haulage of rails, because you

can nearly always find a creek running far up into the country, and dump

out your rails within a few miles of the place where they are wanted.

Then, again, all your timber lies to your hand, and your staff are Japs.

There are a few European engineers, but they are quite the heads of the

departments, and I believe if they were cleared out to-morrow, the Japs

would go on building their lines. They know how to make 'em pay. One

line started on a State guarantee of eight per cent. It hasn't called

for the guarantee yet. It's making twelve per cent on its own hook.

There's a very heavy freight traffic in wood and provisions for the big

towns, and there's a local traffic that you can have no idea of unless

you've watched it. The people seem to move in twenty-mile circles for

business or pleasure--'specially pleasure. Oh, I tell you, Japan will be

a gridiron of railways before long. In another month or two you'll be

able to travel nearly seven hundred miles on and by the Tokaido line

alone from one end to the other, of the central islands. Getting from

east to west is harder work. The backbone-hills of the country are just

cruel, and it will be some time before the Japs run many lines across.

But they'll do it, of course. Their country must go forward.

"If you want to know anything about their politics, I'm afraid I can't

help you much. They are, so to speak, drunk with Western liquor, and are

sucking it up by the hogshead. In a few years they will see how much of

what we call civilisation they really want, and how much they can

discard. 'Tisn't as if they had to learn the arts of life or how to make

themselves comfortable. They knew all that long ago. When their railway

system is completed, and they begin to understand their new

Constitution, they will have learned as much as we can teach 'em. That's

my opinion; but it needs time to understand this country. I've been a

matter of eight or ten years in it, and my views aren't worth much. I've

come to know some of the old families that used to be of the feudal

nobility. They keep themselves to themselves and live very quietly. I

don't think you'll find many of them in the official classes. Their one

fault is that they entertain far beyond their means. They won't receive

you informally and take you into their houses. They raise dancing-girls,

or take you to their club and have a big feed. They don't introduce you

to their wives, and they haven't yet given up the rule of making the

wife eat after the husband. Like the native of India you say? Well, I am

very fond of the Jap; but I suppose he \_is\_ a native any way you look at

him. You wouldn't think that he is careless in his workmanship and

dishonest. A Chinaman, on an average, is out and away a bigger rogue

than a Jap; but he has sense enough to see that honesty is the best

policy, and to act by that light. A Jap will be dishonest just to save

himself trouble. He's like a child that way."

How many times have I had to record such an opinion as the foregoing?

Everywhere the foreigner says the same thing of the neat-handed, polite

little people that live among flowers and babies, and smoke tobacco as

mild as their own manners. I am sorry; but when you come to think of it,

a race without a flaw would be perfect. And then all the other nations

of the earth would rise up and hammer it to pieces. And then there would

be no Japan.

"I'll give you a day to think over things generally," said the

Professor. "After that we'll go to Nikko and Tokio. Who has not seen

Nikko does not know how to pronounce the world 'beautiful.'"

Yokohama is not the proper place to arrange impressions in. The Pacific

Ocean knocks at your door, asking to be looked at; the Japanese and

American men-of-war demand serious attention through a telescope; and if

you wander about the corridors of the Grand Hotel, you stop to play with

Spanish Generals, all gold lace and spurs, or are captured by touts for

curio-shops. It is not a nice experience to find a Sahib in a Panama hat

handing you the card of his firm for all the world like a Delhi

silk-merchant. You are inclined to pity that man, until he sits down,

gives you a cigar, and tells you all about his diseases, his past career

in California, where he was always making money and always losing it,

and his hopes for the future. You see then that you are entering upon a

new world. Talk to every one you meet, if they show the least

disposition to talk to you, and you will gather, as I have done, a host

of stories that will be of use to you hereafter. Unfortunately, they are

not all fit for publication. When I tore myself away from the

distractions of the outer world, and was just sitting down to write

seriously on the Future of Japan, there entered a fascinating man, with

heaps of money, who had collected Indian and Japanese curios all his

life, and was now come to this country to get some old books which his

collection lacked. Can you imagine a more pleasant life than his

wanderings over the earth, with untold special knowledge to back each

signature of his cheque-book?

In five minutes he had carried me far away from the clattering, fidgetty

folk around, to a quiet world where men meditated for three weeks over a

bronze, and scoured all Japan for a sword-guard designed by a great

artist and--were horribly cheated in the end.

"Who is the best artist in Japan now?" I asked.

"He died in Tokio, last Friday, poor fellow, and there is no one to take

his place. His name was K----, and as a general rule he could never be

persuaded to work unless he was drunk. He did his best pictures when he

was drunk."

"\_Ãmu.\_ Artists are never drunk."

"Quite right. I'll show you a sword-guard that he designed. All the

best artists out here do a lot of designing. K---- used to fritter away

his time on designs for old friends. Had he stuck to pictures he could

have made twice as much. But he never turned out potboilers. When you go

to Tokio, make it your business to get two little books of his called

\_Drunken Sketches\_--pictures that he did, when he was--\_Ã©mu\_. There is

enough dash and go in them to fill half a dozen studios. An English

artist studied under him for some time. But K----'s touch was not

communicable, though he might have taught his pupil something about

technique. Have you ever come across one of K----'s crows? You could

tell it anywhere. He could put all the wicked thoughts that ever came

into the mind of a crow--and a crow is first cousin to the Devil--on a

piece of paper six inches square, with a brush of Indian ink and two

turns of his wrist. Look at the sword-guard I spoke of. How is that for

feeling?"

On a circular piece of iron four inches in diameter and pierced by the

pole for the tang of the blade, poor K----, who died last Friday, had

sketched the figure of a coolie trying to fold up a cloth which was

bellying to a merry breeze--not a cold wind, but a sportive summer gust.

The coolie was enjoying the performance, and so was the cloth. It would

all be folded up in another minute and the coolie would go on his way

with a grin.

This thing had K---- conceived, and the faithful workman executed, with

the lightest touches of the graver, to the end that it might lie in a

collector's cabinet in London.

"Wah! Wah!" I said, and returned it reverently. "It would kill a man who

could do that to live after his touch had gone. Well for him he

died--but I wish I had seen him. Show me some more."

"I've got a painting by Hokusai--the great artist who lived at the end

of the last century and the beginning of this. Even \_you\_ have heard of

Hokusai, haven't you?"

"A little. I have heard it was impossible to get a genuine painting with

his signature attached."

"That's true; but I've shown this one to the Japanese Government expert

in pictures--the man the Mikado consults in cases of doubt--to the first

European authority on Japanese art, and of course I have my own opinion

to back the signed guarantee of the seller. Look!"

He unrolled a silk-scroll and showed me the figure of a girl in pale

blue and grey crÃªpe, carrying in her arms a bundle of clothes that, as

the tub behind her showed, had just been washed. A dark-blue

handkerchief was thrown lightly over the left forearm, shoulder, and

neck, ready to tie up the clothes when the bundle should be put down.

The flesh of the right arm showed through the thin drapery of the

sleeve. The right hand merely steadied the bundle from above; the left

gripped it firmly from below. Through the stiff blue-black hair showed

the outline of the left ear.

That there was enormous elaboration in the picture, from the

ornamentation of the hair-pins to the graining of the clogs, did not

strike me till after the first five minutes, when I had sufficiently

admired the certainty of touch.

"Recollect there is no room for error in painting on silk," said the

proud possessor. "The line must stand under any circumstances. All that

is possible before painting is a little dotting with charcoal, which is

rubbed off with a feather-brush. Did he know anything about drapery or

colour or the shape of a woman? Is there any one who could teach him

more if he were alive to-day?"

Then we went to Nikko.

No. XIX

THE LEGEND OF NIKKO FORD AND THE STORY OF THE AVOIDANCE OF MISFORTUNE.

A rose-red city, half as old as Time.

Five hours in the train took us to the beginning of a 'rickshaw journey

of twenty-five miles. The guide unearthed an aged cart on Japanese

lines, and seduced us into it by promises of speed and comfort beyond

anything that a 'rickshaw could offer. Never go to Nikko in a cart. The

town of departure is full of pack-ponies who are not used to it, and

every third animal tries to get a kick at his friends in the shafts.

This renders progress sufficiently exciting till the bumpsomeness of the

road quenches all emotions save one. Nikko is reached through one avenue

of \_cryptomerias\_--cypress-like trees eighty feet high, with red or dull

silver trunks and hearse-plume foliage of darkest green. When I say one

avenue, I mean one continuous avenue twenty-five miles long, the trees

so close to each other throughout that their roots interlace and form a

wall of wood on either side of the sunken road. Where it was necessary

to make a village along the line of march,--that is to say once every

two or three miles,--a few of the giants had been wrenched out--as teeth

are wrenched from a full-planted jaw--to make room for the houses. Then

the trees closed up as before to mount guard over the road. The banks

between which we drove were alight with azaleas, camelias, and violets.

"Glorious! Stupendous! Magnificent!" sang the Professor and I in chorus

for the first five miles, in the intervals of the bumps. The avenue took

not the least notice of our praise except by growing the trees even more

closely together. "Vistas of pillared shade" are very pleasant to read

about, but on a cold day the ungrateful heart of man could cheerfully

dispense with a mile or two of it if that would shorten the journey. We

were blind to the beauty around; to the files of pack-ponies with manes

like hearth-brooms and the tempers of Eblis kicking about the path; to

the pilgrims with blue and white handkerchiefs on their heads, enviable

silver-grey leggings on their feet, and Buddha-like babies on their

backs; to the trim country drays pulled by miniature cart-horses

bringing down copper from the mines and \_saki\_ from the hills; to the

colour and movement in the villages where all the little children

shouted "Ohio's!" and all the old people laughed. The grey tree-trunks

marched us solemnly along over that horrid bad road which had been

mended with brushwood, and after five hours we got Nikko in the shape of

a long village at the foot of a hill, and capricious Nature, to reward

us for our sore bones, laughed on the instant in floods of sunshine. And

upon what a mad scene did the light fall! The \_cryptomerias\_ rose in

front of us a wall of green darkness, a tearing torrent ran deep-green

over blue boulders, and between stream and trees was thrown a blood-red

bridge--the sacred bridge of red lacquer that no foot save the Mikado's

may press.

Very cunning artists are the Japanese. Long ago a great-hearted king

came to Nikko River and looked across at the trees, up-stream at the

torrent and the hills whence it came, and down-stream at the softer

outlines of the crops and spurs of wooded mountains. "It needs only a

dash of colour in the foreground to bring this all together," said he,

and he put a little child in a blue and white dressing-gown under the

awful trees to judge the effect. Emboldened by his tenderness, an aged

beggar ventured to ask for alms. Now it was the ancient privilege of the

great to try the temper of their blades upon beggars and such cattle.

Mechanically the king swept off the old man's head, for he did not wish

to be disturbed. The blood spurted across the granite slabs of the

river-ford in a sheet of purest vermilion. The king smiled. Chance had

solved the problem for him. "Build a bridge here," he said to the court

carpenter, "of just such a colour as that stuff on the stones. Build

also a bridge of grey stone close by, for I would not forget the wants

of my people." So he gave the little child across the stream a thousand

pieces of gold and went his way. He had composed a landscape. As for the

blood, they wiped it up and said no more about it; and that is the story

of Nikko Bridge. You will not find it in the guide-books.

I followed the voice of the river through a rickety toy-village, across

some rough bottom-land, till, crossing a bridge, I found myself among

lichened stones, scrub, and the blossoms of spring. A hillside, steep

and wooded as the flanks of the red Aravallis, rose on my left; on my

right, the eye travelled from village to cropland, crop to towering

cypress, and rested at last on the cold blue of an austere hill-top

encircled by streaks of yet unmelted snow. The Nikko hotel stood at the

foot of this hill; and the time of the year was May. Then a sparrow came

by with a piece of grass in her beak, for she was building her nest; and

I knew that the spring was come to Nikko. One is so apt to forget the

changes of the year over there with you in India.

Sitting in a solemn line on the banks of the river were fifty or sixty

cross-legged images which the untrained eye put down immediately as so

many small Buddhas. They had all, even when the lichen had cloaked them

with leprosy, the calm port and unwinking regard of the Lord of the

World. They are not Buddhas really, but other things--presents from

forgotten great men to dead and gone institutions, or else memorials of

ancestors. The guide-book will tell you. They were a ghostly crew. As I

examined them more closely I saw that each differed from the other. Many

of them held in their joined arms a little store of river pebbles,

evidently put there by the pious. When I inquired the meaning of the

gift from a stranger who passed, he said: "Those so distinguished are

images of the God who Plays with Little Children up in the Sky. He tells

them stories and builds them houses of pebbles. The stones are put in

his arms either that he may not forget to amuse the babies or to prevent

his stock running low."

I have no means of telling whether the stranger spoke the truth, but I

prefer to believe that tale as gospel truth. Only the Japanese could

invent the God who Plays with Little Children. Thereafter the images

took a new aspect in my eyes and were no longer "GrÃ¦co-Buddhist

sculptures," but personal friends. I added a great heap of pebbles to

the stock of the cheeriest among them. His bosom was ornamented with

small printed slips of prayers which gave him the appearance of a

disreputable old parson with his bands in disorder. A little further up

the bank of the river was a rough, solitary rock hewn with what men

called a Shinto shrine. I knew better: the thing was Hindu, and I looked

at the smooth stones on every side for the familiar dab of red paint. On

a flat rock overhanging the water were carved certain characters in

Sanscrit, remotely resembling those on a Thibetan prayer-wheel. Not

comprehending these matters, and grateful that I had brought no

guide-book with me, I clambered down to the lip of the river--now

compressed into a raging torrent. Do you know the Strid near

Bolton--that spot where the full force of the river is pent up in two

yards' breadth? The Nikko Strid is an improvement upon the Yorkshire

one. The blue rocks are hollowed like soapstone by the rush of the

water. They rise above head-level and in spring are tufted with azalea

blossom. The stranger of the godlings came up behind me as I basked on a

boulder. He pointed up the little gorge of rocks, "Now if I painted that

as it stands, every critic in the papers would say I was a liar."

The mad stream came down directly from a blue hill blotched with pink,

through a sky-blue gorge also pink-blotched. An obviously impossible

pine mounted guard over the water. I would give much to see an accurate

representation of that view. The stranger departed growling over some

hidden grief--connected with the Academy perhaps.

Hounded on by the Professor, the guide sought me by banks of the river

and bade me "come and see temples." Then I fairly and squarely cursed

all temples, being stretched at my ease on some warm sand in the hollow

of a rock, and ignorant as the grass-shod cattle that tramped the

further bank. "Very fine temples," said the guide, "you come and see. By

and by temple be shut up because priests make half an hour more time."

Nikko time is half an hour ahead of the standard, because the priests of

the temples have discovered that travellers arriving at three p.m. try

to do all the temples before four--the official-hour of closing. This

defrauds the church of her dues, so her servants put the clock on, and

Nikko, knowing naught of the value of time, is well content.

When I cursed the temples I did a foolish thing, and one for which this

poor pen can never make fitting reparation. We went up a hill by way of

a flight of grey stone slabs. The \_cryptomerias\_ of the Nikko road were

as children to the giants that overshadowed us here. Between their

iron-grey boles were flashes of red--the blood-red of the Mikado's

bridge. That great king who killed the beggar at the ford had been well

pleased with the success of his experiment. Passing under a mighty stone

arch we came into a square of splendour alive with the sound of hammers.

Thirty or forty men were tapping the pillars and steps of a carnelian

shrine heavy with gold. "That," said the guide, impassively, "is a

godown. They are renewing the lacquer. First they extract it."

Have you ever "extracted" lacquer from wood? I smote the foot of a

pillar with force, and after half a dozen blows chipped off one small

fragment of the stuff, in texture like red horn. Betraying no surprise,

I demanded the name of a yet more magnificent shrine across the

courtyard. It was red lacquered like the others, but above its main door

were carved in open work three apes--one with his hands to his ears,

another covering his mouth, and a third blinding his eyes.

"That place," said the guide, "used to be a stable when the Daimio kept

his horses there. The monkeys are the three who hear no wrong, say no

wrong, and see no wrong."

"Of course," I said. "What a splendid device for a stable where the

grooms steal the grain!" I was angry because I had grovelled before a

godown and a stable, though the round world cannot hold their equals.

We entered a temple, or a tomb, I do not know which, through a gateway

of carven pillars. Eleven of them bore a running pattern of trefoil--the

apex pointing earthward--the twelfth had its pattern reversed.

"Make 'em all the same--no good," said the guide, emphatically.

"Something sure to come bad by an' by. Make one different all right.

Save him so. Nothing happen then."

Unless I am mistaken, that voluntarily breaking of the set was the one

sacrifice that the designer had made to the great Gods above who are so

jealous of the craft of men. For the rest he had done what he

pleased--even as a god might have done--with the wood in its gleaming

lacquer sheath, with enamel and inlay and carving and bronze, hammered

work, and the work of the inspired chisel. When he went to his account

he saved himself from the jealousy of his judges, by pointing to the

trefoil pillars for proof that he was only a weak mortal and in no

sense their equals. Men say that never man has given complete drawings,

details, or descriptions of the temples of Nikko. Only a German would

try, and he would fail in spirit. Only a Frenchman could succeed in

spirit, but he would be inaccurate. I have a recollection of passing

through a door with \_cloisonnÃ©e\_ hinges, with a golden lintel and red

lacquer jambs, with panels of tortoise-shell lacquer and clamps of

bronze tracery. It opened into a half-lighted hall on whose blue ceiling

a hundred golden dragons romped and spat fire. A priest moved about the

gloom with noiseless feet, and showed me a pot-bellied lantern four feet

high, that the Dutch traders of old time had sent as a present to the

temple. There were posts of red lacquer dusted over with gold, to

support the roof. On one post lay a rib of lacquer, six inches thick,

that had been carved or punched over with high relief carvings and had

set harder than crystal.

The temple steps were of black lacquer, and the frames of the sliding

screens red. That money, lakhs and lakhs of money, had been lavished on

the wonder impressed me but little. I wished to know who were the men

that, when the \_cryptomerias\_ were saplings, had sat down and spent

their lives on a niche or corner of the temple, and dying passed on the

duty of adornment to their sons, though neither father nor child hoped

to see the work completed. This question I asked the guide, who plunged

me in a tangle of Daimios and Shoguns, all manifestly extracted from a

guide-book.

After a while the builder's idea entered into my soul.

He had said: "Let us build blood-red chapels in a Cathedral." So they

planted the Cathedral three hundred years ago, knowing that tree-boles

would make the pillars and the sky the roof.

Round each temple stood a small army of priceless bronze or stone

lanterns, stamped, as was everything else, with the three leaves that

make the Daimio's crest. The lanterns were dark green or lichened grey,

and in no way lightened the gloom of the red. Down below, by the sacred

bridge, I believed red was a joyous colour. Up the hillside under the

trees and the shadow of the temple eaves I saw that it was the hue of

sorrow. When the great king killed the beggar at the ford he did not

laugh, as I have said. He was very sorry, and said: "Art is Art, and

worth any sacrifice. Take that corpse away and pray for the naked soul."

Once, in one of the temple courtyards, nature dared to rebel against the

scheme of the hillside. Some forest tree, all unimpressed by the

\_cryptomerias\_, had tossed a torrent of tenderest pink flowers down the

face of a grey retaining wall that guarded a cutting. It was as if a

child had laughed aloud at some magnificence it could not understand.

"You see that cat?" said the guide, pointing out a pot-bellied pussy

painted above a door. "That is the Sleeping Cat. The artist he paint it

left-handed. We are proud of that cat."

"And did they let him remain left-handed after he had painted that

thing?"

"Oh yes. You see he was always left-handed."

The infinite tenderness of the Japanese towards their children extends,

it would seem, even to artists. Every guide will take you to see the

Sleeping Cat. Don't go. It is bad. Coming down the hill, I learned that

all Nikko was two feet under snow in the winter, and while I was trying

to imagine how fierce red, white, and black-green would look under the

light of a winter sun I met the Professor murmuring expletives of

admiration.

"What have you done? What have you seen?" said he.

"Nothing. I've accumulated a lot of impressions of no use to any one but

the owner."

"Which means you are going to slop over for the benefit of the people in

India," said the Professor.

And the notion so disgusted me that I left Nikko that very afternoon,

the guide clamouring that I had not seen half its glories. "There is a

lake," he said; "there are mountains. You must go see!"

"I will return to Tokio and study the modern side of Japan. This place

annoys me because I do not understand it."

"Yet I am \_the\_ good guide of Yokohama," said the guide.

No. XX

SHOWS HOW I GROSSLY LIBELLED THE JAPANESE ARMY, AND EDITED A CIVIL AND

MILITARY GAZETTE WHICH IS NOT IN THE LEAST TRUSTWORTHY.

"And the Duke said, 'Let there be cavalry,' and there were

cavalry. And he said, 'Let them be slow,' and they were slow,

d----d slow; and the Japanese Imperial Horse called he them."

I was wrong. I know it. I ought to have clamoured at the doors of the

Legation for a pass to see the Imperial Palace. I ought to have

investigated Tokio and called upon some of the political leaders of the

Liberal and Radical parties. There are a hundred things which I ought to

have done, but somehow or other the bugles began to blare through the

chill of the morning, and I heard the tramp of armed men under my

window. The parade-ground was within a stone's throw of the Tokio hotel;

the Imperial troops were going on parade. Would \_you\_ have bothered your

head about politics or temples? I ran after them.

It is rather difficult to get accurate information about the Japanese

army. It seems to be in perpetual throes of reorganisation. At present,

so far as one can gather, it is about one hundred and seventy thousand

strong. Everybody has to serve for three years, but payment of one

hundred dollars will shorten the term of service by one year at least.

This is what a man who had gone through the mill told me. He capped his

information with this verdict: "English army no use. Only navy any

good. Have seen two hundred English army. No use."

On the parade-ground they had a company of foot and a wing of what, for

the sake of brevity, I will call cavalry under instruction. The former

were being put through some simple evolutions in close order; the latter

were variously and singularly employed. To the former I took off the hat

of respect; at the latter I am ashamed to say I pointed the finger of

derision. But let me try to describe what I saw. The likeness of the Jap

infantryman to the Gurkha grows when you see him in bulk. Thanks to

their wholesale system of conscription the quality of conscripts varies

immensely. I have seen scores of persons with spectacles whom it were

base flattery to call soldiers, and who I hope were in the medical or

commissariat departments. Again I have seen dozens of bull-necked,

deep-chested, flat-backed, thin-flanked little men who were as good as a

colonel commanding could desire. There was a man of the 2d Infantry whom

I met at an up-country railway station. He carried just the proper

amount of insolent swagger that a soldier should, refused to answer any

questions of mine, and parted the crowd round him without ceremony. A

Gurkha of the Prince of Wales' Own could not have been trimmer. In the

crush of a ticket-collecting--we both got out together--I managed to run

my hand over that small man's forearm and chest. They must have a very

complete system of gymnastics in the Japanese army, and I would have

given much to have stripped my friend and seen how he peeled. If the 2d

Infantry are equal to sample, they are good.

The men on parade at Tokio belonged either to the 4th or the 9th, and

turned out with their cowskin valises strapped, but I think not packed.

Under full kit, such as I saw on the sentry at Osaka Castle, they ought

to be much too heavily burdened. Their officers were as miserable a set

of men as Japan could furnish--spectacled, undersized even for Japan,

hollow-backed and hump-shouldered. They squeaked their words of command

and had to trot by the side of their men to keep up with them. The Jap

soldier has the long stride of the Gurkha, and he doubles with the easy

lope of the 'rickshaw coolie. Throughout the three hours that I watched

them they never changed formation but once, when they doubled in pairs

across the plain, their rifles at the carry. Their step and intervals

were as good as those of our native regiments, but they wheeled rather

promiscuously, and were not checked for this by their officers. So far

as my limited experience goes, their formation was not Ours, but

continental. The words of command were as beautifully unintelligible as

anything our parade-grounds produce; and between them the officers of

each half-company vehemently harangued their men, and shook their swords

at 'em in distinctly unmilitary style. The precision of their movements

was beyond praise. They enjoyed three hours of steady drill, and in the

rare intervals when they stood easy to draw breath I looked for

slackness all down the ranks, inasmuch as "standing easy" is the crucial

test of men after the first smartness of the morning has worn off. They

stood "easy," neither more nor less, but never a hand went to a shoe or

stock or button while they were so standing. When they knelt, still in

this queer column of company, I understood the mystery of the

long-sword bayonet which has puzzled me sorely. I had expected to see

the little fellows lifted into the air as the bayonet-sheath took

ground; but they were not. They kicked it sideways as they dropped. All

the same, the authorities tie men to the bayonets instead of bayonets to

the men. When at the double there was no grabbing at the cartridge pouch

with one hand or steadying the bayonet with the other, as may be seen

any day at running-firing on Indian ranges. They ran cleanly--as our

Gurkhas run.

It was an unchristian thought, but I would have given a good deal to see

that company being blooded on an equal number of Our native

infantry--just to know how they would work. If they have pluck, and

there is not much in their past record to show that they have not, they

ought to be first-class enemies. Under British officers instead of the

little anatomies at present provided, and with a better rifle, they

should be as good as any troops recruited east of Suez. I speak here

only for the handy little men I saw. The worst of conscription is that

it sweeps in such a mass of fourth and fifth-rate citizens who, though

they may carry a gun, are likely, by their own excusable ineptitude, to

do harm to the morale and set-up of a regiment. In their walks abroad

the soldiery never dream of keeping step. They tie things to their

side-arms, they carry bundles, they slouch, and dirty their uniforms.

And so much for a raw opinion on Japanese infantry. The cavalry were

having a picnic on the other side of the parade-ground--circling right

and left by sections, trying to do something with a troop, and so forth.

I would fain believe that the gentlemen I saw were recruits. But they

wore all their arms, and their officers were just as clever as

themselves. Half of them were in white fatigue-dress and flat cap,--and

wore half-boots of brown leather with short hunting-spurs and black

straps; no chains. They carried carbine and sword--the sword fixed to

the man, and the carbine slung over the back. No martingales, but

breastplates and crupper, a huge, heavy saddle, with single hide-girth,

over two \_numdahs\_, completed the equipment which a thirteen-hand pony,

all mane and tail, was trying to get rid of. When you thrust a two-pound

bit and bridoon into a small pony's mouth, you hurt his feelings. When

the riders wear, as did my friends, white worsted gloves, they cannot

take a proper hold of the reins. When they ride with both hands, sitting

well on the mount's neck, knuckles level with its ears and the stirrup

leathers as short as they can be, the chances of the pony getting rid of

the rider are manifestly increased. Never have I seen such a wild dream

of equitation as the Tokio parade-ground showed. Do you remember the

picture in \_Alice in Wonderland\_, just before Alice found the Lion and

the Unicorn; when she met the armed men coming through the woods? I

thought of that, and I thought of the White Knight in the same classic,

and I laughed aloud. Here were a set of very fair ponies, sure-footed as

goats, mostly entires, and full of go. Under Japanese weights they would

have made very thorough mounted infantry. And here was this blindly

imitative nation trying to turn them into heavy cavalry. As long as the

little beasts were gravely trotting in circles they did not mind their

work. But when it came to slashing at the Turk's head they objected

very much indeed. I affiliated myself to a section who, armed with long

wooden swords, were enjoying some Turk's-heading. Out started a pony at

the gentlest of canters, while the rider bundled all the reins into one

hand, and held his sword like a lance. Then the pony shied a little shy,

shook his shaggy head, and began to passage round the Turk's head. There

was no pressure of knee or rein to tell him what was wanted. The man on

top began kicking with the spurs from shoulder to rump, and shaking up

the ironmongery in the poor brute's mouth. The pony could neither rear,

nor kick, nor buck; but it shook itself free of the incubus who slid

off. Three times I saw this happen. The catastrophe didn't rise to the

dignity of a fall. It was the blundering collapse of incompetence plus

worsted gloves, two-handed riding, and a haystack of equipment. Very

often the pony went at the post, and the man delivered a back-handed cut

at the Turk's head which nearly brought him out of his world-too-wide

saddle. Again and again this solemn performance was repeated. I can

honestly say that the ponies are very willing to break rank and leave

their companions, which is what an English troop-horse fails in; but I

fancy this is more due to the urgent private affairs of the pony than

any skill in training. The troops charged once or twice in a terrifying

canter. When the men wished to stop they leaned back and tugged, and the

pony put his head to the ground, and bored all he knew. They charged me,

but I was merciful, and forebore to empty half the saddles, as I

assuredly could have done by throwing up my arms and yelling "Hi!" The

saddest thing of all was the painful conscientiousness displayed by all

the performers in the circus. They had to turn these rats into cavalry.

They knew nothing about riding, and what they did know was wrong; but

the rats must be made troop-horses. Why wouldn't the scheme work? There

was a patient, pathetic wonder on the faces of the men that made me long

to take one of them in my arms and try to explain things to

him--bridles, for instance, and the futility of hanging on by the spurs.

Just when the parade was over, and the troops were ambling off,

Providence sent diagonally across the parade-ground, at a gallop, a big,

rawboned man on a lathy-red American horse. The brute cracked his

nostrils, and switched his flag abroad, and romped across the plain,

while his rider dropped one hand and sat still, swaying lightly from the

hips. The two served to scale the surroundings. Some one really ought to

tell the Mikado that ponies were never intended for dragoons.

If the changes and chances of military service ever send you against

Japanese troops, be tender with their cavalry. They mean no harm. Put

some fusees down for the horses to step on, and send a fatigue-party out

to pick up the remnants. But if you meet Japanese infantry, led by a

Continental officer, commence firing early and often and at the longest

ranges compatible with getting at them. They are bad little men who know

too much.

Having thoroughly settled the military side of the nation exactly as my

Japanese friend at the beginning of this letter settled Us,--on the

strength of two hundred men caught at random,--I devoted myself to a

consideration of Tokio. I am wearied of temples. Their monotony of

splendour makes my head ache. You also will weary of temples unless you

are an artist, and then you will be disgusted with yourself. Some folk

say that Tokio covers an area equal to London. Some folk say that it is

not more than ten miles long and eight miles broad. There are a good

many ways of solving the question. I found a tea-garden situated on a

green plateau far up a flight of steps, with pretty girls smiling on

every step. From this elevation I looked forth over the city, and it

stretched away from the sea, far as the eye could reach--one grey

expanse of packed house-roof, the perspective marked by numberless

factory chimneys. Then I went several miles away and found a park,

another eminence, and some more tea-girls prettier than the last; and,

looking again, the city stretched out in a new direction as far as the

eye could reach. Taking the scope of the eye on a clear day at eighteen

miles, I make Tokio thirty-six miles long by thirty-six miles broad

exactly; and there may be some more which I missed. The place roared

with life through all its quarters. Double lines of trams ran down the

main streets for mile on mile, rows of omnibuses stood at the principal

railway station, and the "Compagnie General des Omnibus de Tokio"

paraded the streets with gold and vermilion cars. All the trams were

full, all the private and public omnibuses were full, and the streets

were full of 'rickshaws. From the sea-shore to the shady green park,

from the park to the dim distance, the land pullulated with people.

Here you saw how Western civilisation had eaten into them. Every tenth

man was attired in Europe clothes from hat to boots. It is a queer race.

It can parody every type of humanity to be met in a large English town.

Eat and prosperous merchant with mutton-chop whiskers; mild-eyed,

long-haired professor of science, his clothes baggy about him; schoolboy

in Eton jacket, broadcloth trousers; young clerk, member of the Clapham

Athletic Club in tennis flannels; artisans in sorely worn tweeds;

top-hatted lawyer with clean-shaven upper lip and black leather bag;

sailor out of work; and counter-jumper; all these and many, many more

you shall find in the streets of Tokio in half an hour's walk. But when

you come to speak to the imitation, behold it can only talk Japanese.

You touch it, and it is not what you thought. I fluctuated down the

streets addressing myself to the most English-looking folk I saw. They

were polite with a graciousness that in no way accorded with their

raiment, but they knew not a word of my tongue. One small boy in the

uniform of the Naval College said suddenly: "I spik Inglees," and

collapsed. The rest of the people in our clothes poured their own

vernacular upon my head. Yet the shop-signs were English, the tramway

under my feet was English gauge, the commodities sold were English, and

the notices on the streets were in English. It was like walking in a

dream. I reflected. Far away from Tokio and off the line of rail I had

met men like these men in the streets. Perfectly dressed Englishmen to

the outer eye, but dumb. The country must be full of their likes.

"Good gracious! Here is Japan going to run its own civilisation without

learning a language in which you can say Damn satisfactorily. I must

inquire into this."

Chance had brought me opposite the office of a newspaper, and I ran in

demanding an editor. He came--the Editor of the \_Tokio Public Opinion\_,

a young man in a black frock-coat. There are not many editors in other

parts of the world who would offer you tea and a cigarette ere beginning

a conversation. My friend had but little English. His paper, though the

name was printed in English, was Japanese. But he knew his business.

Almost before I had explained my errand, which was the pursuit of

miscellaneous information, he began: "You are English. How you think now

the American Revision Treaty?" Out came a note-book and I sweated cold.

It was not in the bargain that he should interview me.

"There's a great deal," I answered, remembering Sir Roger, of blessed

memory,--"a great deal to be said on both sides. The American Revision

Treaty--h'm--demands an enormous amount of matured consideration and may

safely be referred--"

"But we of Japan are now civilised."

Japan says that she is now civilised. That is the crux of the whole

matter so far as I understand it. "Let us have done with the idiotic

system of treaty-ports and passports for the foreigner who steps beyond

them," says Japan in effect. "Give us our place among the civilised

nations of the earth, come among us, trade with us, hold land in our

midst. Only be subject to our jurisdiction and submit to our--tariffs."

Now since one or two of the foreign nations have won special tariffs for

their goods in the usual way, they are not over-anxious to become just

ordinary folk. The effect of accepting Japan's views would be excellent

for the individual who wanted to go up-country and make his money, but

bad for the nation. For Our nation in particular.

All the same I was not prepared to have my ignorance of a burning

question put down in any note-book save my own. I Gladstoned about the

matter with the longest words I could. My friend recorded them much

after the manner of Count Smorltork. Then I attacked him on the subject

of civilisation--speaking very slowly because he had a knack of running

two words of mine together, and turning them into something new.

"You are right," said he. "We are becoming civilised. But not too quick,

for that is bad. Now there are two parties in the State--the Liberal and

the Radical: one Count he lead one, one Count lead the other. The

Radical say that we should swiftly become all English. The Liberal he

says not so quick, because that nation which too swiftly adopt other

people's customs he decay. That question of civilisation and the

American Revision Treaty he occupied our chief attentions. Now we are

not so zealous to become civilised as we were two--three years gone. Not

so quick--that is our watchword. Yes."

If matured deliberation be the wholesale adoption of imperfectly

understood arrangements, I should dearly like to see Japan in a hurry.

We discussed comparative civilisations for a short time, and I protested

feebly against the defilement of the streets of Tokio by rows of houses

built after glaring European models. Surely there is no need to discard

your own architecture, I said.

"Ha," snorted the chief of the \_Public Opinion\_. "You call it

picturesque. I call it too. Wait till he light up--incendiate. A

Japanese house then is one only fire box. \_That\_ is why we think good to

build in European fashion. I tell you, and you must believe, that we

take up no change without thinking upon it. Truth, indeed, it is not

because we are curious children, wanting new things, as some people have

said. We have done with that season of picking up things and throwing

them down again. You see?"

"Where did you pick up your Constitution, then?"

I did not know what the question would bring forth, yet I ought to have

been wise. The first question that a Japanese on the railway asks an

Englishman is: "Have you got the English translation of our

Constitution?" All the book-stalls sell it in English and Japanese, and

all the papers discuss it. The child is not yet three months old.

"Our Constitution?--That was promised to us--promised twenty years ago.

Fourteen years ago the provinces they have been allowed to elect their

big men--their heads. Three years ago they have been allowed to have

assemblies, and thus Civil Liberty was assured."

I was baffled here for some time. In the end I thought I made out that

the municipalities had been given certain control over police funds and

the appointment of district officials. I may have been entirely wrong,

but the editor bore me along on a torrent of words, his body rocking and

his arms waving with the double agony of twisting a foreign tongue to

his service and explaining the to-be-taken-seriouslyness of Japan. Whack

come the little hand on the little table, and the little tea-cups jumped

again.

"Truly, and indeed, this Constitution of ours has \_not\_ come too soon.

It proceeded step-by. You understand that? Now your Constitution, the

Constitutions of the foreign nations, are all bloody--bloody

Constitutions. Ours has come step-by. We did not fight as the barons

fought with King John at Runnymede."

This was a quotation from a speech delivered at Otsu, a few days

previously, by a member of the Government. I grinned at the brotherhood

of editors all the world over. Up went the hand anew.

"We shall be happy with this Constitution and a people civilised among

civilisations."

"Of course. But what will you actually do with it? A Constitution is

rather a monotonous thing to work after the fun of sending members to

Parliament has died out. You have a Parliament, have you not?"

"Oh yes, \_with\_ parties--Liberal and Radical."

"Then they will both tell lies to you and to each other. Then they will

pass bills, and spend their time fighting each other. Then all the

foreign governments will discover that you have no fixed policy."

"Ah, yes. But the Constitution." The little hands were crossed in his

lap. The cigarette hung limply from his mouth.

"No fixed policy. Then, when you have sufficiently disgusted the foreign

Powers, they will wait until the Liberals and Radicals are fighting very

hard, and then they will blow you out of the water."

"You are not making fun? I do not quite understand," said he. "Your

Constitutions are all so bloody."

"Yes. That is exactly what they are. You are very much in earnest about

yours, are you not?"

"Oh yes, we all talk politics now."

"And write politics, of course. By the way, under what--h'm,

arrangements with the Government is a Japanese paper published? I mean,

must you pay anything before starting a press?"

"Literary, scientific, and religious papers--no. Quite free. All purely

political papers pay five hundred yen--give to the Government to keep,

or else some man says he will pay."

"You must give security, you mean?"

"I do not know, but sometimes the Government can keep the money. We are

purely political."

Then he asked questions about India, and appeared astonished to find

that the natives there possessed considerable political power, and

controlled districts.

"But have you a Constitution in India?"

"I am afraid that we have not."

"Ah!"

He crushed me there, and I left very humbly, but cheered by the promise

that the \_Tokio Public Opinion\_ would contain an account of my words.

Mercifully, that respectable journal is printed in Japanese, so the hash

will not be served up to a large table. I would give a good deal to

discover what meaning he attached to my forecast of Constitutional

government in Japan.

"We all talk politics now." That was the sentence which remained to me.

It was true talk. Men of the Educational Department in Tokio told me

that the students would "talk politics" by the hour if you allowed them.

At present they were talking in the abstract about their new plaything,

the Constitution, with its Upper House and its Lower House, its

committees, its questions of supply, its rules of procedure, and all the

other skittles we have played with for six hundred years.

Japan is the second Oriental country which has made it impossible for a

strong man to govern alone. This she has done of her own free will.

India, on the other hand, has been forcibly ravished by the Secretary of

State and the English M. P.

Japan is luckier than India.

No. XXI

SHOWS THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE BABU AND THE JAPANESE. CONTAINS THE

EARNEST OUTCRY OF AN UNBELIEVER. THE EXPLANATION OF MR. SMITH OF

CALIFORNIA AND ELSEWHERE. TAKES ME ON BOARD SHIP AFTER DUE WARNING TO

THOSE WHO FOLLOW.

Very sadly did we leave it, but we gave our hearts in pledge

To the pine above the city, to the blossoms by the hedge,

To the cherry and the maple and the plum tree and the peach,

And the babies--Oh, the babies!--romping fatly under each.

Eastward ho! Across the water see the black bow drives and swings

From the land of Little Children, where the Babies are the Kings.

The Professor discovered me in meditation amid tea-girls at the back of

the Ueno Park in the heart of Tokio. My 'rickshaw coolie sat by my side

drinking tea from daintiest china, and eating maccaroons. I thought of

Sterne's donkey and smiled vacuously into the blue above the trees. The

tea-girls giggled. One of them captured my spectacles, perched them on

her own snubby-chubby nose, and ran about among her cackling fellows.

"And loose thy fingers in the tresses of The cypress-slender minister of

wine," quoted the Professor, coming round a booth suddenly. "Why aren't

you at the Mikado's garden party?"

"Because he didn't invite me, and, anyhow, he wears Europe clothes--so

does the Empress--so do all the Court people. Let's sit down and

consider things. This people puzzles me."

And I told my story of the interview with the Editor of the \_Tokio

Public Opinion\_. The Professor had been making investigation into the

Educational Department. "And further," said he at the end of the tale,

"the ambition of the educated student is to get a place under

Government. Therefore he comes to Tokio: will accept any situation at

Tokio that he may be near to his chance."

"Whose son is that student?"

"Son of the peasant, yeoman farmer, and shopkeeper, \_ryot\_, \_tehsildar\_,

and \_bunnia\_. While he waits he imbibes Republican leanings on account

of the nearness of Japan to America. He talks and writes and debates,

and is convinced he can manage the Empire better than the Mikado."

"Does he go away and start newspapers to prove that?"

"He may; but it seems to be unwholesome work. A paper can be suspended

without reason given under the present laws; and I'm told that one

enterprising editor has just got three years' simple imprisonment for

caricaturing the Mikado."

"Then there is yet hope for Japan. I can't quite understand how a people

with a taste for fighting and quick artistic perceptions can care for

the things that delight our friends in Bengal."

"You make the mistake of looking on the Bengali as unique. So he is in

his own peculiar style; but I take it that the drunkenness of Western

wine affects all Oriental folk in much the same way. What misleads you

is that very likeness. Followest thou? Because a Jap struggles with

problems beyond his grip in much the same phraseology as a Calcutta

University student, and discusses Administration with a capital A, you

lump Jap and Chatterjee together."

"No, I don't. Chatterjee doesn't sink his money in railway companies, or

sit down and provide for the proper sanitation of his own city, or of

his own notion cultivate the graces of life, as the Jap does. He is like

the \_Tokio Public Opinion\_--'purely political.' He has no art whatever,

he has no weapons, and there is no power of manual labour in him. Yet he

is like the Jap in the pathos of his politics. Have you ever studied

Pathetic Politics? \_Why\_ is he like the Jap?"

"Both drunk, I suppose," said the Professor. "Get that girl to give back

your gig-lamps, and you will be able to see more clearly into the soul

of the Far East."

"The 'Far East' hasn't got a soul. She swapped it for a Constitution on

the Eleventh of February last. Can any Constitution make up for the

wearing of Europe clothes? I saw a Jap lady just now in full afternoon

calling-kit. She looked atrocious. Have you seen the later Japanese

art--the pictures on the fans and in the shop windows? They are faithful

reproductions of the changed life--telegraph poles down the streets,

conventionalised tram-lines, top-hats, and carpet-bags in the hands of

the men. The artists can make those things almost passable, but when it

comes to conventionalising a Europe dress, the effect is horrible."

"Japan wishes to take her place among civilised nations," said the

Professor.

"That's where the pathos comes in. It's enough to make you weep to watch

this misdirected effort--this wallowing in unloveliness for the sake of

recognition at the hands of men who paint their ceilings white, their

grates black, their mantelpieces French grey, and their carriages yellow

and red. The Mikado wears blue and gold and red, his guards wear orange

breeches with a stone-blue stripe down them; the American missionary

teaches the Japanese girl to wear bangs--"shingled bangs"--on her

forehead, plait her hair into a pigtail, and to tie it up with magenta

and cobalt ribbons. The German sells them the offensive chromos of his

own country and the labels of his beer-bottles. Allen and Ginter

devastate Tokio with their blood-red and grass-green tobacco-tins. And

in the face of all these things the country wishes to progress toward

civilisation! I have read the entire Constitution of Japan, and it is

dearly bought at the price of one of the kaleidoscope omnibuses plying

in the street there."

"Are you going to inflict all that nonsense on them at home?" said the

Professor.

"I am. For this reason. In the years to come, when Japan has sold her

birthright for the privilege of being cheated on equal terms by her

neighbours; when she has so heavily run into debt for her railways and

public works that the financial assistance of England and annexation is

her only help; when the Daimios through poverty have sold the treasures

of their houses to the curio-dealer, and the dealer has sold them to the

English collector; when all the people wear slop-trousers and ready-made

petticoats, and the Americans have established soap factories on the

rivers and a boarding-house on the top of Fujiyama, some one will turn

up the files of the \_Pioneer\_ and say: 'This thing was prophesied.' Then

they will be sorry that they began tampering with the great

sausage-machine of civilisation. What is put into the receiver must come

out at the spout; but it must come out mincemeat. \_Dixi!\_ And now let us

go to the tomb of the Forty-Seven Ronins."

"It has been said some time ago, and much better than you can say it,"

said the Professor, \_apropos\_ of nothing that I could see.

Distances are calculated by the hour in Tokio. Forty minutes in a

'rickshaw, running at full speed, will take you a little way into the

city; two hours from the Ueno Park brings you to the tomb of the famous

Forty-Seven, passing on the way the very splendid temples of Shiba,

which are all fully described in the guide-books. Lacquer, gold-inlaid

bronze-work, and crystals carved with the words "Om" and "Shri" are fine

things to behold, but they do not admit of very varied treatment in

print. In one tomb of one of the temples was a room of lacquer panels

overlaid with gold leaf. An animal of the name of V. Gay had seen fit to

scratch his entirely uninteresting name on the gold. Posterity will take

note that V. Gay never cut his fingernails, and ought not to have been

trusted with anything prettier than a hog-trough.

"It is the handwriting upon the wall," I said.

"Presently there will be neither gold nor lacquer--nothing but the

finger-marks of foreigners. Let us pray for the soul of V. Gay all the

same. Perhaps he was a missionary."

\* \* \* \* \*

The Japanese papers occasionally contain, sandwiched between notes of

railway, mining, and tram concessions, announcements like the following:

"Dr. ---- committed \_hara-kiri\_ last night at his private residence in

such and such a street. Family complications are assigned as the reason

of the act." Nor does \_hara-kiri\_ merely mean suicide by any method.

\_Hara-kiri\_ is \_hara-kiri\_, and the private performance is even more

ghastly than the official one. It is curious to think that any one of

the dapper little men with top-hats and reticules who have a

Constitution of their own, may in time of mental stress, strip to the

waist, shake their hair over their brows, and, after prayer, rip

themselves open. When you come to Japan, look at Farsari's \_hara-kiri\_

pictures and his photos of the last crucifixion (twenty years ago) in

Japan. Then at Deakin's, inquire for the modelled head of a gentleman

who was not long ago executed in Tokio. There is a grim fidelity in the

latter work of art that will make you uncomfortable. The Japanese, in

common with the rest of the East, have a strain of blood-thirstiness in

their compositions. It is very carefully veiled now, but some of

Hokusai's pictures show it, and show that not long ago the people

revelled in its outward expression. Yet they are tender to all children

beyond the tenderness of the West, courteous to each other beyond the

courtesy of the English, and polite to the foreigner alike in the big

towns and in the Mofussil. What they will be after their Constitution

has been working for three generations the Providence that made them

what they are alone knows!

All the world seems ready to proffer them advice. Colonel Olcott is

wandering up and down the country now, telling them that the Buddhist

religion needs reformation, offering to reform it, and eating with

ostentation rice gruel which is served to him in cups by admiring

handmaidens. A wanderer from Kioto tells me that in the Chion-in,

loveliest of all the temples, he saw only three days ago the Colonel

mixed up with a procession of Buddhist priests, just such a procession

as the one I tried vainly to describe, and "tramping about as if the

whole show belonged to him." You cannot appreciate the solemnity of this

until you have seen the Colonel and the Chion-in temple. The two are

built on entirely different lines, and they don't seem to harmonise. It

only needs now Madame Blavatsky, cigarette in mouth, under the

\_cryptomerias\_ of Nikko, and the return of Mr. Caine, M. P., to preach

the sin of drinking \_saki\_, and the menagerie would be full.

Something should be done to America. There are many American

missionaries in Japan, and some of them construct clapboard churches and

chapels for whose ugliness no creed could compensate. They further

instil into the Japanese mind wicked ideas of "Progress," and teach that

it is well to go ahead of your neighbour, to improve your situation, and

generally to thresh yourself to pieces in the battle of existence. They

do not mean to do this; but their own restless energy enforces the

lesson. The American is objectionable. And yet--this is written from

Yokohama--how pleasant in every way is a nice American whose tongue is

cleansed of "right there," "all the time," "noos," "revoo," "raound,"

and the Falling Cadence. I have met such an one even now--a Californian

ripened in Spain, matured in England, polished in Paris, and yet always

a Californian. His voice and manners were soft alike, temperate were his

judgments and temperately expressed, wide was his range of experience,

genuine his humour, and fresh from the mint of his mind his reflections.

It was only at the end of the conversation that he startled me a little.

"I understand that you are going to stay some time in California. Do you

mind my giving you a little advice? I am speaking now of towns that are

still rather brusque in their manners. When a man offers you a drink

accept at once, and then stand drinks all round. I don't say that the

second part of the programme is as necessary as the first, but it puts

you on a perfectly safe footing. Above all, remember that where you are

going you must never carry anything. The men you move among will do that

for you. They have been accustomed to it. It is in some places,

unluckily, a matter of life and death as well as daily practice to draw

first. I have known really lamentable accidents occur from a man

carrying a revolver when he did not know what to do with it. Do you

understand anything about revolvers?"

"N-no," I stammered, "of course not."

"Do you think of carrying one?"

"Of course not. I don't want to kill myself."

"Then you are safe. But remember you will be moving among men who go

heeled, and you will hear a good deal of talk about the thing and a

great many tall stories. You may listen to the yarns, but you must not

conform to the custom however much you may feel tempted. You invite your

own death if you lay your hand on a weapon you don't understand. No man

flourishes a revolver in a bad place. It is produced for one specified

purpose and produced before you can wink."

"But surely if you draw first you have an advantage over the other man,"

said I, valorously.

"You think so? Let me show you. I have no use for any weapon, but I

believe I have one about me somewhere. An ounce of demonstration is

worth a ton of theory. Your pipe-case is on the table. My hands are on

the table too. Use that pipe case as a revolver and as quickly as you

can."

I used it in the approved style of the penny dreadful--pointed it with a

stiff arm at my friend's head. Before I knew how it came about the pipe

case had quitted my hand, which was caught close to the funny-bone and

tingled horribly. I heard four persuasive clicks under the table almost

before I knew that my arm was useless. The gentleman from California had

jerked out his pistol from its pocket and drawn the trigger four times,

his hand resting on his hip while I was lifting my right arm.

"Now, do you believe?" he said. "Only an Englishman or an Eastern man

fires from the shoulder in that melodramatic manner. I had you safe

before your arm went out, merely because I happened to know the trick;

and there are men out yonder who in a trouble could hold me as safe as I

held you. They don't reach round for their revolver, as novelists say.

It's here in front, close to the second right brace-button, and it is

fired, without aim, at the other man's stomach. You will understand now

why in event of a dispute you should show very clearly that you are

unarmed. You needn't hold up your hands ostentatiously; keep them out of

your pockets, or somewhere where your friend can see them. No man will

touch you then. Or if he does, he is pretty sure to be shot by the

general sense of the room."

"That must be a singular consolation to the corpse," I said.

"I see I've misled you. Don't fancy that any part in America is as free

and easy as my lecture shows. Only in a few really tough towns do you

require \_not\_ to own a revolver. Elsewhere you are all right. Most

Americans of my acquaintance have got into the habit of carrying

something; but it's only a habit. They'd never dream of using it unless

they are hard pressed. It's the man who draws to enforce a proposition

about canning peaches, orange-culture, or town lots or water-rights

that's a nuisance."

"Thank you," I said faintly. "I purpose to investigate these things

later on. I'm much obliged to you for your advice."

When he had departed it struck me that, in the language of the East, "he

might have been pulling my leg." But there remained no doubt whatever as

to his skill with the weapon he excused so tenderly.

I put the case before the Professor. "We will go to America before you

forejudge it altogether," said he. "To America in an American ship will

we go, and say good-by to Japan." That night we counted the gain of our

sojourn in the Land of Little Children more closely than many men count

their silver. Nagasaki with the grey temples, green hills, and all the

wonder of a first-seen shore; the Inland Sea, a thirty-hour panorama of

passing islets drawn in grey and buff and silver for our delight; KobÃ©,

where we fed well and went to a theatre; Osaka of the canals and the

peach blossom; Kioto--happy, lazy, sumptuous Kioto, and the blue rapids

and innocent delights of Arashima; Otzu on the shoreless, rainy lake;

Myanoshita in the hills; Kamakura by the tumbling Pacific, where the

great god Buddha sits and equably hears the centuries and the seas

murmur in his ears; Nikko, fairest of all places under the sun; Tokio,

the two-thirds civilised and altogether progressive warren of humanity;

and composite Franco-American Yokohama; we renewed them all, sorting out

and putting aside our special treasures of memory. If we stayed longer,

we might be disillusioned, and yet--surely, that would be impossible.

"What sort of mental impression do you carry away?" said the Professor.

"A tea-girl in fawn-coloured crÃªpe under a cherry tree all blossom.

Behind her, green pines, two babies, and a hog-backed bridge spanning a

bottle-green river running over blue boulders. In the foreground a

little policeman in badly fitting Europe clothes drinking tea from blue

and white china on a black lacquered stand. Fleecy white clouds above

and a cold wind up the street," I said, summarising hastily.

"Mine is a little different. A Japanese boy in a flat-headed German cap

and baggy Eton jacket; a King taken out of a toy-shop, a railway taken

out of a toy-shop, hundreds of little Noah's Ark trees and fields made

of green-painted wood. The whole neatly packed in a camphor-wood box

with an explanatory book called the Constitution--price twenty cents."

"You looked on the darker side of things. But what's the good of writing

impressions? Every man has to get his own at first hand. Suppose I give

an itinerary of what we saw?"

"You couldn't do it," said the Professor, blandly. "Besides, by the

time the next Anglo-Indian comes this way there will be a hundred more

miles of railway and all the local arrangements will have changed. Write

that a man should come to Japan without any plans. The guide-books will

tell him a little, and the men he meets will tell him ten times more.

Let him get first a good guide at KobÃ©, and the rest will come easily

enough. An itinerary is only a fresh manifestation of that unbridled

egoism which--"

"I shall write that a man can do himself well from Calcutta to Yokohama,

stopping at Rangoon, Moulmein, Penang, Singapur, Hong-Kong, Canton, and

taking a month in Japan, for about sixty pounds--rather less than more.

But if he begins to buy curios, that man is lost. Five hundred rupees

cover his month in Japan and allow him every luxury. Above all, he

should bring with him thousands of cheroots--enough to serve him till he

reaches 'Frisco. Singapur is the last place on the line where you can

buy Burmas. Beyond that point wicked men sell Manila cigars with fancy

names for ten, and Havanas for thirty-five, cents. No one inspects your

boxes till you reach 'Frisco. Bring, therefore, at least one thousand

cheroots."

"Do you know, it seems to me you have a very queer sense of proportion?"

And that was the last word the Professor spoke on Japanese soil.

No. XXII

SHOWS HOW I CAME TO AMERICA BEFORE MY TIME AND WAS MUCH SHAKEN IN BODY

AND SOUL.

"Then spoke der Captain Stossenheim

Who had theories of God,

'Oh, Breitmann, this is judgment on

Der ways dot you have trod.

You only lifs to enjoy yourself

While you yourself agree

Dot self-development requires

Der religious Idee.'"--\_C. G. Leland.\_

This is America. They call her the \_City of Peking\_, and she belongs to

the Pacific Mail Company, but for all practical purposes she is the

United States. We are divided between missionaries and

generals--generals who were at Vicksburg and Shiloh, and German by

birth, but more American than the Americans, who in confidence tell you

that they are not generals at all, but only brevet majors of militia

corps. The missionaries are perhaps the queerest portion of the cargo.

Did you ever hear an English minister lecture for half an hour on the

freight-traffic receipts and general working of, let us say, the

Midland? The Professor has been sitting at the feet of a keen-eyed,

close-bearded, swarthy man who expounded unto him kindred mysteries with

a fluency and precision that a city leader-writer might have envied.

"Who's your financial friend with the figures at his fingers' ends?" I

asked. "Missionary--Presbyterian Mission to the Japs," said the

Professor. I laid my hand upon my mouth and was dumb.

As a counterpoise to the missionaries, we carry men from Manila--lean

Scotchmen who gamble once a month in the Manila State lottery and

occasionally turn up trumps. One, at least, drew a ten-thousand-dollar

prize last December and is away to make merry in the New World.

Everybody on the staff of an American steamer this side the Continent

seems to gamble steadily in that lottery, and the talk of the

smoking-room runs almost entirely on prizes won by accident or lost

through a moment's delay. The tickets are sold more or less openly at

Yokahama and Hong-Kong, and the drawings--losers and winners both agree

here--are above reproach.

We have resigned ourselves to the infinite monotony of a twenty days'

voyage. The Pacific Mail advertises falsely. Only under the most

favorable circumstances of wind and steam can their under-engined boats

cover the distance in fifteen days. Our \_City of Peking\_, for instance,

had been jogging along at a gentle ten knots an hour, a pace out of all

proportion to her bulk. "When we get a wind," says the Captain, "we

shall do better." She is a four-master and can carry any amount of

canvas. It is not safe to run steamers across this void under the poles

of Atlantic liners. The monotony of the sea is paralysing. We have

passed the wreck of a little sealing-schooner lying bottom up and

covered with gulls. She weltered by in the chill dawn, unlovely as the

corpse of a man, and the wild birds piped thinly at us as they steered

her across the surges. The pulse of the Pacific is no little thing even

in the quieter moods of the sea. It set our bows swinging and nosing and

ducking ere we were a day clear of Yokohama, and yet there was never

swell nor crested wave in sight. "We ride very high," said the Captain,

"and she's a dry boat. She has a knack of crawling over things somehow;

but we shan't need to put her to the test this journey."

\* \* \* \* \*

The Captain was mistaken. For four days we have endured the sullen

displeasure of the North Pacific, winding up with a night of discomfort.

It began with a grey sea, flying clouds, and a head-wind that smote

fifty knots off the day's run. Then rose from the southeast a beam sea

warranted by no wind that was abroad upon the waters in our

neighbourhood, and we wallowed in the trough of it for sixteen mortal

hours. In the stillness of the harbour, when the newspaper man is

lunching in her saloon and the steam-launch is crawling round her sides,

a ship of pride is a "stately liner." Out in the open, one rugged

shoulder of a sea between you and the horizon, she becomes "the old

hooker," a "lively boat," and other things of small import, for this is

necessary to propitiate the Ocean. "There's a storm to the southeast of

us," explained the Captain. "That's what's kicking up this sea."

The \_City of Peking\_ did not belie her reputation. She crawled over the

seas in liveliest wise, never shipping a bucket till--she was forced to.

Then she took it green over the bows to the vast edification of, at

least, one passenger who had never seen the scuppers full before.

Later in the day the fun began. "Oh, she's a daisy at rolling," murmured

the chief steward, flung starfish-wise on a table among his glassware.

"She's rolling some," said a black apparition new risen from the

stoke-hold. "Is she going to roll any more?" demanded the ladies grouped

in what ought to have been the ladies' saloon, but, according to

American custom, was labelled "Social Hall."

Passed in the twilight the chief officer--a dripping, bearded face.

"Shall I mark out the bull-board?" said he, and lurched aft, followed by

the tongue of a wave. "She'll roll her guards under to-night," said a

man from Louisiana, where their river-steamers do not understand the

meaning of bulwarks. We dined to a dashing accompaniment of crockery,

the bounds of emancipated beer-bottles livelier than their own corks,

and the clamour of the ship's gong broken loose and calling to meals on

its own account.

After dinner the real rolling began. She did roll "guards under," as the

Louisiana man had prophesied. At thirty-minute intervals to the second

arrived one big sea, when the electric lamps died down to nothing, and

the screw raved and the blows of the sea made the decks quiver. On those

occasions we moved from our chairs, not gently, but discourteously. At

other times we were merely holding on with both hands.

It was then that I studied Fear--Terror bound in black silk and fighting

hard with herself. For reasons which will be thoroughly understood,

there was a tendency among the passengers to herd together and to

address inquiries to every officer who happened to stagger through the

saloon. No one was in the least alarmed,--oh dear, no!--but all were

keenly anxious for information. This anxiety redoubled after a more than

usually vicious roll. Terror was a large, handsome, and cultured lady

who knew the precise value of human life, the inwardness of \_Robert

Elsmere\_, the latest poetry--everything in fact that a clever woman

should know. When the rolling was near its worst, she began to talk

swiftly. I do not for a moment believe that she knew what she was

talking about. The rolling increased. She buckled down to the task of

making conversation. By the heave of the labouring bust, the restless

working of the fingers on the tablecloth, and the uncontrollable eyes

that turned always to the companion stairhead, I was able to judge the

extremity of her fear. Yet her words were frivolous and commonplace

enough; they poured forth unceasingly, punctuated with little laughs and

giggles, as a woman's speech should be. Presently, a member of her group

suggested going to bed. No, she wanted to sit up; she wanted to go on

talking, and as long as she could get a soul to sit with her she had her

desire. When for sheer lack of company she was forced to get to her

cabin, she left reluctantly, looking back to the well-lighted saloon

over her shoulder. The contrast between the flowing triviality of her

speech and the strained intentness of eye and hand was a quaint thing to

behold. I know now how Fear should be painted.

No one slept very heavily that night. Both arms were needed to grip the

berth, while the trunks below wound the carpet-slips into knots and

battered the framing of the cabins. Once it seemed to me that the whole

of the labouring fabric that cased our trumpery fortunes stood on end

and in this undignified posture hopped a mighty hop. Twice I know I shot

out of my berth to join the adventurous trunks on the floor. A hundred

times the crash of the wave on the ship's side was followed by the roar

of the water, as it swept the decks and raved round the deckhouses. In a

lull I heard the flying feet of a man, a shout, and a far-away chorus of

lost spirits singing somebody's requiem.

\_May 24\_ (Queen's Birthday).--If ever you meet an American, be good to

him. This day the ship was dressed with flags from stem to stern, and

chiefest of the bunting was the Union-Jack. They had given no word of

warning to the English, who were proportionately pleased. At dinner up

rose an ex-Commissioner of the Lucknow Division (on my honour,

Anglo-India extends to the ends of the earth!) and gave us the health of

Her Majesty and the President. It was afterwards that the trouble began.

A small American penned half a dozen English into a corner and lectured

them soundly on--their want of patriotism!

"What sort of Queen's Birthday do you call this?" he thundered. "What

did you drink our President's health for? What's the President to you on

this day of all others? Well, suppose you \_are\_ in the minority, all the

more reason for standing by your country. Don't talk to me. You

Britishers made a mess of it--a mighty bungle of the whole thing. I'm an

American of the Americans; but if no one can propose Her Majesty's

health better than by just throwing it at your heads, I'm going to

try."

Then and there he delivered a remarkably neat little oration--pat, well

put together, and clearly delivered. So it came to pass that the Queen's

health was best honoured by an American. We English were dazed. I

wondered how many Englishmen not trained to addressing their fellows

would have spoken half so fluently as the gentleman from 'Frisco.

"Well, you see," said one of us feebly, "she's our Queen, anyhow,

and--and--she's been ours for fifty years, and not one of us here has

seen England for seven years, and we can't enthuse over the matter.

We've lived to be hauled over the coals for want of patriotism by an

American! We'll be more careful next time."

And the conversation drifted naturally into the question of the

government of men--English, Japanese (we have several travelled Japanese

aboard), and Americans throwing the ball from one to another. We bore in

mind the golden rule: "Never agree with a man who abuses his own

country," and got on well enough.

"Japan," said a little gentleman who was a rich man there, "Japan is

divided into two administrative sides. On the one the remains of a very

strict and quite Oriental despotism; on the other a mass of--what do you

call it?--red-tapeism which is not understood even by the officials who

handle it. We copy the red tape, and when it is copied we believe that

we administer. That is a vice of all Oriental nations. We are

Orientals."

"Oh no, say the most westerly of the westerns," purred an American,

soothingly.

The little man was pleased. "Thanks. That is what we hope to believe,

but up to the present it is not so. Look now. A farmer in my country

holds a hillside cut into little terraces. Every year he must submit to

his Government a statement of the size and revenue paid, not on the

whole hillside, but on each terrace. The complete statement makes a pile

three inches high, and is of no use when it is made except to keep in

work thousands of officials to check the returns. Is that

administration? By God! we call it so, but we multiply officials by the

twenty, and \_they\_ are not administration. What country is such a fool?

Look at our Government offices eaten up with clerks! Some day, I tell

you, there will be a smash."

This was new to me, but I might have guessed it. In every country where

swords and uniforms accompany civil office there is a natural tendency

towards an ill-considered increase of officialdom.

"You might pay India a visit some day," I said. "I fancy that you would

find that our country shares your trouble."

Thereupon a Japanese gentleman in the Educational Department began to

cross-question me on the matters of his craft in India, and in a quarter

of an hour got from me the very little that I knew about primary

schools, higher education, and the value of an M. A. degree. He knew

exactly what he wanted to ask, and only dropped me when the tooth of

Desire had clean picked the bone of Ignorance.

Then an American held forth, harping on a string that has already been

too often twanged in my ear. "What will it be in America itself?"

"The whole system is rotten from top to bottom," he said. "As rotten as

rotten can be."

"That's so," said the Louisiana man, with an affirmative puff of smoke.

"They call us a Republic. We may be. I don't think it. You Britishers

have got the only republic worth the name. You choose to run your ship

of state with a gilt figurehead; but I know, and so does every man who

has thought about it, that your Queen doesn't cost you one-half what our

system of pure democracy costs us. Politics in America? There aren't

any. The whole question of the day is spoils. That's all. We fight our

souls out over tram-contracts, gas-contracts, road-contracts, and any

darned thing that will turn a dishonest dollar, and we call that

politics. No one but a low-down man will run for Congress and the

Senate--the Senate of the freest people on earth are bound slaves to

some blessed monopoly. If I had money enough, I could buy the Senate of

the United States, the Eagle, and the Star-Spangled Banner complete."

"And the Irish vote included?" said some one--a Britisher, I fancy.

"Certainly, if I chose to go yahooing down the street at the tail of the

British lion. Anything dirty will buy the Irish vote. That's why our

politics are dirty. Some day you Britishers will grant Home Rule to the

vermin in our blankets. Then the real Americans will invite the Irish to

get up and git to where they came from. 'Wish you'd hurry up that time

before we have another trouble. We're bound hand and foot by the Irish

vote; or at least that's the excuse for any unusual theft that we

perpetrate. I tell you there's no good in an Irishman except as a

fighter. He doesn't understand work. He has a natural gift of the gab,

and he can drink a man blind. These three qualifications make him a

first-class politician."

With one accord the Americans present commenced to abuse Ireland and its

people as they had met them, and each man prefaced his commination

service with: "I am an American by birth--an American from way back."

It must be an awful thing to live in a country where you have to explain

that you really belong there. Louder grew the clamour and crisper the

sentiments.

"If we weren't among Americans, I should say we were consorting with

Russians," said a fellow-countryman in my ear.

"They can't mean what they say," I whispered. "Listen to this fellow."

He was saying:

"And I know, for I have been three times round the world and resided in

most countries on the Continent, that there was never people yet could

govern themselves."

"Allah! This from an American!"

"And who should know better than an American?" was the retort. "For the

ignorant--that is to say for the majority--there is only one

argument--fear; the fear of Death. In our case we give any scallawag who

comes across the water all the same privileges that we have made for

ourselves. There we make a mistake. They thank us by playing the fool.

Then we shoot them down. You can't persuade the mob of any country to

become decent citizens. If they misbehave themselves, shoot them. I saw

the bombs thrown at Chicago when our police were blown to bits. I saw

the banners in the procession that threw the bombs. All the mottoes on

them were in German. The men were aliens in our midst, and they were

shot down like dogs. I've been in labour riots and seen the militia go

through a crowd like a finger through tissue paper."

"I was in the riots at New Orleans," said the man from Louisiana. "We

turned the Gatling on the other crowd, and they were sick."

"Whew! I wonder what would have happened if a Gatling had been used when

the West End riots were in full swing?" said an Englishman. "If a single

rioter were killed in an English town by the police, the chances are

that the policeman would have to stand his trial for murder and the

Ministry of the day would go out."

"Then you've got all your troubles before you. The more power you give

the people, the more trouble they will give. With us our better classes

are corrupt and our lower classes are lawless. There are millions of

useful, law-abiding citizens, and they are very sick of this thing. We

execute our justice in the streets. The law courts are no use. Take the

case of the Chicago Anarchists. It was all we could do to get 'em

hanged: whereas the dead in the streets had been punished off-hand. We

were sure of \_them\_. Guess that's the reason we are so quick to fire on

a mob. But it's unfair, all the same. We receive all these

cattle--Anarchists, Socialists, and ruffians of every sort--and then we

shoot them. The States are as republican as they make 'em. We have no

use for a man who wants to try any more experiments on the Constitution.

We are the biggest people on God's earth. All the world knows that.

We've been shouting that we are also the greatest people. No one cares

to contradict us but ourselves; and we are now wondering whether we are

what we claim to be. Never mind; you Britishers will have the same

experiences to go through. You're beginning to rot now. Your County

Councils will make you more rotten because you are putting power into

the hands of untrained people. When you reach our level,--every man with

a vote and the right to sell it; the right to nominate fellows of his

own kidney to swamp out better men,--you'll be what we are now--rotten,

rotten, rotten!"

The voice ceased, and no man rose up to contradict.

"We'll worry through it somehow," said the man from Louisiana. "What

would do us a world of good now would be a big European war. We're

getting slack and sprawly. Now a war outside our borders would make us

all pull together. But that's a luxury we shan't get."

"Can't you raise one within your own borders?" I said flippantly, to get

rid of the thought of the great blind nation in her unrest putting out

her hand to the Sword. Mine was a most unfortunate remark.

"I hope not," said an American, very seriously. "We have paid a good

deal to keep ourselves together before this, and it is not likely that

we shall split up without protest. Yet some say we are too large, and

some say that Washington and the Eastern States are running the whole

country. If ever we do divide,--God help us when we do,--it will be East

and West this time."

"We built the old hooker too long in the run. We put the engine room

aft. Break her back," said an American who had not yet spoken. "'Wonder

if our forbears knew how she was going to grow."

"A very large country." The speaker sighed as though the weight of it

from New York to 'Frisco lay upon his shoulders. "If ever we do divide,

it means that we are done for. There is no room for four first-class

empires in the States. One split will lead to another if the first is

successful. What's the use of talking?"

What was the use? Here's our conversation as it ran, the night of the

Queen's Birthday. What do \_you\_ think?

No. XXIII

HOW I GOT TO SAN FRANCISCO AND TOOK TEA WITH THE NATIVES THERE.

"Serene, indifferent to fate,

Thou sittest at the western gate,

Thou seest the white seas fold their tents,

Oh warder of two Continents.

Thou drawest all things small and great

To thee beside the Western Gate."

This is what Bret Harte has written of the great city of San Francisco,

and for the past fortnight I have been wondering what made him do it.

There is neither serenity nor indifference to be found in these parts;

and evil would it be for the Continent whose wardship were intrusted to

so reckless a guardian. Behold me pitched neck-and-crop from twenty days

of the High Seas, into the whirl of California, deprived of any

guidance, and left to draw my own conclusions. Protect me from the wrath

of an outraged community if these letters be ever read by American eyes.

San Francisco is a mad city--inhabited for the most part by perfectly

insane people whose women are of a remarkable beauty. When the \_City of

Peking\_ steamed through the Golden Gate I saw with great joy that the

block-house which guarded the mouth of the "finest harbour in the world,

Sir," could be silenced by two gunboats from Hong-Kong with safety,

comfort, and despatch.

Then a reporter leaped aboard, and ere I could gasp held me in his

toils. He pumped me exhaustively while I was getting ashore, demanding,

of all things in the world, news about Indian journalism. It is an awful

thing to enter a new land with a new lie on your lips. I spoke the truth

to the evil-minded Custom-house man who turned my most sacred raiment on

a floor composed of stable-refuse and pine-splinters; but the reporter

overwhelmed me not so much by his poignant audacity as his beautiful

ignorance. I am sorry now that I did not tell him more lies as I passed

into a city of three hundred thousand white men. Think of it! Three

hundred thousand white men and women gathered in one spot, walking upon

real pavements in front of real plate-glass windowed shops, and talking

something that was not very different from English. It was only when I

had tangled myself up in a hopeless maze of small wooden houses, dust,

street-refuse, and children who play with empty kerosene tins, that I

discovered the difference of speech.

"You want to go to the Palace Hotel?" said an affable youth on a dray.

"What in hell are you doing here, then? This is about the lowest place

in the city. Go six blocks north to corner of Geary and Market; then

walk around till you strike corner of Gutter and Sixteenth, and that

brings you there."

I do not vouch for the literal accuracy of these directions, quoting but

from a disordered memory.

"Amen," I said. "But who am I that I should strike the corners of such

as you name? Peradventure they be gentlemen of repute, and might hit

back. Bring it down to dots, my son."

I thought he would have smitten me, but he didn't. He explained that no

one ever used the word "street," and that every one was supposed to know

how the streets run; for sometimes the names were upon the lamps and

sometimes they weren't. Fortified with these directions I proceeded till

I found a mighty street full of sumptuous buildings four or five stories

high, but paved with rude cobble stones in the fashion of the Year One.

A cable-car without any visible means of support slid stealthily behind

me and nearly struck me in the back. A hundred yards further there was a

slight commotion in the street--a gathering together of three or

four--and something that glittered as it moved very swiftly. A ponderous

Irish gentleman with priest's cords in his hat and a small nickel-plated

badge on his fat bosom emerged from the knot, supporting a Chinaman who

had been stabbed in the eye and was bleeding like a pig. The bystanders

went their ways, and the Chinaman, assisted by the policeman, his own.

Of course this was none of my business, but I rather wanted to know what

had happened to the gentleman who had dealt the stab. It said a great

deal for the excellence of the municipal arrangements of the town that a

surging crowd did not at once block the street to see what was going

forward. I was the sixth man and the last who assisted at the

performance, and my curiosity was six times the greatest. Indeed, I felt

ashamed of showing it.

There were no more incidents till I reached the Palace Hotel, a

seven-storied warren of humanity with a thousand rooms in it. All the

travel-books will tell you about hotel arrangements in this country.

They should be seen to be appreciated. Understand clearly--and this

letter is written after a thousand miles of experiences--that money

will not buy you service in the West.

When the hotel clerk--the man who awards your room to you and who is

supposed to give you information--when that resplendent individual

stoops to attend to your wants, he does so whistling or humming, or

picking his teeth, or pauses to converse with some one he knows. These

performances, I gather, are to impress upon you that he is a free man

and your equal. From his general appearance and the size of his diamonds

he ought to be your superior. There is no necessity for this swaggering,

self-consciousness of freedom. Business is business, and the man who is

paid to attend to a man might reasonably devote his whole attention to

the job.

In a vast marble-paved hall under the glare of an electric light sat

forty or fifty men; and for their use and amusement were provided

spittoons of infinite capacity and generous gape. Most of the men wore

frock-coats and top-hats,--the things that we in India put on at a

wedding breakfast if we possessed them,--but they all spat. They spat on

principle. The spittoons were on the staircases, in each bedroom--yea,

and in chambers even more sacred than these. They chased one into

retirement, but they blossomed in chiefest splendour round the Bar, and

they were all used, every reeking one of 'em. Just before I began to

feel deathly sick, another reporter grappled me. What he wanted to know

was the precise area of India in square miles. I referred him to

Whittaker. He had never heard of Whittaker. He wanted it from my own

mouth, and I would not tell him. Then he swerved off, like the other

man, to details of journalism in our own country. I ventured to suggest

that the interior economy of a paper most concerned the people who

worked it. "That's the very thing that interests us," he said. "Have you

got reporters anything like our reporters on Indian news papers?" "We

have not," I said, and suppressed the "thank God" rising to my lips.

"\_Why\_ haven't you?" said he. "Because they would die," I said. It was

exactly like talking to a child--a very rude little child. He would

begin almost every sentence with: "Now tell me something about India,"

and would turn aimlessly from one question to another without the least

continuity. I was not angry, but keenly interested. The man was a

revelation to me. To his questions I returned answers mendacious and

evasive. After all, it really did not matter what I said. He could not

understand. I can only hope and pray that none of the readers of the

\_Pioneer\_ will ever see that portentous interview. The man made me out

to be an idiot several sizes more drivelling than my destiny intended,

and the rankness of his ignorance managed to distort the few poor facts

with which I supplied him into large and elaborate lies. Then thought I:

"The matter of American journalism shall be looked into later on. At

present I will enjoy myself."

No man rose to tell me what were the lions of the place. No one

volunteered any sort of conveyance. I was absolutely alone in this big

city of white folk. By instinct I sought refreshment and came upon a

bar-room, full of bad Salon pictures, in which men with hats on the

backs of their heads were wolfing food from a counter. It was the

institution of the "Free Lunch" that I had struck. You paid for a drink

and got as much as you wanted to eat. For something less than a rupee a

day a man can feed himself sumptuously in San Francisco, even though he

be bankrupt. Remember this if ever you are stranded in these parts.

Later, I began a vast but unsystematic exploration of the streets. I

asked for no names. It was enough that the pavements were full of white

men and women, the streets clanging with traffic, and that the restful

roar of a great city rang in my ears. The cable-cars glided to all

points of the compass. I took them one by one till I could go no

farther. San Francisco has been pitched down on the sand-bunkers of the

Bikaneer desert. About one-fourth of it is ground reclaimed from the

sea--any old-timer will tell you all about that. The remainder is

ragged, unthrifty sand-hills, pegged down by houses.

From an English point of view there has not been the least attempt at

grading those hills, and indeed you might as well try to grade the

hillocks of Sind. The cable-cars have for all practical purposes made

San Francisco a dead level. They take no count of rise or fall, but

slide equably on their appointed courses from one end to the other of a

six-mile street. They turn corners almost at right angles; cross other

lines, and, for aught I know, may run up the sides of houses. There is

no visible agency of their flight; but once in a while you shall pass a

five-storied building, humming with machinery that winds up an

everlasting wire-cable, and the initiated will tell you that here is the

mechanism. I gave up asking questions. If it pleases Providence to make

a car run up and down a slit in the ground for many miles, and if for

twopence-halfpenny I can ride in that car, why shall I seek the reasons

of the miracle? Rather let me look out of the windows till the shops

give place to thousands and thousands of little houses made of

wood--each house just big enough for a man and his family. Let me watch

the people in the cars, and try to find out in what manner they differ

from us, their ancestors. They delude themselves into the belief that

they talk English,--\_the\_ English,--and I have already been pitied for

speaking with "an English accent." The man who pitied me spoke, so far

as I was concerned, the language of thieves. And they all do. Where we

put the accent forward, they throw it back, and \_vice versa\_; where we

use the long \_a\_, they use the short; and words so simple as to be past

mistaking, they pronounce somewhere up in the dome of their heads. How

do these things happen? Oliver Wendell Holmes says that Yankee

schoolmarms, the cider, and the salt codfish of the Eastern States are

responsible for what he calls a nasal accent. A Hindu is a Hindu, and a

brother to the man who knows his vernacular; and a Frenchman is French

because he speaks his own language; but the American has no language. He

is dialect, slang, provincialism, accent, and so forth. Now that I have

heard their voices, all the beauty of Bret Harte is being ruined for me,

because I find myself catching through the roll of his rhythmical prose

the cadence of his peculiar fatherland. Get an American lady to read to

you "How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar," and see how much is, under

her tongue, left of the beauty of the original.

But I am sorry for Bret Harte. It happened this way. A reporter asked me

what I thought of the city, and I made answer suavely that it was

hallowed ground to me because of Bret Harte. That was true: "Well,"

said the reporter, "Bret Harte claims California, but California don't

claim Bret Harte. He's been so long in England that he's quite English.

Have you seen our cracker-factories and the new offices of the

\_Examiner\_?" He could not understand that to the outside world the city

was worth a great deal less than the man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Night fell over the Pacific, and the white sea-fog whipped through the

streets, dimming the splendours of the electric lights. It is the use of

this city, her men and women, to parade between the hours of eight and

ten a certain street, called Kearney Street, where the finest shops are

situated. Here the click of heels on the pavement is loudest, here the

lights are brightest, and here the thunder of the traffic is most

overwhelming. I watched Young California and saw that it was at least

expensively dressed, cheerful in manner, and self-asserting in

conversation. Also the women are very fair. The maidens were of generous

build, large, well-groomed, and attired in raiment that even to my

inexperienced eyes must have cost much. Kearney Street, at nine o'clock,

levels all distinctions of rank as impartially as the grave. Again and

again I loitered at the heels of a couple of resplendent beings, only to

overhear, when I expected the level voice of culture, the \_staccato\_

"Sez he," "Sez I," that is the mark of the white servant-girl all the

world over.

This was depressing because, in spite of all that goes to the contrary,

fine feathers ought to make fine birds. There was wealth--unlimited

wealth--in the streets, but not an accent that would not have been dear

at fifty cents. Wherefore, revolving in my mind that these folk were

barbarians, I was presently enlightened and made aware that they also

were the heirs of all the ages, and civilised after all. There appeared

before me an affable stranger of prepossessing appearance, with a blue

and an innocent eye. Addressing me by name, he claimed to have met me in

New York at the Windsor, and to this claim I gave a qualified assent. I

did not remember the fact, but since he was so certain of it, why

then--I waited developments. "And what did you think of Indiana when you

came through?" was the next question. It revealed the mystery of

previous acquaintance, and one or two other things. With reprehensible

carelessness, my friend of the light-blue eye had looked up the name of

his victim in the hotel register and read "India" for Indiana. He could

not imagine an Englishman coming through the States from West to East

instead of by the regularly ordained route. My fear was that in his

delight at finding me so responsive he would make remarks about New York

and the Windsor which I could not understand. And indeed, he adventured

in this direction once or twice, asking me what I thought of such and

such streets, which, from his tone, I gathered were anything but

respectable. It is trying to talk unknown New York in almost unknown San

Francisco. But my friend was merciful. He protested that I was one after

his own heart, and pressed upon me rare and curious drinks at more than

one bar. These drinks I accepted with gratitude, as also the cigars with

which his pockets were stored. He would show me the Life of the city.

Having no desire to watch a weary old play again, I evaded the offer,

and received in lieu of the Devil's instruction much coarse flattery.

Curiously constituted is the soul of man. Knowing how and where this man

lied, waiting idly for the finale, I was distinctly conscious, as he

bubbled compliments in my ear, of soft thrills of gratified pride. I was

wise, quoth he, anybody could see that with half an eye; sagacious;

versed in the affairs of the world; an acquaintance to be desired; one

who had tasted the cup of Life with discretion. All this pleased me, and

in a measure numbed the suspicion that was thoroughly aroused.

Eventually the blue-eyed one discovered, nay insisted, that I had a

taste for cards (this was clumsily worked in, but it was my fault, in

that I met him half-way, and allowed him no chance of good acting).

Hereupon, I laid my head to one side, and simulated unholy wisdom,

quoting odds and ends of poker-talk, all ludicrously misapplied. My

friend kept his countenance admirably; and well he might, for five

minutes later we arrived, always by the purest of chances, at a place

where we could play cards, and also frivol with Louisiana State Lottery

tickets. Would I play? "Nay," said I, "for to me cards have neither

meaning nor continuity; but let us assume that I am going to play. How

would you and your friends get to work? Would you play a straight game,

or make me drunk, or--well, the fact is I'm a newspaper man, and I'd be

much obliged if you'd let me know something about bunco-steering." My

blue-eyed friend cursed me by his gods,--the Right and the Left Bower;

he even cursed the very good cigars he had given me. But, the storm

over, he quieted down and explained. I apologised for causing him to

waste an evening, and we spent a very pleasant time together.

Inaccuracy, provincialism, and a too hasty rushing to conclusions were

the rocks that he had split on; but he got his revenge when he said:

"How would I play with you? From all the poppycock" (\_Anglice\_, bosh)

"you talked about poker, I'd ha' played a straight game and skinned you.

I wouldn't have taken the trouble to make you drunk. You never knew

anything of the game; but the way I was mistaken in you makes me sick."

He glared at me as though I had done him an injury. To-day I know how it

is that, year after year, week after week, the bunco-steerer, who is the

confidence-trick and the card-sharper man of other climes, secures his

prey. He slavers them over with flattery, as the snake slavers the

rabbit. The incident depressed me because it showed I had left the

innocent East far behind, and was come to a country where a man must

look out for himself. The very hotel bristled with notices about keeping

my door locked, and depositing my valuables in a safe. The white man in

a lump is bad. Weeping softly for O-Toyo (little I knew then that my

heart was to be torn afresh from my bosom!), I fell asleep in the

clanging hotel.

Next morning I had entered upon the Deferred Inheritance. There are no

princes in America,--at least with crowns on their heads,--but a

generous-minded member of some royal family received my letter of

introduction. Ere the day closed I was a member of the two clubs and

booked for many engagements to dinner and party. Now this prince, upon

whose financial operations be continual increase, had no reason, nor had

the others, his friends, to put himself out for the sake of one Briton

more or less; but he rested not till he had accomplished all in my

behalf that a mother could think of for her \_dÃ©butante\_ daughter. Do you

know the Bohemian Club of San Francisco? They say its fame extends over

the world. It was created somewhat on the lines of the Savage by men who

wrote or drew things, and it has blossomed into most unrepublican

luxury. The ruler of the place is an owl--an owl standing upon a skull

and cross-bones, showing forth grimly the wisdom of the man of letters

and the end of his hopes for immortality. The owl stands on the

staircase, a statue four feet high, is carved in the woodwork, flutters

on the frescoed ceilings, is stamped on the note paper, and hangs on the

walls. He is an Ancient and Honourable Bird. Under his wing 'twas my

privilege to meet with white men whose lives were not chained down to

routine of toil, who wrote magazine articles instead of reading them

hurriedly in the pauses of office-work, who painted pictures instead of

contenting themselves with cheap etchings picked up at another man's

sale of effects. Mine were all the rights of social intercourse that

India, stony-hearted step-mother of Collectors, has swindled us out of.

Treading soft carpets and breathing the incense of superior cigars, I

wandered from room to room studying the paintings in which the members

of the club had caricatured themselves, their associates, and their

aims. There was a slick French audacity about the workmanship of these

men of toil unbending that went straight to the heart of the beholder.

And yet it was not altogether French. A dry grimness of treatment,

almost Dutch, marked the difference. The men painted as they spoke--with

certainty. The club indulges in revelries which it calls "jinks"--high

and low,--at intervals,--and each of these gatherings is faithfully

portrayed in oils by hands that know their business. In this club were

no amateurs spoiling canvas because they fancied they could handle oils

without knowledge of shadows or anatomy--no gentleman of leisure ruining

the temper of publishers and an already ruined market with attempts to

write "because everybody writes something these days." My hosts were

working, or had worked, for their daily bread with pen or paint, and

their talk for the most part was of the shop shoppy--that is to say,

delightful. They extended a large hand of welcome and were as brethren,

and I did homage to the Owl and listened to their talk. An Indian Club

about Christmas-time will yield, if properly worked, an abundant harvest

of queer tales; but at a gathering of Americans from the uttermost ends

of their own continent the tales are larger, thicker, more spinous, and

even more azure than any Indian variety. Tales of the War I heard told

by an ex-officer of the South over his evening drink to a Colonel of the

Northern army; my introducer, who had served as a trooper in the

Northern Horse, throwing in emendations from time to time.

Other voices followed with equally wondrous tales of riata-throwing in

Mexico or Arizona, of gambling at army posts in Texas, of newspaper wars

waged in godless Chicago, of deaths sudden and violent in Montana and

Dakota, of the loves of half-breed maidens in the South, and fantastic

huntings for gold in mysterious Alaska. Above all, they told the story

of the building of old San Francisco, when the "finest collection of

humanity on God's earth, Sir, started this town, and the water came up

to the foot of Market Street." Very terrible were some of the tales,

grimly humorous the others, and the men in broadcloth and fine linen who

told them had played their parts in them.

"And now and again when things got too bad they would toll the city

bell, and the Vigilance Committee turned out and hanged the suspicious

characters. A man didn't begin to be suspected in those days till he had

committed at least one unprovoked murder," said a calm-eyed, portly old

gentleman. I looked at the pictures around me, the noiseless,

neat-uniformed waiter behind me, the oak-ribbed ceiling above, the

velvety carpet beneath. It was hard to realise that even twenty years

ago you could see a man hanged with great pomp. Later on I found reason

to change my opinion. The tales gave me a headache and set me thinking.

How in the world was it possible to take in even one-thousandth of this

huge, roaring, many-sided continent? In the silence of the sumptuous

library lay Professor Bryce's book on the American Republic. "It is an

omen," said I. "He has done all things in all seriousness, and he may be

purchased for half a guinea. Those who desire information of the most

undoubted must refer to his pages. For me is the daily round of

vagabondage, the recording of the incidents of the hour, and talk with

the travelling companion of the day. I will not 'do' this country at

all."

And I forgot all about India for ten days while I went out to dinners

and watched the social customs of the people, which are entirely

different from our customs, and was introduced to the men of many

millions. These persons are harmless in their earlier stages; that is

to say, a man worth three or four million dollars may be a good talker,

clever, amusing, and of the world; a man with twice that amount is to be

avoided; and a twenty-million man is--just twenty millions. Take an

instance. I was speaking to a newspaper man about seeing the proprietor

of his journal. My friend snorted indignantly: "See \_him\_! Great Scott!

\_No!\_ If he happens to appear in the office, I have to associate with

him; but, thank Heaven, outside of that I move in circles where he

cannot come."

And yet the first thing I have been taught to believe is that money was

everything in America!

No. XXIV

SHOWS HOW THROUGH FOLLY I ASSISTED AT A MURDER AND WAS AFRAID. THE RULE

OF THE DEMOCRACY AND THE DESPOTISM OF THE ALIEN.

"Poor men--God made, and all for that!"

It was a bad business throughout, and the only consolation is that it

was all my fault. A man took me round the Chinese quarter of San

Francisco, which is a ward of the city of Canton set down in the most

eligible business-quarter of the place. The Chinaman with his usual

skill has possessed himself of good brick fire-proof buildings and,

following instinct, has packed each tenement with hundreds of souls, all

living in filth and squalor not to be appreciated save by you in India.

That cursory investigation ought to have sufficed; but I wanted to know

how deep in the earth the Pig-tail had taken root. Therefore I explored

the Chinese quarter a second time and alone, which was foolishness. No

one in the filthy streets (but for the blessed sea breezes San Francisco

would enjoy cholera every season) interfered with my movements, though

many asked for \_cumshaw\_. I struck a house about four stories high full

of celestial abominations, and began to burrow down; having heard that

these tenements were constructed on the lines of icebergs--two-thirds

below sight level. Downstairs I crawled past Chinamen in bunks,

opium-smokers, brothels, and gambling hells, till I had reached the

second cellar--was in fact, in the labyrinths of a warren. Great is the

wisdom of the Chinaman. In time of trouble that house could be razed to

the ground by the mob, and yet hide all its inhabitants in brick-walled

and wooden-beamed subterranean galleries, strengthened with iron-framed

doors and gates. On the second underground floor a man asked for

\_cumshaw\_ and took me downstairs to yet another cellar, where the air

was as thick as butter, and the lamps burned little holes in it not more

than an inch square. In this place a poker club had assembled and was in

full swing. The Chinaman loves "pokel," and plays it with great skill,

swearing like a cat when he loses. Most of the men round the table were

in semi-European dress, their pigtails curled up under billy-cock hats.

One of the company looked like a Eurasian, whence I argued that he was a

Mexican--a supposition that later inquiries confirmed. They were a

picturesque set of fiends and polite, being too absorbed in their game

to look at the stranger. We were all deep down under the earth, and save

for the rustle of a blue gown sleeve and the ghostly whisper of the

cards as they were shuffled and played, there was no sound. The heat was

almost unendurable. There was some dispute between the Mexican and the

man on his left. The latter shifted his place to put the table between

himself and his opponent, and stretched a lean yellow hand towards the

Mexican's winnings.

Mark how purely man is a creature of instinct. Rarely introduced to the

pistol, I saw the Mexican half rise in his chair and at the same instant

found myself full length on the floor. None had told me that this was

the best attitude when bullets are abroad. I was there prone before I

had time to think--dropping as the room was filled with an intolerable

clamour like the discharge of a cannon. In those close quarters the

pistol report had no room to spread any more than the smoke--then acrid

in my nostrils. There was no second shot, but a great silence in which I

rose slowly to my knees. The Chinaman was gripping the table with both

hands and staring in front of him at an empty chair. The Mexican had

gone, and a little whirl of smoke was floating near the roof. Still

gripping the table, the Chinaman said: "Ah!" in the tone that a man

would use when, looking up from his work suddenly, he sees a well-known

friend in the doorway. Then he coughed and fell over to his own right,

and I saw that he had been shot in the stomach.

I became aware that, save for two men leaning over the stricken one, the

room was empty; and all the tides of intense fear, hitherto held back by

intenser curiosity, swept over my soul. I ardently desired the outside

air. It was possible that the Chinamen would mistake me for the

Mexican,--everything horrible seemed possible just then,--and it was

more than possible that the stairways would be closed while they were

hunting for the murderer. The man on the floor coughed a sickening

cough. I heard it as I fled, and one of his companions turned out the

lamp. Those stairs seemed interminable, and to add to my dismay there

was no sound of commotion in the house. No one hindered, no one even

looked at me. There was no trace of the Mexican. I found the doorway

and, my legs trembling under me, reached the protection of the clear

cool night, the fog, and the rain. I dared not run, and for the life of

me I could not walk. I must have effected a compromise, for I remember

the light of a street lamp showed the shadow of one half

skipping--caracoling along the pavements in what seemed to be an ecstacy

of suppressed happiness. But it was fear--deadly fear. Fear compounded

of past knowledge of the Oriental--only other white man--available

witness--three stories underground--and the cough of the Chinaman now

some forty feet under my clattering boot-heels. It was good to see the

shop-fronts and electric lights again. Not for anything would I have

informed the police, because I firmly believed that the Mexican had been

dealt with somewhere down there on the third floor long ere I had

reached the air; and, moreover, once clear of the place, I could not for

the life of me tell where it was. My ill-considered flight brought me

out somewhere a mile distant from the hotel; and the clank of the lift

that bore me to a bed six stories above ground was music in my ears.

Wherefore I would impress it upon you who follow after, do not knock

about the Chinese quarters at night and alone. You may stumble across a

picturesque piece of human nature that will unsteady your nerves for

half a day.

\* \* \* \* \*

And this brings me by natural sequence to the great drink question. As

you know, of course, the American does not drink at meals as a sensible

man should. Indeed, he has no meals. He stuffs for ten minutes thrice a

day. Also he has no decent notions about the sun being over the yard-arm

or below the horizon. He pours his vanity into himself at unholy hours,

and indeed he can hardly help it. You have no notion of what "treating"

means on the Western slope. It is more than an institution; it is a

religion, though men tell me that it is nothing to what it was. Take a

very common instance. At 10.30 A.M. a man is smitten with desire for

stimulants. He is in the company of two friends. All three adjourn to

the nearest bar,--seldom more than twenty yards away,--and take three

straight whiskys. They talk for two minutes. The second and third man

then treats in order; and thus each walks into the street, two of them

the poorer by three goes of whisky under their belt and one with two

more liquors than he wanted. It is not etiquette yet to refuse a treat.

The result is peculiar. I have never yet, I confess, seen a drunken man

in the streets, but I have heard more about drunkenness among white men,

and seen more decent men above or below themselves with drink, than I

care to think about. And the vice runs up into all sorts of circles and

societies. Never was I more astonished than at one pleasant dinner party

to hear a pair of pretty lips say casually of a gentleman friend then

under discussion, "He was drunk." The fact was merely stated without

emotion. That was what startled me. But the climate of California deals

kindly with excess, and treacherously covers up its traces. A man

neither bloats nor shrivels in this dry air. He continues with the false

bloom of health upon his cheeks, an equable eye, a firm mouth, and a

steady hand till a day of reckoning arrives, and suddenly breaking up,

about the head, he dies, and his friends speak his epitaph accordingly.

Why people who in most cases cannot hold their liquor should play with

it so recklessly I leave to others to decide. This unhappy state of

affairs has, however, produced one good result which I will confide to

you. In the heart of the business quarter, where banks and bankers are

thickest, and telegraph wires most numerous, stands a semi-subterranean

bar tended by a German with long blond locks and a crystalline eye. Go

thither softly, treading on the tips of your toes, and ask him for a

Button Punch. 'Twill take ten minutes to brew, but the result is the

highest and noblest product of the age. No man but one knows what is in

it. I have a theory it is compounded of the shavings of cherubs' wings,

the glory of a tropical dawn, the red clouds of sunset, and fragments of

lost epics by dead masters. But try you for yourselves, and pause a

while to bless me, who am always mindful of the truest interests of my

brethren.

But enough of the stale spilth of bar-rooms. Turn now to the august

spectacle of a Government of the people, by the people, for the people,

as it is understood in the city of San Francisco. Professor Bryce's book

will tell you that every American citizen over twenty-one years of age

possesses a vote. He may not know how to run his own business, control

his wife, or instil reverence into his children, may be pauper,

half-crazed with drink, bankrupt, dissolute, or merely a born fool; but

he has a vote. If he likes, he can be voting most of his time--voting

for his State Governor, his municipal officers, local option, sewage

contracts, or anything else of which he has no special knowledge.

Once every four years he votes for a new President. In his spare moments

he votes for his own judges--the men who shall give him justice. These

are dependent on popular favour for re-election inasmuch as they are

but chosen for a term of years--two or three, I believe. Such a

position is manifestly best calculated to create an independent and

unprejudiced administrator. Now this mass of persons who vote is divided

into two parties--Republican and Democrat. They are both agreed in

thinking that the other part is running creation (which is America) into

red flame. Also the Democrat as a party drinks more than the Republican,

and when drunk may be heard to talk about a thing called the Tariff,

which he does not understand, but which he conceives to be the bulwark

of the country or else the surest power for its destruction. Sometimes

he says one thing and sometimes another, in order to contradict the

Republican, who is always contradicting himself. And this is a true and

lucid account of the forepart of American politics. The behind-part is

otherwise.

Since every man has a vote and may vote on every conceivable thing, it

follows that there exist certain wise men who understand the art of

buying up votes retail, and vending them wholesale to whoever wants them

most urgently. Now an American engaged in making a home for himself has

not time to vote for turn-cocks and district attorneys and cattle of

that kind, but the unemployed have much time because they are always on

hand somewhere in the streets. They are called "the boys," and form a

peculiar class. The boys are young men; inexpert in war, unskilled in

labour; who have neither killed a man, lifted cattle, or dug a well. In

plain English, they are just the men in the streets who can always be

trusted to rally round any cause that has a glass of liquor for a

visible heart. They wait--they are on hand--; and in being on hand lies

the crown and the glory of American politics. The wise man is he who,

keeping a liquor-saloon and judiciously dispensing drinks, knows how to

retain within arm's reach a block of men who will vote for or against

anything under the canopy of Heaven. Not every saloon-keeper can do

this. It demands careful study of city politics, tact, the power of

conciliation, and infinite resources of anecdote to amuse and keep the

crowd together night after night, till the saloon becomes a salon. Above

all, the liquor side of the scheme must not be worked for immediate

profit. The boys who drink so freely will ultimately pay their host a

thousandfold. An Irishman, and an Irishman pre-eminently, knows how to

work such a saloon parliament. Observe for a moment the plan of

operations. The rank and file are treated to drink and a little

money--and they vote. He who controls ten votes receives a proportionate

reward; the dispenser of a thousand votes is worthy of reverence, and so

the chain runs on till we reach the most successful worker of public

saloons--the man most skilful in keeping his items together and using

them when required. Such a man governs the city as absolutely as a king.

And you would know where the gain comes in? The whole of the public

offices of a city (with the exception of a very few where special

technical skill is required) are short-term offices distributed

according to "political" leanings. What would you have? A big city

requires many officials. Each office carries a salary and influence

worth twice the pay. The offices are for the representatives of the men

who keep together and are on hand to vote. The Commissioner of Sewage,

let us say, is a gentleman who has been elected to his office by a

Republican vote. He knows little and cares less about sewage, but he

has sense enough to man the pumping-works and the

street-sweeping-machines with the gentlemen who elected him. The

Commissioner of Police has been helped to his post very largely by the

influence of the boys at such and such a saloon. He may be the guardian

of city morals, but he is not going to allow his subordinates to enforce

early closing or abstention from gambling in that saloon. Most offices

are limited to four years, consequently he is a fool who does not make

his office pay him while he is in it.

The only people who suffer by this happy arrangement are, in fact, the

people who devised the lovely system. And they suffer because they are

Americans. Let us explain. As you know, every big city here holds at

least one big foreign vote--generally Irish, frequently German. In San

Francisco, the gathering place of the races, there is a distinct Italian

vote to be considered, but the Irish vote is more important. For this

reason the Irishman does not kill himself with overwork. He is made for

the cheery dispensing of liquors, for everlasting blarney, and possesses

a wonderfully keen appreciation of the weaknesses of lesser human

nature. Also he has no sort of conscience, and only one strong

conviction--that of deep-rooted hatred toward England. He keeps to the

streets, he is on hand, he votes joyously, spending days lavishly,--and

time is the American's dearest commodity. Behold the glorious result.

To-day the city of San Francisco is governed by the Irish vote and the

Irish influence, under the rule of a gentleman whose sight is impaired,

and who requires a man to lead him about the streets. He is called

officially "Boss Buckley," and unofficially the "Blind White Devil." I

have before me now the record of his amiable career in black and white.

It occupies four columns of small print, and perhaps you would think it

disgraceful. Summarised, it is as follows: Boss Buckley, by tact and

deep knowledge of the seamy side of the city, won himself a following of

voters. He sought no office himself, or rarely: but as his following

increased he sold their services to the highest bidder, himself taking

toll of the revenues of every office. He controlled the Democratic party

in the city of San Francisco. The people appoint their own judges. Boss

Buckley's people appointed judges. These judges naturally were Boss

Buckley's property. I have been to dinner parties and heard educated

men, not concerned with politics, telling stories one to another of

"justice," both civil and criminal, being bought with a price from the

hands of these judges. Such tales they told without heat, as men

recording facts. Contracts for road-mending, public buildings, and the

like are under the control of Boss Buckley, because the men whom

Buckley's following sent to the City Council adjudicate on these

contracts; and on each and every one of these contracts Boss Buckley

levies his percentage for himself and his allies.

The Republican party in San Francisco also have their boss. He is not so

great a genius as Boss Buckley, but I decline to believe that he is any

whit more virtuous. He has a smaller number of votes at his command.

From Sea to Sea

Letters of Travel

By Rudyard Kipling

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PART II

FROM SEA TO SEA

No. XXV

TELLS HOW I DROPPED INTO POLITICS AND THE TENDERER SENTIMENTS. CONTAINS

A MORAL TREATISE ON AMERICAN MAIDENS AND AN ETHNOLOGICAL ONE ON THE

NEGRO. ENDS WITH A BANQUET AND A TYPE-WRITER.

I have been watching machinery in repose after reading about machinery

in action. An excellent gentleman who bears a name honoured in the

magazines writes, much as Disraeli orated, of "the sublime instincts of

an ancient people," the certainty with which they can be trusted to

manage their own affairs in their own way, and the speed with which they

are making for all sorts of desirable goals. This he called a statement

or purview of American politics. I went almost directly afterwards to a

saloon where gentlemen interested in ward politics nightly congregate.

They were not pretty persons. Some of them were bloated, and they all

swore cheerfully till the heavy gold watch-chains on their fat stomachs

rose and fell again; but they talked over their liquor as men who had

power and unquestioned access to places of trust and profit. The

magazine-writer discussed theories of government; these men the

practice. They had been there. They knew all about it. They banged their

fists on the table and spoke of political "pulls," the vending of votes,

and so forth. Theirs was not the talk of village babblers

reconstructing the affairs of the nation, but of strong, coarse, lustful

men fighting for spoil and thoroughly understanding the best methods of

reaching it. I listened long and intently to speech I could not

understand, or only in spots. It was the speech of business, however. I

had sense enough to know \_that\_, and to do my laughing outside the door.

Then I began to understand why my pleasant and well-educated hosts in

San Francisco spoke with a bitter scorn of such duties of citizenship as

voting and taking an interest in the distribution of offices. Scores of

men have told me with no false pride that they would as soon concern

themselves with the public affairs of the city or State as rake muck.

Read about politics as the cultured writer of the magazines regards 'em,

and then, \_and not till then\_, pay your respects to the gentlemen who

run the grimy reality.

I'm sick of interviewing night-editors, who, in response to my demand

for the record of a prominent citizen, answer: "Well, you see, he began

by keeping a saloon," etc. I prefer to believe that my informants are

treating me as in the old sinful days in India I was used to treat our

wandering Globe-trotters. They declare that they speak the truth, and

the news of dog-politics lately vouchsafed to me in groggeries incline

me to believe--but I won't. The people are much too nice to slangander

as recklessly as I have been doing. Besides, I am hopelessly in love

with about eight American maidens--all perfectly delightful till the

next one comes into the room. O-Toyo was a darling, but she lacked

several things; conversation, for one. You cannot live on giggles. She

shall remain unmoved at Nagasaki while I roast a battered heart before

the shrine of a big Kentucky blonde who had for a nurse, when she was

little, a negro "mammy." By consequence she has welded on to Californian

beauty, Paris dresses, Eastern culture, Europe trips, and wild Western

originality, the queer dreamy superstitions of the negro quarters, and

the result is soul-shattering. And she is but one of many stars. \_Item\_,

a maiden who believes in education and possesses it, with a few hundred

thousand dollars to boot, and a taste for slumming. \_Item\_, the leader

of a sort of informal salon where girls congregate, read papers, and

daringly discuss metaphysical problems and candy--a sloe-eyed,

black-browed, imperious maiden. \_Item\_, a very small maiden, absolutely

without reverence, who can in one swift sentence trample upon and leave

gasping half a dozen young men. \_Item\_, a millionnairess, burdened with

her money, lonely, caustic, with a tongue keen as a sword, yearning for

a sphere, but chained up to the rock of her vast possessions. \_Item\_, a

typewriter-maiden earning her own bread in this big city, because she

doesn't think a girl ought to be a burden on her parents. She quotes

ThÃ©ophile Gautier, and moves through the world manfully, much respected,

for all her twenty inexperienced summers. \_Item\_, a woman from Cloudland

who has no history in the past, but is discreetly of the present, and

strives for the confidences of male humanity on the grounds of

"sympathy." (This is not altogether a new type.) \_Item\_, a girl in a

"dive" blessed with a Greek head and eyes that seem to speak all that is

best and sweetest in the world. But woe is me!--she has no ideas in this

world or the next, beyond the consumption of beer (a commission on each

bottle), and protests that she sings the songs allotted to her nightly

with no more than the vaguest notion of their meaning.

Sweet and comely are the maidens of Devonshire; delicate and of gracious

seeming those who live in the pleasant places of London; fascinating for

all their demureness the damsels of France clinging closely to their

mothers, and with large eyes wondering at the wicked world; excellent in

her own place and to those who understand her is the Anglo-Indian "spin"

in her second season; but the girls of America are above and beyond them

all. They are clever; they can talk. Yea, it is said that they think.

Certainly they have an appearance of so doing. They are original, and

look you between the brows with unabashed eyes as a sister might look at

her brother. They are instructed in the folly and vanity of the male

mind, for they have associated with "the boys" from babyhood, and can

discerningly minister to both vices, or pleasantly snub the possessor.

They possess, moreover, a life among themselves, independent of

masculine associations. They have societies and clubs and unlimited

tea-fights where all the guests are girls. They are self-possessed

without parting with any tenderness that is their sex-right; they

understand; they can take care of themselves; they are superbly

independent. When you ask them what makes them so charming, they say:

"It is because we are better educated than your girls and--and we are

more sensible in regard to men. We have good times all round, but we

aren't taught to regard every man as a possible husband. Nor is he

expected to marry the first girl he calls on regularly." Yes, they have

good times, their freedom is large, and they do not abuse it. They can

go driving with young men, and receive visits from young men to an

extent that would make an English mother wink with horror; and neither

driver nor drivee have a thought beyond the enjoyment of a good time. As

certain also of their own poets have said:--

"Man is fire and woman is tow,

And the Devil he comes and begins to blow."

In America the tow is soaked in a solution that makes it fire-proof, in

absolute liberty and large knowledge; consequently accidents do not

exceed the regular percentage arranged by the Devil for each class and

climate under the skies. But the freedom of the young girl has its

drawbacks. She is--I say it with all reluctance--irreverent, from her

forty-dollar bonnet to the buckles in her eighteen-dollar shoes. She

talks flippantly to her parents and men old enough to be her

grandfather. She has a prescriptive right to the society of the Man who

Arrives. The parents admit it. This is sometimes embarrassing,

especially when you call on a man and his wife for the sake of

information; the one being a merchant of varied knowledge, the other a

woman of the world. In five minutes your host has vanished. In another

five his wife has followed him, and you are left with a very charming

maiden doubtless, but certainly not the person you came to see. She

chatters and you grin; but you leave with the very strong impression of

a wasted morning. This has been my experience once or twice. I have even

said as pointedly as I dared to a man: "I came to see you." "You'd

better see me in my office, then. The house belongs to my women-folk--to

my daughter, that is to say." He spoke with truth. The American of

wealth is owned by his family. They exploit him for bullion, and

sometimes it seems to me that his lot is a lonely one. The women get the

ha'pence; the kicks are all his own. Nothing is too good for an

American's daughter (I speak here of the moneyed classes). The girls

take every gift as a matter of course. Yet they develop greatly when a

catastrophe arrives and the man of many millions goes up or goes down

and his daughters take to stenography or type-writing. I have heard many

tales of heroism from the lips of girls who counted the principals among

their friends. The crash came; Mamie or Hattie or Sadie gave up their

maid, their carriages and candy, and with a No. 2 Remington and a stout

heart set about earning their daily bread.

"And did I drop her from the list of my friends? No, Sir," said a

scarlet-lipped vision in white lace. "That might happen to me any day."

It may be this sense of possible disaster in the air that makes San

Franciscan society go with so captivating a rush and whirl. Recklessness

is in the air. I can't explain where it comes from, but there it is. The

roaring winds off the Pacific make you drunk to begin with. The

aggressive luxury on all sides helps out the intoxication, and you spin

for ever "down the ringing groves of change" (there is no small change,

by the way, west of the Rockies) as long as money lasts. They make

greatly and they spend lavishly; not only the rich but the artisans, who

pay nearly five pounds for a suit of clothes and for other luxuries in

proportion. The young men rejoice in the days of their youth. They

gamble, yacht, race, enjoy prize-fights and cock-fights--the one openly,

the other in secret--they establish luxurious clubs; they break

themselves over horse-flesh and--other things; and they are instant in

quarrel. At twenty they are experienced in business; embark in vast

enterprises, take partners as experienced as themselves, and go to

pieces with as much splendour as their neighbours. Remember that the men

who stocked California in the Fifties were physically, and as far as

regards certain tough virtues, the pick of the earth. The inept and the

weakly died \_en route\_ or went under in the days of construction. To

this nucleus were added all the races of the Continent--French, Italian,

German, and, of course, the Jew. The result you shall see in

large-boned, deep-chested, delicate-handed women, and long, elastic,

well-built boys. It needs no little golden badge swinging from his

watch-chain to mark the Native Son of the Golden West--the country-bred

of California. Him I love because he is devoid of fear, carries himself

like a man, and has a heart as big as his boots. I fancy, too, he knows

how to enjoy the blessings of life that his world so abundantly bestows

upon him. At least I heard a little rat of a creature with hock-bottle

shoulders explaining that a man from Chicago could pull the eye-teeth of

a Californian in business. Well, if I lived in Fairyland, where cherries

were as big as plums, plums as big as apples, and strawberries of no

account; where the procession of the fruits of the seasons was like a

pageant in a Drury Lane pantomime and where the dry air was wine, I

should let business slide once in a way and kick up my heels with my

fellows. The tale of the resources of California--vegetable and

mineral--is a fairy tale. You can read it in books. You would never

believe me. All manner of nourishing food from sea-fish to beef may be

bought at the lowest prices; and the people are well developed and of a

high stomach. They demand ten shillings for tinkering a jammed lock of a

trunk; they receive sixteen shillings a day for working as carpenters;

they spend many sixpences on very bad cigars, and they go mad over a

prize-fight. When they disagree, they do so fatally, with firearms in

their hands, and on the public streets. I was just clear of Mission

Street when the trouble began between two gentlemen, one of whom

perforated the other. When a policeman, whose name I do not recollect,

"fatally shot Ed. Kearney," for attempting to escape arrest, I was in

the next street. For these things I am thankful. It is enough to travel

with a policeman in a tram-car and while he arranges his coat-tails as

he sits down, to catch sight of a loaded revolver. It is enough to know

that fifty per cent of the men in the public saloons carry pistols about

them. The Chinaman waylays his adversary and methodically chops him to

pieces with his hatchet. Then the Press roar about the brutal ferocity

of the Pagan. The Italian reconstructs his friend with a long knife. The

Press complains of the waywardness of the alien. The Irishman and the

native Californian in their hours of discontent use the revolver, not

once, but six times. The Press records the fact, and asks in the next

column whether the world can parallel the progress of San Francisco. The

American who loves this country will tell you that this sort of thing is

confined to the lower classes. Just at present an ex-judge who was sent

to jail by another judge (upon my word, I cannot tell whether these

titles mean anything) is breathing red-hot vengeance against his enemy.

The papers have interviewed both parties and confidently expect a fatal

issue.

Now let me draw breath and curse the negro waiter and through him the

negro in service generally. He has been made a citizen with a vote;

consequently both political parties play with him. But that is neither

here nor there. He will commit in one meal every \_bÃ©tise\_ that a

scullion fresh from the plough-tail is capable of, and he will continue

to repeat those faults. He is as complete a heavy-footed,

uncomprehending, bungle-fisted fool as any \_memsahib\_ in the East ever

took into her establishment. But he is according to law a free and

independent citizen--consequently above reproof or criticism. He, and he

alone, in this insane city will wait at table (the Chinaman doesn't

count). He is untrained, inept, but he will fill the place and draw the

pay. Now God and his father's Kismet made him intellectually inferior to

the Oriental. He insists on pretending that he serves tables by

accident--as a sort of amusement. He wishes you to understand this

little fact. You wish to eat your meals, and if possible to have them

properly served. He is a big, black, vain baby and a man rolled into

one. A coloured gentleman who insisted on getting me pie when I wanted

something else, demanded information about India. I gave him some facts

about wages. "Oh hell," said he, cheerfully, "that wouldn't keep me in

cigars for a month." Then he fawned on me for a ten-cent piece. Later he

took it upon himself to pity the natives of India--"heathen" he called

them, this Woolly One whose race has been the butt of every comedy on

the Asiatic stage since the beginning. And I turned and saw by the head

upon his shoulders that he was a Yoruba man, if there be any truth in

ethnological castes. He did his thinking in English, but he was a Yoruba

negro, and the race type had remained the same throughout his

generations. And the room was full of other races--some that looked

exactly like Gallas (but the trade was never recruited from that side of

Africa), some duplicates of Cameroon heads, and some Kroomen, if ever

Kroomen wore evening dress. The American does not consider little

matters of descent, though by this time he ought to know all about

"damnable heredity." As a general rule he keeps himself very far from

the negro and says unpretty things about him. There are six million

negroes more or less in the States, and they are increasing. The

Americans once having made them citizens cannot unmake them. He says, in

his newspapers, they ought to be elevated by education. He is trying

this: but it is like to be a long job, because black blood is much more

adhesive than white, and throws back with annoying persistence. When the

negro gets a religion he returns, directly as a hiving bee, to the first

instincts of his people. Just now a wave of religion is sweeping over

some of the Southern States. Up to the present, two Messiahs and one

Daniel have appeared; and several human sacrifices have been offered up

to these incarnations. The Daniel managed to get three young men, who he

insisted were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to walk into a blast

furnace; guaranteeing non-combustion. They did not return. I have seen

nothing of this kind, but I have attended a negro church. The

congregation were moved by the spirit to groans and tears, and one of

them danced up the aisle to the mourners' bench. The motive may have

been genuine. The movements of the shaken body were those of a Zanzibar

stick-dance, such as you see at Aden on the coal boats; and even as I

watched the people, the links that bound them to the white man snapped

one by one, and I saw before me--the \_hubshi\_ (the Woolly One) praying

to the God he did not understand. Those neatly dressed folk on the

benches, the grey-headed elder by the window, were savages--neither more

nor less. What will the American do with the negro? The South will not

consort with him. In some States miscegenation is a penal offence. The

North is every year less and less in need of his services. And he will

not disappear. He will continue as a problem. His friends will urge that

he is as good as the white man. His enemies ... it is not good to be a

negro in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

But this has nothing to do with San Francisco and her merry maidens, her

strong, swaggering men, and her wealth of gold and pride. They bore me

to a banquet in honour of a brave Lieutenant--Carlin, of the

\_Vandalia\_--who stuck by his ship in the great cyclone at Apia and

comported himself as an officer should. On that occasion--'twas at the

Bohemian Club--I heard oratory with the roundest of O's; and devoured a

dinner the memory of which will descend with me into the hungry grave.

There were about forty speeches delivered; and not one of them was

average or ordinary. It was my first introduction to the American Eagle

screaming for all it was worth. The Lieutenant's heroism served as a peg

from which those silver-tongued ones turned themselves loose and kicked.

They ransacked the clouds of sunset, the thunderbolts of Heaven, the

deeps of Hell, and the splendours of the Resurrection, for tropes and

metaphors, and hurled the result at the head of the guest of the

evening. Never since the morning stars sang together for joy, I

learned, had an amazed creation witnessed such superhuman bravery as

that displayed by the American navy in the Samoa cyclone. Till earth

rotted in the phosphorescent star-and-stripe slime of a decayed universe

that God-like gallantry would not be forgotten. I grieve that I cannot

give the exact words. My attempt at reproducing their spirit is pale and

inadequate. I sat bewildered on a coruscating Niagara

of--blatherumskite. It was magnificent--it was stupendous; and I was

conscious of a wicked desire to hide my face in a napkin and grin. Then,

according to rule, they produced their dead, and across the snowy

tablecloths dragged the corpse of every man slain in the Civil War, and

hurled defiance at "our natural enemy" (England, so please you!) "with

her chain of fortresses across the world." Thereafter they glorified

their nation afresh, from the beginning, in case any detail should have

been overlooked, and that made me uncomfortable for their sakes. How in

the world can a white man, a Sahib of Our blood, stand up and plaster

praise on his own country? He can think as highly as he likes, but his

open-mouthed vehemence of adoration struck me almost as indelicate. My

hosts talked for rather more than three hours, and at the end seemed

ready for three hours more. But when the Lieutenant--such a big, brave,

gentle giant!--rose to his feet, he delivered what seemed to me as the

speech of the evening. I remember nearly the whole of it, and it ran

something in this way: "Gentlemen--it's very good of you to give me this

dinner and to tell me all these pretty things, but what I want you to

understand--the fact is--what we want and what we ought to get at once

is a navy--more ships--lots of 'em--" Then we howled the top of the roof

off, and I, for one, fell in love with Carlin on the spot. Wallah! He

was a man.

The Prince among merchants bade me take no heed to the warlike

sentiments of some of the old Generals. "The sky-rockets are thrown in

for effect," quoth he, "and whenever we get on our hind legs we always

express a desire to chaw up England. It's a sort of family affair."

And indeed, when you come to think of it, there is no other country for

the American public speaker to trample upon.

France has Germany; we have Russia; for Italy, Austria is provided; and

the humblest Pathan possesses an ancestral enemy. Only America stands

out of the racket; and therefore, to be in fashion, makes a sand-bag of

the mother-country, and bangs her when occasion requires. "The chain of

fortresses" man, a fascinating talker, explained to me after the affair

that he was compelled to blow off steam. Everybody expected it. When we

had chanted "The Star-Spangled Banner" not more than eight times, we

adjourned. America is a very great country, but it is not yet Heaven

with electric lights and plush fittings, as the speakers professed to

believe. My listening mind went back to the politicians in the saloon

who wasted no time in talking about freedom, but quietly made

arrangements to impose their will on the citizens. "The Judge is a great

man, but give thy presents to the Clerk," as the proverb saith.

And what more remains to tell? I cannot write connectedly, because I am

in love with all those girls aforesaid and some others who do not

appear in the invoice. The type-writer girl is an institution of which

the comic papers make much capital, but she is vastly convenient. She

and a companion rent a room in a business quarter, and copy manuscript

at the rate of six annas a page. Only a woman can manage a type-writing

machine, because she has served apprenticeship to the sewing-machine.

She can earn as much as a hundred dollars a month, and professes to

regard this form of bread-winning as her natural destiny. But oh how she

hates it in her heart of hearts! When I had got over the surprise of

doing business and trying to give orders to a young woman of coldly

clerkly aspect, intrenched behind gold-rimmed spectacles, I made

inquiries concerning the pleasures of this independence. They liked

it--indeed, they did. 'Twas the natural fate of almost all girls,--the

recognised custom in America,--and I was a barbarian not to see it in

that light.

"Well, and after?" said I. "What happens?"

"We work for our bread."

"And then what do you expect?"

"Then we shall work for our bread."

"Till you die?"

"Ye-es--unless--"

"Unless what? A man works till he dies."

"So shall we." This without enthusiasm--"I suppose."

Said the partner in the firm audaciously: "Sometimes we marry our

employers--at least that's what the newspapers say." The hand banged on

half a dozen of the keys of the machine at once. "Yes, I don't care. I

hate it--I \_hate\_ it--I hate it, and you needn't look so!"

The senior partner was regarding the rebel with grave-eyed reproach.

"I thought you did," said I. "I don't suppose American girls are much

different from English ones in instinct."

"Isn't it ThÃ©ophile Gautier who says that the only differences between

country and country lie in the slang and the uniform of the police?"

Now in the name of all the Gods at once, what is one to say to a young

lady (who in England would be a Person) who earns her own bread, and

very naturally hates the employ, and slings out-of-the-way quotations at

your head? That one falls in love with her goes without saying; but that

is not enough.

A mission should be established.

No. XXVI

TAKES ME THROUGH BRET HARTE'S COUNTRY, AND TO PORTLAND WITH "OLD MAN

CALIFORNIA." EXPLAINS HOW TWO VAGABONDS BECAME HOMESICK THROUGH LOOKING

AT OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES.

"I walked in the lonesome even,

And who so sad as I,

As I saw the young men and maidens

Merrily passing by?"

San Francisco has only one drawback. 'Tis hard to leave. When like the

pious Hans Breitmann I "cut that city by the sea" it was with regrets

for the pleasant places left behind, for the men who were so clever, and

the women who were so witty, for the "dives," the beer-halls, the

bucket-shops, and the poker-hells where humanity was going to the Devil

with shouting and laughter and song and the rattle of dice-boxes. I

would fain have stayed, but I feared that an evil end would come to me

when my money was all spent and I descended to the street corner. A

voice inside me said: "Get out of this. Go north. Strike for Victoria

and Vancouver. Bask for a day under the shadow of the old flag." So I

set forth from San Francisco to Portland in Oregon, and that was a

railroad run of thirty-six hours.

The Oakland railway terminus, whence all the main lines start, does not

own anything approaching to a platform. A yard with a dozen or more

tracks is roughly asphalted, and the traveller laden with hand-bags

skips merrily across the metals in search of his own particular train.

The bells of half a dozen shunting engines are tolling suggestively in

his ears. If he is run down, so much the worse for him. "When the bell

rings, look out for the locomotive." Long use has made the nation

familiar and even contemptuous towards trains to an extent which God

never intended. Women who in England would gather up their skirts and

scud timorously over a level crossing in the country, here talk dress

and babies under the very nose of the cow-catcher, and little children

dally with the moving car in a manner horrible to behold. We pulled out

at the wholly insignificant speed of twenty-five miles an hour through

the streets of a suburb of fifty thousand, and in our progress among the

carts and the children and the shop fronts slew nobody; at which I was

not a little disappointed.

When the negro porter bedded me up for the night and I had solved the

problem of undressing while lying down,--I was much cheered by the

thought that if anything happened I should have to stay where I was and

wait till the kerosene lamps set the overturned car alight and burned me

to death. It is easier to get out of a full theatre than to leave a

Pullman in haste.

By the time I had discovered that a profusion of nickel-plating, plush,

and damask does not compensate for closeness and dust, the train ran

into the daylight on the banks of the Sacramento River. A few windows

were gingerly opened after the bunks had been reconverted into seats,

but that long coffin-car was by no means ventilated, and we were a

gummy, grimy crew who sat there. At six in the morning the heat was

distinctly unpleasant, but seeing with the eye of the flesh that I was

in Bret Harte's own country, I rejoiced. There were the pines and

madrone-clad hills his miners lived and fought among; there was the

heated red earth that showed whence the gold had been washed; the dry

gulch, the red, dusty road where Hamblin was used to stop the stage in

the intervals of his elegant leisure and superior card-play; there was

the timber felled and sweating resin in the sunshine; and, above all,

there was the quivering pungent heat that Bret Harte drives into your

dull brain with the magic of his pen. When we stopped at a collection of

packing-cases dignified by the name of a town, my felicity was complete.

The name of the place was something offensive,--Amberville or

Jacksonburgh,--but it owned a cast-iron fountain worthy of a town of

thirty thousand. Next to the fountain was a "hotel," at least seventeen

feet high including the chimney, and next to the hotel was the

forest--the pine, the oak, and the untrammelled undergrowth of the

hillside. A cinnamon-bear cub--Baby Sylvester in the very fur--was tied

to the stump of a tree opposite the fountain; a pack-mule dozed in the

dust-haze, a red-shirted miner in a slouch hat supported the hotel, a

blue-shirted miner swung round the corner, and the two went indoors for

a drink. A girl came out of the only other house but one, and shading

her eyes with a brown hand stared at the panting train. She didn't

recognise me, but I knew her--had known her for years. She was M'liss.

She never married the schoolmaster, after all, but stayed, always young

and always fair, among the pines. I knew Red-Shirt too. He was one of

the bearded men who stood back when Tennessee claimed his partner from

the hands of the Law. The Sacramento River, a few yards away, shouted

that all these things were true. The train went on while Baby Sylvester

stood on his downy head, and M'liss swung her sun-bonnet by the strings.

"What do you think?" said a lawyer who was travelling with me. "It's a

new world to you; isn't it?"

"No. It's quite familiar. I was never out of England; it's as if I saw

it all."

Quick as light came the answer: "'Yes, they lived once thus at Venice

when the miners were the kings.'"

I loved that lawyer on the spot. We drank to Bret Harte who, you

remember, "claimed California, but California never claimed him. He's

turned English."

Lying back in state, I waited for the flying miles to turn over the

pages of the book I knew. They brought me all I desired--from the Man of

no Account sitting on a stump and playing with a dog, to "that most

sarcastic man, the quiet Mister Brown." He boarded the train from out of

the woods, and there was venom and sulphur on his tongue. He had just

lost a lawsuit. Only Yuba Bill failed to appear. The train had taken his

employment from him. A nameless ruffian backed me into a corner and

began telling me about the resources of the country, and what it would

eventually become. All I remember of his lecture was that you could

catch trout in the Sacramento River--the stream that we followed so

faithfully.

Then rose a tough and wiry old man with grizzled hair and made

inquiries about the trout. To him was added the secretary of a

life-insurance company. I fancy he was travelling to rake in the dead

that the train killed. But he, too, was a fisherman, and the two turned

to meward. The frankness of a Westerner is delightful. They tell me that

in the Eastern States I shall meet another type of man and a more

reserved. The Californian always speaks of the man from the New England

States as a different breed. It is our Punjab and Madras over again, but

more so. The old man was on a holiday in search of fish. When he

discovered a brother-loafer he proposed a confederation of rods. Quoth

the insurance-agent, "I'm not staying any time in Portland, but I will

introduce you to a man there who'll tell you about fishing." The two

told strange tales as we slid through the forests and saw afar off the

snowy head of a great mountain. There were vineyards, fruit orchards,

and wheat fields where the land opened out, and every ten miles or so,

twenty or thirty wooden houses and at least three churches. A large town

would have a population of two thousand and an infinite belief in its

own capacities. Sometimes a flaring advertisement flanked the line,

calling for men to settle down, take up the ground, and make their home

there. At a big town we could pick up the local newspaper, narrow as the

cutting edge of a chisel and twice as keen--a journal filled with the

prices of stock, notices of improved reaping and binding machines,

movements of eminent citizens--"whose fame beyond their own abode

extends--for miles along the Harlem road." There was not much grace

about these papers, but all breathed the same need for good men, steady

men who would plough, and till, and build schools for their children,

and make a township in the hills. Once only I found a sharp change in

the note and a very pathetic one. I think it was a young soul in trouble

who was writing poetry. The editor had jammed the verses between the

flamboyant advertisement of a real-estate agent--a man who sells you

land and lies about it--and that of a Jew tailor who disposed of "nobby"

suits at "cut-throat prices." Here are two verses; I think they tell

their own story:--

"God made the pine with its root in the earth,

Its top in the sky;

They have burned the pine to increase the worth

Of the wheat and the silver rye.

"Go weigh the cost of the soul of the pine

Cut off from the sky;

And the price of the wheat that grows so fine

And the worth of the silver rye!"

The thin-lipped, keen-eyed men who boarded the train would not read that

poetry, or, if they did, would not understand. Heaven guard that poor

pine in the desert and keep "its top in the sky"!

When the train took to itself an extra engine and began to breathe

heavily, some one said that we were ascending the Siskiyou Mountains. We

had been climbing steadily from San Francisco, and at last won to over

four thousand feet above sea-level, always running through forest. Then,

naturally enough, we came down, but we dropped two thousand two hundred

feet in about thirteen miles. It was not so much the grinding of the

brakes along the train, or the sight of three curves of track apparently

miles below us, or even the vision of a goods-train apparently just

under our wheels, or even the tunnels, that made me reflect; it was the

trestles over which we crawled,--trestles something over a hundred feet

high and looking like a collection of match-sticks.

"I guess our timber is as much a curse as a blessing," said the old man

from Southern California. "These trestles last very well for five or six

years; then they get out of repair, and a train goes through 'em, or

else a forest fire burns 'em up."

This was said in the middle of a groaning, shivering trestle. An

occasional plate-layer took a look at us as we went down, but that

railway didn't waste men on inspection duty. Very often there were

cattle on the track, against which the engine used a diabolical form of

whistling. The old man had been a driver in his youth, and beguiled the

way with cheery anecdotes of what might be expected if we fouled a young

calf.

"You see, they get their legs under the cow-catcher and that'll put an

engine off the line. I remember when a hog wrecked an excursion-train

and killed sixty people. 'Guess the engineer will look out, though."

There is considerably too much guessing about this large nation. As one

of them put it rather forcibly: "We guess a trestle will stand for ever,

and we guess that we can patch up a washout on the track, and we guess

the road's clear, and sometimes we guess ourselves into the \_deepot\_,

and sometimes we guess ourselves into Hell."

\* \* \* \* \*

The descent brought us far into Oregon and a timber and wheat country.

We drove through wheat and pine in alternate slices, but pine chiefly,

till we reached Portland, which is a city of fifty thousand, possessing

the electric light of course, equally, of course, devoid of pavements,

and a port of entry about a hundred miles from the sea at which big

steamers can load. It is a poor city that cannot say it has no equal on

the Pacific coast. Portland shouts this to the pines which run down from

a thousand-foot ridge clear up to the city. You may sit in a bedizened

bar-room furnished with telephone and clicker, and in half an hour be in

the woods.

Portland produces lumber and jig-saw fittings for houses, and beer and

buggies, and bricks and biscuit; and, in case you should miss the fact,

there are glorified views of the town hung up in public places with the

value of the products set down in dollars. All this is excellent and

exactly suitable to the opening of a new country; but when a man tells

you it is civilisation, you object. The first thing that the civilised

man learns to do is to keep the dollars in the background, because they

are only the oil of the machine that makes life go smoothly.

Portland is so busy that it can't attend to its own sewage or paving,

and the four-storey brick blocks front cobble-stones and plank sidewalks

and other things much worse. I saw a foundation being dug out. The

sewage of perhaps twenty years ago, had thoroughly soaked into the soil,

and there was a familiar and Oriental look about the compost that flew

up with each shovel-load. Yet the local papers, as was just and proper,

swore there was no place like Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., chronicled the

performances of Oregonians, "claimed" prominent citizens elsewhere as

Oregonians, and fought tooth and nail for dock, rail, and wharfage

projects. And you could find men who had thrown in their lives with the

city, who were bound up in it, and worked their life out for what they

conceived to be its material prosperity. Pity it is to record that in

this strenuous, labouring town there had been, a week before, a

shooting-case. One well-known man had shot another on the street, and

was now pleading self-defence because the other man had, or the murderer

thought he had, a pistol about him. Not content with shooting him dead,

he squibbed off his revolver into him as he lay. I read the pleadings,

and they made me ill. So far as I could judge, if the dead man's body

had been found with a pistol on it, the shooter would have gone free.

Apart from the mere murder, cowardly enough in itself, there was a

refinement of cowardice in the plea. Here in this civilised city the

surviving brute was afraid he would be shot--fancied he saw the other

man make a motion to his hip-pocket, and so on. Eventually the jury

disagreed. And the degrading thing was that the trial was reported by

men who evidently understood all about the pistol, was tried before a

jury who were versed in the etiquette of the hip-pocket, and was

discussed on the streets by men equally initiate.

But let us return to more cheerful things. The insurance-agent

introduced us as friends to a real-estate man, who promptly bade us go

up the Columbia River for a day while he made inquiries about fishing.

There was no overwhelming formality. The old man was addressed as

"California," I answered indifferently to "England" or "Johnny Bull,"

and the real-estate man was "Portland." This was a lofty and spacious

form of address.

So California and I took a steamboat, and upon a sumptuous blue and gold

morning steered up the Willamette River, on which Portland stands, into

the great Columbia--the river that brings the salmon that goes into the

tin that is emptied into the dish when the extra guest arrives in India.

California introduced me to the boat and the scenery, showed me the

"texas," the difference between a "tow-head" and a "sawyer," and the

precise nature of a "slue." All I remember is a delightful feeling that

Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn and Mississippi Pilot were quite true, and

that I could almost recognise the very reaches down which Huck and Jim

had drifted. We were on the border line between Oregon State and

Washington Territory, but that didn't matter. The Columbia was the

Mississippi so far as I was concerned. We ran along the sides of wooded

islands whose banks were caving in with perpetual smashes, and we

skipped from one side to another of the mile-wide stream in search of a

channel, exactly like a Mississippi steamer, and when we wanted to pick

up or set down a passenger we chose a soft and safe place on the shore

and ran our very snub nose against it. California spoke to each new

passenger as he came aboard and told me the man's birthplace. A

long-haired tender of kine crashed out of the underwood, waved his hat,

and was taken aboard forthwith. "South Carolina," said California,

almost without looking at him. "When he talks you will hear a softer

dialect than mine." And it befell as he said: whereat I marvelled, and

California chuckled. Every island in the river carried fields of rich

wheat, orchards, and a white, wooden house; or else, if the pines grew

very thickly, a sawmill, the tremulous whine of whose saws flickered

across the water like the drone of a tired bee. From remarks he let fall

I gathered that California owned timber ships and dealt in lumber, had

ranches too, a partner, and everything handsome about him; in addition

to a chequered career of some thirty-five years. But he looked almost as

disreputable a loafer as I.

"Say, young feller, we're going to see scenery now. You shout and sing,"

said California, when the bland wooded islands gave place to bolder

outlines, and the steamer ran herself into a hornet's nest of

black-fanged rocks not a foot below the boiling broken water. We were

trying to get up a slue, or back channel, by a short cut, and the

stern-wheel never spun twice in the same direction. Then we hit a

floating log with a jar that ran through our system, and then,

white-bellied, open-gilled, spun by a dead salmon--a lordly twenty-pound

Chinook salmon who had perished in his pride. "You'll see the

salmon-wheels 'fore long," said a man who lived "way back on the

Washoogle," and whose hat was spangled with trout-flies. "Those Chinook

salmon never rise to the fly. The canneries take them by the wheel." At

the next bend we sighted a wheel--an infernal arrangement of wire-gauze

compartments worked by the current and moved out from a barge in shore

to scoop up the salmon as he races up the river. California swore long

and fluently at the sight, and the more fluently when he was told of the

weight of a good night's catch--some thousands of pounds. Think of the

black and bloody murder of it! But you out yonder insist in buying

tinned salmon, and the canneries cannot live by letting down lines.

About this time California was struck with madness. I found him dancing

on the fore-deck shouting, "Isn't she a daisy? Isn't she a darling?" He

had found a waterfall--a blown thread of white vapour that broke from

the crest of a hill--a waterfall eight hundred and fifty feet high whose

voice was even louder than the voice of the river. "Bridal Veil," jerked

out the purser. "D--n that purser and the people who christened her! Why

didn't they call her Mechlin lace Falls at fifty dollars a yard while

they were at it?" said California. And I agreed with him. There are many

"bridal veil" falls in this country, but few, men say, lovelier than

those that come down to the Columbia River. Then the scenery

began--poured forth with the reckless profusion of Nature, who when she

wants to be amiable succeeds only in being oppressively magnificent. The

river was penned between gigantic stone walls crowned with the ruined

bastions of Oriental palaces. The stretch of green water widened and was

guarded by pine-clad hills three thousand feet high. A wicked devil's

thumb nail of rock shot up a hundred feet in midstream. A sand-bar of

blinding white sand gave promise of flat country that the next bend

denied; for, lo! we were running under a triple tier of fortifications,

lava-topped, pine-clothed, and terrible. Behind them the white dome of

Mount Hood ran fourteen thousand feet into the blue, and at their feet

the river threshed among a belt of cottonwood trees. There I sat down

and looked at California half out of the boat in his anxiety to see both

sides of the river at once. He had seen my note-book, and it offended

him. "Young feller, let her go--and you shut your head. It's not you nor

anybody like you can put this down. Black, the novelist, he could. He

can describe salmon-fishing, \_he\_ can." And he glared at me as though he

expected me to go and do likewise.

"I can't. I know it," I said humbly.

"Then thank God that you came along this way."

We reached a little railway, on an island, which was to convey us to a

second steamer, because, as the purser explained, the river was "a

trifle broken." We had a six-mile run, sitting in the sunshine on a

dummy wagon, whirled just along the edge of the river-bluffs. Sometimes

we dived into the fragrant pine woods, ablaze with flowers; but we

generally watched the river now narrowed into a turbulent millrace. Just

where the whole body of water broke in riot over a series of cascades,

the United States Government had chosen to build a lock for steamers,

and the stream was one boiling, spouting mob of water. A log shot down

the race, struck on a rock, split from end to end, and rolled over in

white foam. I shuddered because my toes were not more than sixty feet

above the log, and I feared that a stray splinter might have found me.

But the train ran into the river on a sort of floating trestle, and I

was upon another steamer ere I fully understood why. The cascades were

not two hundred yards below us, and when we cast off to go upstream, the

rush of the river, ere the wheel struck the water, dragged us as though

we had been towed. Then the country opened out; and California mourned

for his lost bluffs and crags, till we struck a rock wall four hundred

feet high, crowned by the gigantic figure of a man watching us. On a

rocky island we saw the white tomb of an old-time settler who had made

his money in San Francisco, but had chosen to be buried in an Indian

burying-ground. A decayed wooden "wickyup," where the bones of the

Indian dead are laid, almost touched the tomb. The river ran into a

canal of basaltic rock, painted in yellow, vermilion, and green by

Indians and, by inferior brutes, adorned with advertisements of "bile

beans." We had reached The Dalles--the centre of a great sheep and wool

district, and the head of navigation.

When an American arrives at a new town it is his bounden duty to "take

it in." California swung his coat over his shoulder with the gesture of

a man used to long tramps, and together, at eight in the evening, we

explored The Dalles. The sun had not yet set, and it would be light for

at least another hour. All the inhabitants seemed to own a little villa

and one church apiece. The young men were out walking with the young

maidens, the old folks were sitting on the front steps,--not the ones

that led to the religiously shuttered best drawing-room, but the

side-front-steps,--and the husbands and wives were tying back pear trees

or gathering cherries. A scent of hay reached me, and in the stillness

we could hear the cattle bells as the cows came home across the

lava-sprinkled fields. California swung down the wooden pavements,

audibly criticising the housewives' hollyhocks and the more perfect ways

of pear-grafting, and, as the young men and maidens passed, giving

quaint stories of his youth. I felt that I knew all the people

aforetime, I was so interested in them and their life. A woman hung over

a gate talking to another woman, and as I passed I heard her say,

"skirts," and again, "skirts," and "I'll send you over the pattern"; and

I knew they were talking dress. We stumbled upon a young couple saying

good-by in the twilight, and "When shall I see you again?" quoth he; and

I understood that to the doubting heart the tiny little town we paraded

in twenty minutes might be as large as all London and as impassable as

an armed camp. I gave them both my blessing, because "When shall I see

you again?" is a question that lies very near to hearts of all the

world. The last garden gate shut with a click that travelled far down

the street, and the lights of the comfortable families began to shine in

the confidingly uncurtained windows.

"Say, Johnny Bull, doesn't all this make you feel lonesome?" said

California. "Have you got any folks at home? So've I--a wife and five

children--and I'm only on a holiday."

"And I'm only on a holiday," I said, and we went back to the

Spittoon-wood Hotel. Alas! for the peace and purity of the little town

that I had babbled about. At the back of a shop, and discreetly

curtained, was a room where the young men who had been talking to the

young maidens could play poker and drink and swear, and on the shop were

dime novels of bloodshed to corrupt the mind of the little boy, and

prurient servant-girl-slush yarns to poison the mind of the girl.

California only laughed grimly. He said that all these little one-house

towns were pretty much the same all over the States.

That night I dreamed I was back in India with no place to sleep in;

tramping up and down the Station mall and asking everybody, "When shall

I see you again?"

No. XXVII

SHOWS HOW I CAUGHT SALMON IN THE CLACKAMAS.

"The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; but

time and chance cometh to all."

I have lived! The American Continent may now sink under the sea, for I

have taken the best that it yields, and the best was neither dollars,

love, nor real estate. Hear now, gentlemen of the Punjab Fishing Club,

who whip the reaches of the Tavi, and you who painfully import trout to

Ootacamund, and I will tell you how "old man California" and I went

fishing, and you shall envy. We returned from The Dalles to Portland by

the way we had come, the steamer stopping \_en route\_ to pick up a

night's catch of one of the salmon wheels on the river, and to deliver

it at a cannery down-stream. When the proprietor of the wheel announced

that his take was two thousand two hundred and thirty pounds' weight of

fish, "and not a heavy catch, neither," I thought he lied. But he sent

the boxes aboard, and I counted the salmon by the hundred--huge

fifty-pounders, hardly dead, scores of twenty and thirty-pounders, and a

host of smaller fish.

The steamer halted at a rude wooden warehouse built on piles in a lonely

reach of the river, and sent in the fish. I followed them up a

scale-strewn, fishy incline that led to the cannery. The crazy building

was quivering with the machinery on its floors, and a glittering bank

of tin-scraps twenty feet high showed where the waste was thrown after

the cans had been punched. Only Chinamen were employed on the work, and

they looked like blood-besmeared yellow devils, as they crossed the

rifts of sunlight that lay upon the floor. When our consignment arrived,

the rough wooden boxes broke of themselves as they were dumped down

under a jet of water, and the salmon burst out in a stream of

quicksilver. A Chinaman jerked up a twenty-pounder, beheaded and

de-tailed it with two swift strokes of a knife, flicked out its internal

arrangements with a third, and cast it into a bloody-dyed tank. The

headless fish leaped from under his hands as though they were facing a

rapid. Other Chinamen pulled them from the vat and thrust them under a

thing like a chaff-cutter, which, descending, hewed them into unseemly

red gobbets fit for the can. More Chinamen with yellow, crooked fingers,

jammed the stuff into the cans, which slid down some marvellous machine

forthwith, soldering their own tops as they passed. Each can was hastily

tested for flaws, and then sunk, with a hundred companions, into a vat

of boiling water, there to be half cooked for a few minutes. The cans

bulged slightly after the operation, and were therefore slidden along by

the trolleyful to men with needles and soldering irons, who vented them,

and soldered the aperture. Except for the label, the "finest Columbia

salmon" was ready for the market. I was impressed, not so much with the

speed of the manufacture, as the character of the factory. Inside, on a

floor ninety by forty, the most civilised and murderous of machinery.

Outside, three footsteps, the thick-growing pines and the immense

solitude of the hills. Our steamer only stayed twenty minutes at that

place, but I counted two hundred and forty finished cans, made from the

catch of the previous night, ere I left the slippery, blood-stained,

scale-spangled, oily floors, and the offal-smeared Chinamen.

We reached Portland, California and I, crying for salmon, and the

real-estate man, to whom we had been intrusted by "Portland" the

insurance man, met us in the street saying that fifteen miles away,

across country, we should come upon a place called Clackamas where we

might perchance find what we desired. And California, his coat-tails

flying in the wind, ran to a livery stable and chartered a wagon and

team forthwith. I could push the wagon about with one hand, so light was

its structure. The team was purely American--that is to say, almost

human in its intelligence and docility. Some one said that the roads

were not good on the way to Clackamas and warned us against smashing the

springs. "Portland," who had watched the preparations, finally reckoned

"he'd come along too," and under heavenly skies we three companions of a

day set forth; California carefully lashing our rods into the carriage,

and the bystanders overwhelming us with directions as to the sawmills we

were to pass, the ferries we were to cross, and the sign-posts we were

to seek signs from. Half a mile from this city of fifty thousand souls

we struck (and this must be taken literally) a plank-road that would

have been a disgrace to an Irish village.

Then six miles of macadamised road showed us that the team could move. A

railway ran between us and the banks of the Willamette, and another

above us through the mountains. All the land was dotted with small

townships, and the roads were full of farmers in their town wagons,

bunches of tow-haired, boggle-eyed urchins sitting in the hay behind.

The men generally looked like loafers, but their women were all well

dressed. Brown hussar-braiding on a tailor-made jacket does not,

however, consort with hay-wagons. Then we struck into the woods along

what California called a "\_camina reale\_,"--a good road,--and Portland a

"fair track." It wound in and out among fire-blackened stumps, under

pine trees, along the corners of log-fences, through hollows which must

be hopeless marsh in the winter, and up absurd gradients. But nowhere

throughout its length did I see any evidence of road-making. There was a

track,--you couldn't well get off it,--and it was all you could do to

stay on it. The dust lay a foot thick in the blind ruts, and under the

dust we found bits of planking and bundles of brushwood that sent the

wagon bounding into the air. Sometimes we crashed through bracken; anon

where the blackberries grew rankest we found a lonely little cemetery,

the wooden rails all awry, and the pitiful stumpy headstones nodding

drunkenly at the soft green mulleins. Then with oaths and the sound of

rent underwood a yoke of mighty bulls would swing down a "skid" road,

hauling a forty-foot log along a rudely made slide. A valley full of

wheat and cherry trees succeeded, and halting at a house we bought ten

pound weight of luscious black cherries for something less than a rupee

and got a drink of icy-cold water for nothing, while the untended team

browsed sagaciously by the roadside. Once we found a wayside camp of

horse-dealers lounging by a pool, ready for a sale or a swap, and once

two sun-tanned youngsters shot down a hill on Indian ponies, their full

creels banging from the high-pommelled saddles. They had been fishing,

and were our brethren therefore. We shouted aloud in chorus to scare a

wild-cat; we squabbled over the reasons that had led a snake to cross a

road; we heaved bits of bark at a venturesome chipmunk, who was really

the little grey squirrel of India and had come to call on me; we lost

our way and got the wagon so beautifully fixed on a steep road that we

had to tie the two hind-wheels to get it down. Above all, California

told tales of Nevada and Arizona, of lonely nights spent out

prospecting, of the slaughter of deer and the chase of men; of woman,

lovely woman, who is a firebrand in a Western city, and leads to the

popping of pistols, and of the sudden changes and chances of Fortune,

who delights in making the miner or the lumberman a quadruplicate

millionnaire, and in "busting" the railroad king. That was a day to be

remembered, and it had only begun when we drew rein at a tiny farmhouse

on the banks of the Clackamas and sought horse-feed and lodging ere we

hastened to the river that broke over a weir not a quarter of a mile

away.

Imagine a stream seventy yards broad divided by a pebbly island, running

over seductive riffles, and swirling into deep, quiet pools where the

good salmon goes to smoke his pipe after meals. Set such a stream amid

fields of breast-high crops surrounded by hills of pines, throw in where

you please quiet water, log-fenced meadows, and a hundred-foot bluff

just to keep the scenery from growing too monotonous, and you will get

some faint notion of the Clackamas.

Portland had no rod. He held the gaff and the whisky. California sniffed

upstream and downstream across the racing water, chose his ground, and

let the gaudy spoon drop in the tail of a riffle. I was getting my rod

together when I heard the joyous shriek of the reel and the yells of

California, and three feet of living silver leaped into the air far

across the water. The forces were engaged. The salmon tore up stream,

the tense line cutting the water like a tide-rip behind him, and the

light bamboo bowed to breaking. What happened after I cannot tell.

California swore and prayed, and Portland shouted advice, and I did all

three for what appeared to be half a day, but was in reality a little

over a quarter of an hour, and sullenly our fish came home with spurts

of temper, dashes head-on, and sarabands in the air; but home to the

bank came he, and the remorseless reel gathered up the thread of his

life inch by inch. We landed him in a little bay, and the spring-weight

checked at eleven and a half pounds. Eleven and one-half pounds of

fighting salmon! We danced a war dance on the pebbles, and California

caught me round the waist in a hug that went near to breaking my ribs

while he shouted: "Partner! Partner! This \_is\_ glory! Now you catch your

fish! Twenty-four years I've waited for this!"

I went into that icy-cold river and made my cast just above a weir, and

all but foul-hooked a blue and black water-snake with a coral mouth who

coiled herself on a stone and hissed maledictions. The next cast--ah,

the pride of it, the regal splendour of it! the thrill that ran down

from finger-tip to toe! The water boiled. He broke for the spoon and got

it! There remained enough sense in me to give him all he wanted when he

jumped not once but twenty times before the upstream flight that ran my

line out to the last half-dozen turns, and I saw the nickled reel-bar

glitter under the thinning green coils. My thumb was burned deep when I

strove to stopper the line, but I did not feel it till later, for my

soul was out in the dancing water praying for him to turn ere he took my

tackle away. The prayer was heard. As I bowed back, the butt of the rod

on my left hip-bone and the top joint dipping like unto a weeping

willow, he turned, and I accepted each inch of slack that I could by any

means get in as a favour from on High. There be several sorts of success

in this world that taste well in the moment of enjoyment, but I question

whether the stealthy theft of line from an able-bodied salmon who knows

exactly what you are doing and why you are doing it is not sweeter than

any other victory within human scope. Like California's fish, he ran at

me head-on and leaped against the line, but the Lord gave me two hundred

and fifty pairs of fingers in that hour. The banks and the pine trees

danced dizzily round me, but I only reeled--reeled as for life--reeled

for hours, and at the end of the reeling continued to give him the butt

while he sulked in a pool. California was farther up the reach, and with

the corner of my eye I could see him casting with long casts and much

skill. Then he struck, and my fish broke for the weir in the same

instant, and down the reach we came, California and I; reel answering

reel even as the morning stars sung together.

The first wild enthusiasm of capture had died away. We were both at work

now in deadly earnest to prevent the lines fouling, to stall off a

downstream rush for deep water just above the weir, and at the same time

to get the fish into the shallow bay downstream that gave the best

practicable landing. Portland bade us both be of good heart, and

volunteered to take the rod from my hands. I would rather have died

among the pebbles than surrender my right to play and land my first

salmon, weight unknown, on an eight-ounce rod. I heard California, at my

ear it seemed, gasping: "He's a fighter from Fightersville sure!" as his

fish made a fresh break across the stream. I saw Portland fall off a log

fence, break the overhanging bank, and clatter down to the pebbles, all

sand and landing-net, and I dropped on a log to rest for a moment. As I

drew breath the weary hands slackened their hold, and I forgot to give

him the butt. A wild scutter in the water, a plunge and a break for the

head-waters of the Clackamas was my reward, and the hot toil of

reeling-in with one eye under the water and the other on the top joint

of the rod, was renewed. Worst of all, I was blocking California's path

to the little landing-bay aforesaid, and he had to halt and tire his

prize where he was. "The Father of all Salmon!" he shouted. "For the

love of Heaven, get your \_trout\_ to bank, Johnny Bull." But I could no

more. Even the insult failed to move me. The rest of the game was with

the salmon. He suffered himself to be drawn, skipping with pretended

delight at getting to the haven where I would fain have him. Yet no

sooner did he feel shoal water under his ponderous belly than he backed

like a torpedo-boat, and the snarl of the reel told me that my labour

was in vain. A dozen times at least this happened ere the line hinted he

had given up that battle and would be towed in. He was towed. The

landing-net was useless for one of his size, and I would not have him

gaffed. I stepped into the shallows and heaved him out with a

respectful hand under the gill, for which kindness he battered me about

the legs with his tail, and I felt the strength of him and was proud.

California had taken my place in the shallows, his fish hard held. I was

up the bank lying full length on the sweet-scented grass, and gasping in

company with my first salmon caught, played and landed on an eight-ounce

rod. My hands were cut and bleeding. I was dripping with sweat, spangled

like harlequin with scales, wet from the waist down, nose-peeled by the

sun, but utterly, supremely, and consummately happy. He, the beauty, the

darling, the daisy, my Salmon Bahadur, weighed twelve pounds, and I had

been seven and thirty minutes bringing him to bank! He had been lightly

hooked on the angle of the right jaw, and the hook had not wearied him.

That hour I sat among princes and crowned heads--greater than them all.

Below the bank we heard California scuffling with his salmon, and

swearing Spanish oaths. Portland and I assisted at the capture, and the

fish dragged the spring-balance out by the roots. It was only

constructed to weigh up to fifteen pounds. We stretched the three fish

on the grass,--the eleven and a half, the twelve, and fifteen

pounder,--and we swore an oath that all who came after should merely be

weighed and put back again.

How shall I tell the glories of that day so that you may be interested?

Again and again did California and I prance down that reach to the

little bay, each with a salmon in tow, and land him in the shallows.

Then Portland took my rod, and caught some ten-pounders, and my spoon

was carried away by an unknown leviathan. Each fish, for the merits of

the three that had died so gamely, was hastily hooked on the balance

and flung back, Portland recording the weight in a pocket-book, for he

was a real-estate man. Each fish fought for all he was worth, and none

more savagely than the smallest--a game little six-pounder. At the end

of six hours we added up the list. Total: 16 fish, aggregate weight 142

lbs. The score in detail runs something like this--it is only

interesting to those concerned: 15, 11-1/2, 12, 10, 9-3/4, 8, and so

forth; as I have said, nothing under six pounds, and three ten-pounders.

Very solemnly and thankfully we put up our rods--it was glory enough for

all time--and returned weeping in each other's arms--weeping tears of

pure joy--to that simple bare-legged family in the packing-case house by

the waterside. The old farmer recollected days and nights of fierce

warfare with the Indians--"way back in the Fifties," when every ripple

of the Columbia River and her tributaries hid covert danger. God had

dowered him with a queer crooked gift of expression, and a fierce

anxiety for the welfare of his two little sons--tanned and reserved

children who attended school daily, and spoke good English in a strange

tongue. His wife was an austere woman who had once been kindly and

perhaps handsome. Many years of toil had taken the elasticity out of

step and voice. She looked for nothing better than everlasting work--the

chafing detail of housework, and then a grave somewhere up the hill

among the blackberries and the pines. But in her grim way she

sympathised with her eldest daughter, a small and silent maiden of

eighteen, who had thoughts very far from the meals she tended or the

pans she scoured. We stumbled into the household at a crisis; and there

was a deal of downright humanity in that same. A bad, wicked dressmaker

had promised the maiden a dress in time for a to-morrow's railway

journey, and, though the barefooted Georgie, who stood in very wholesome

awe of his sister, had scoured the woods on a pony in search, that dress

never arrived. So with sorrow in her heart, and a hundred Sister Anne

glances up the road, she waited upon the strangers, and, I doubt not,

cursed them for the wants that stood between her and her need for tears.

It was a genuine little tragedy. The mother in a heavy, passionless

voice rebuked her impatience, yet sat bowed over a heap of sewing for

the daughter's benefit. These things I beheld in the long

marigold-scented twilight and whispering night, loafing round the little

house with California, who unfolded himself like a lotus to the moon; or

in the little boarded bunk that was our bedroom, swapping tales with

Portland and the old man. Most of the yarns began in this way: "Red

Larry was a bull-puncher back of Lone County, Montanna," or "There was a

man riding the trail met a jack-rabbit sitting in a cactus," or "'Bout

the time of the San Diego land boom, a woman from Monterey," etc. You

can try to piece out for yourselves what sort of stories they were.

And next day California tucked me under his wing and told me we were

going to see a city smitten by a boom, and catch trout. So we took a

train and killed a cow--she wouldn't get out of the way, and the

locomotive "chanced" her and slew--and crossing into Washington

Territory won the town of Tacoma, which stands at the head of Puget

Sound upon the road to Alaska and Vancouver.

California was right. Tacoma was literally staggering under a boom of

the boomiest. I do not quite remember what her natural resources were

supposed to be, though every second man shrieked a selection in my ear.

They included coal and iron, carrots, potatoes, lumber, shipping, and a

crop of thin newspapers all telling Portland that her days were

numbered. California and I struck the place at twilight. The rude

boarded pavements of the main streets rumbled under the heels of

hundreds of furious men all actively engaged in hunting drinks and

eligible corner-lots. They sought the drinks first. The street itself

alternated five-storey business blocks of the later and more abominable

forms of architecture with board shanties. Overhead the drunken

telegraph, telephone, and electric-light wires tangled on the tottering

posts whose butts were half-whittled through by the knife of the loafer.

Down the muddy, grimy, unmetalled thoroughfare ran a horse-car line--the

metals three inches above road level. Beyond this street rose many

hills, and the town was thrown like a broken set of dominoes over all. A

steam tramway--it left the track the only time I used it--was nosing

about the hills, but the most prominent features of the landscape were

the foundations in brick and stone of a gigantic opera house and the

blackened stumps of the pines. California sized up the town with one

comprehensive glance. "Big boom," said he; and a few instants later:

"About time to step off, \_I\_ think," meaning thereby that the boom had

risen to its limit, and it would be expedient not to meddle with it. We

passed down ungraded streets that ended abruptly in a fifteen-foot drop

and a nest of brambles; along pavements that beginning in pine-plank

ended in the living tree; by hotels with Turkish mosque trinketry on

their shameless tops, and the pine stamps at their very doors; by a

female seminary, tall, gaunt and red, which a native of the town bade us

marvel at, and we marvelled; by houses built in imitation of the ones on

Nob Hill, San Francisco,--after the Dutch fashion; by other houses

plenteously befouled with jig-saw work, and others flaring with the

castlemented, battlemented bosh of the wooden Gothic school.

"You can tell just about when those fellers had their houses built,"

quoth California. "That one yonder wanted to be \_I\_talian, and his

architect built him what he wanted. The new houses with the low straddle

roofs and windows pitched in sideways and red brick walls are Dutch.

That's the latest idea. I can read the history of the town." I had no

occasion so to read. The natives were only too glad and too proud to

tell me. The hotel walls bore a flaming panorama of Tacoma in which by

the eye of faith I saw a faint resemblance to the real town. The hotel

stationary advertised that Tacoma bore on its face all the advantages of

the highest civilisation, and the newspapers sang the same tune in a

louder key. The real-estate agents were selling house-lots on unmade

streets miles away for thousands of dollars. On the streets--the rude,

crude streets, where the unshaded electric light was fighting with the

gentle northern twilight--men were babbling of money, town lots, and

again money--how Alf or Ed had done such and such a thing that had

brought him so much money; and round the corner in a creaking boarded

hall the red-jerseyed Salvationists were calling upon mankind to

renounce all and follow their noisy God. The men dropped in by twos and

threes, listened silently for a while, and as silently went their way,

the cymbals clashing after them in vain. I think it was the raw, new

smell of fresh sawdust everywhere pervading the air that threw upon me a

desolating homesickness. It brought back in a moment all remembrances of

that terrible first night at school when the establishment has been

newly whitewashed, and a soft smell of escaping gas mingles with the

odour of trunks and wet overcoats. I was a little boy, and the school

was very new. A vagabond among collarless vagabonds, I loafed up the

street, looking into the fronts of little shops where they sold slop

shirts at fancy prices, which shops I saw later described in the papers

as "great." California had gone off to investigate on his own account,

and presently returned, laughing noiselessly. "They are all mad here,"

he said, "all mad. A man nearly pulled a gun on me because I didn't

agree with him that Tacoma was going to whip San Francisco on the

strength of carrots and potatoes. I asked him to tell me what the town

produced, and I couldn't get anything out of him except those two darned

vegetables. Say, what do you think."

I responded firmly, "I'm going into British territory a little while--to

draw breath."

"I'm going up the Sound, too, for a while," said he, "but I'm coming

back--coming back to our salmon on the Clackamas. A man has been

pressing me to buy real estate here. Young feller, don't you buy real

estate here."

California disappeared with a kindly wave of his overcoat into worlds

other than mine,--good luck go with him for he was a true

sportsman!--and I took a steamer up Puget Sound for Vancouver, which is

the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. That was a queer voyage.

The water, landlocked among a thousand islands, lay still as oil under

our bows, and the wake of the screw broke up the unquivering reflections

of pines and cliffs a mile away. 'Twas as though we were trampling on

glass. No one, not even the Government, knows the number of islands in

the Sound. Even now you can get one almost for the asking; can build a

house, raise sheep, catch salmon, and become a king on a small

scale--your subjects the Indians of the reservation, who glide among the

islets in their canoes and scratch their hides monkeywise by the beach.

A Sound Indian is unlovely and only by accident picturesque. His wife

drives the canoe, but he himself is so thorough a mariner that he can

spring up in his cockle-craft and whack his wife over the head with a

paddle without tipping the whole affair into the water. This I have seen

him do unprovoked. I fancy it must have been to show off before the

whites.

Have I told you anything about Seattle--the town that was burned out a

few weeks ago when the insurance men at San Francisco took their losses

with a grin? In the ghostly twilight, just as the forest fires were

beginning to glare from the unthrifty islands, we struck it--struck it

heavily, for the wharves had all been burned down, and we tied up where

we could, crashing into the rotten foundations of a boathouse as a pig

roots in high grass. The town, like Tacoma, was built upon a hill. In

the heart of the business quarters there was a horrible black smudge, as

though a Hand had come down and rubbed the place smooth. I know now what

being wiped out means. The smudge seemed to be about a mile long, and

its blackness was relieved by tents in which men were doing business

with the wreck of the stock they had saved. There were shouts and

counter-shouts from the steamer to the temporary wharf, which was laden

with shingles for roofing, chairs, trunks, provision-boxes, and all the

lath and string arrangements out of which a western town is made. This

is the way the shouts ran:--

"Oh, George! What's the best with you?"

"Nawthin'. Got the old safe out. She's burned to a crisp. Books all

gone."

"'Save anythin'?"

"Bar'l o' crackers and my wife's bonnet. Goin' to start store on them

though."

"Bully for you. Where's that Emporium? I'll drop in."

"Corner what used to be Fourth and Main--little brown tent close to

militia picquet. Sa-ay! We're under martial law, an' all the saloons are

shut down."

"Best for you, George. Some men gets crazy with a fire, an' liquor makes

'em crazier."

"'Spect any creator-condemned son of a female dog who has lost all his

fixin's in a conflagration is going to put ice on his head an' run for

Congress, do you? How'd you like us act?"

The Job's comforter on the steamer retired into himself.

"Oh George" dived into the bar for a drink.

P. S.--Among many curiosities I have unearthed one. It was a Face on the

steamer--a face above a pointed straw-coloured beard, a face with thin

lips and eloquent eyes. We conversed, and presently I got at the ideas

of the Face. It was, though it lived for nine months of the year in the

wilds of Alaska and British Columbia, an authority on the canon law of

the Church of England--a zealous and bitter upholder of the supremacy of

the aforesaid Church. Into my amazed ears, as the steamer plodded

through the reflections of the stars, it poured the battle-cry of the

Church Militant here on earth, and put forward as a foul injustice that

in the prisons of British Columbia the Protestant chaplain did not

always belong to the Church. The Face had no official connection with

the august body, and by force of his life very seldom attended service.

"But," said he, proudly, "I should think it direct disobedience to the

orders of my Church if I attended any other places of worship than those

prescribed. I was once for three months in a place where there was only

a Wesleyan Methodist chapel, and I never set foot in it once, Sir. Never

once. 'Twould have been heresy. Rank heresy."

And as I leaned over the rail methought that all the little stars in the

water were shaking with austere merriment! But it may have been only the

ripple of the steamer, after all.

No. XXVIII

TAKES ME FROM VANCOUVER TO THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.

"But who shall chronicle the ways

Of common folk, the nights and days

Spent with rough goatherds on the snows,

And travellers come whence no man knows?"

This day I know how a deserter feels. Here in Victoria, a hundred and

forty miles out of America, the mail brings me news from our Home--the

land of regrets. I was enjoying myself by the side of a trout-stream,

and I feel inclined to apologise for every rejoicing breath I drew in

the diamond clear air. The sickness, they said, is heavy with you; from

Rewari to the south good men are dying. Two names come in by the mail of

two strong men dead--men that I dined and jested with only a little time

ago, and it seems unfair that I should be here, cut off from the

chain-gang and the shot-drill of our weary life. After all, there is no

life like it that we lead over yonder. Americans are Americans, and

there are millions of them; English are English; but we of India are Us

all the world over, knowing the mysteries of each other's lives and

sorrowing for the death of a brother. How can I sit down and write to

you of the mere joy of being alive? The news has killed the pleasure of

the day for me, and I am ashamed of myself. There are seventy brook

trout lying in a creel, fresh drawn from Harrison Hot Springs, and they

do not console me. They are like the stolen apples that clinch the fact

of a bad boy's playing truant. I would sell them all, with my heritage

in the woods and air and the delight of meeting new and strange people,

just to be back again in the old galling harness, the heat and the dust,

the gatherings in the evenings by the flooded tennis-courts, the ghastly

dull dinners at the Club when the very last woman has been packed off to

the hills and the four or five surviving men ask the doctor the symptoms

of incubating smallpox. I should be troubled in body, but at peace in

the soul. O excellent and toil-worn public of mine--men of the

brotherhood, griffins new joined from the February troopers, and

gentlemen waiting for your off-reckonings--take care of yourselves and

keep well! It hurts so when any die. There are so few of Us, and we know

one another too intimately.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vancouver three years ago was swept off by fire in sixteen minutes, and

only one house was left standing. To-day it has a population of fourteen

thousand people, and builds its houses out of brick with dressed granite

fronts. But a great sleepiness lies on Vancouver as compared with an

American town: men don't fly up and down the streets telling lies, and

the spittoons in the delightfully comfortable hotel are unused; the

baths are free and their doors are unlocked. You do not have to dig up

the hotel clerk when you want to bathe, which shows the inferiority of

Vancouver. An American bade me notice the absence of bustle, and was

alarmed when in a loud and audible voice I thanked God for it. "Give me

granite--hewn granite and peace," quoth I, "and keep your deal boards

and bustle for yourselves."

The Canadian Pacific terminus is not a very gorgeous place as yet, but

you can be shot directly from the window of the train into the liner

that will take you in fourteen days from Vancouver to Yokohama. The

\_Parthia\_, of some five thousand tons, was at her berth when I came, and

the sight of the ex-Cunard on what seemed to be a little lake was

curious. Except for certain currents which are not much mentioned, but

which make the entrance rather unpleasant for sailing-boats, Vancouver

possesses an almost perfect harbour. The town is built all round and

about the harbour, and young as it is, its streets are better than those

of western America. Moreover, the old flag waves over some of the

buildings, and this is cheering to the soul. The place is full of

Englishmen who speak the English tongue correctly and with clearness,

avoiding more blasphemy than is necessary, and taking a respectable

length of time to getting outside their drinks. These advantages and

others that I have heard about, such as the construction of elaborate

workshops and the like by the Canadian Pacific in the near future, moved

me to invest in real estate. He that sold it me was a delightful English

Boy who, having tried for the Army and failed, had somehow meandered

into a real-estate office, where he was doing well. I couldn't have

bought it from an American. He would have overstated the case and proved

me the possessor of the original Eden. All the Boy said was: "I give you

my word it isn't on a cliff or under water, and before long the town

ought to move out that way. I'd advise you to take it." And I took it

as easily as a man buys a piece of tobacco. \_Me voici\_, owner of some

four hundred well-developed pines, a few thousand tons of granite

scattered in blocks at the roots of the pines, and a sprinkling of

earth. That's a town-lot in Vancouver. You or your agent hold to it till

property rises, then sell out and buy more land further out of town and

repeat the process. I do not quite see how this sort of thing helps the

growth of a town, but the English Boy says that it is the "essence of

speculation," so it must be all right. But I wish there were fewer pines

and rather less granite on my ground. Moved by curiosity and the lust of

trout, I went seventy miles up the Canadian Pacific in one of the

cross-Continent cars, which are cleaner and less stuffy than the

Pullman. A man who goes all the way across Canada is liable to be

disappointed--not in the scenery, but in the progress of the country. So

a batch of wandering politicians from England told me. They even went so

far as to say that Eastern Canada was a failure and unprofitable. The

place didn't move, they complained, and whole counties--they said

provinces--lay under the rule of the Roman Catholic priests, who took

care that the people should not be overcumbered with the good things of

this world to the detriment of their souls. My interest was in the

line--the real and accomplished railway which is to throw actual

fighting troops into the East some day when our hold of the Suez Canal

is temporarily loosened.

All that Vancouver wants is a fat earthwork fort upon a hill,--there are

plenty of hills to choose from,--a selection of big guns, a couple of

regiments of infantry, and later on a big arsenal. The raw

self-consciousness of America would be sure to make her think these

arrangements intended for her benefit, but she could be enlightened. It

is not seemly to leave unprotected the head-end of a big railway; for

though Victoria and Esquimalt, our naval stations on Vancouver Island,

are very near, so also is a place called Vladivostok, and though

Vancouver Narrows are strait, they allow room enough for a man-of-war.

The people--I did not speak to more than two hundred of them--do not

know about Russia or military arrangements. They are trying to open

trade with Japan in lumber, and are raising fruit, wheat, and sometimes

minerals. All of them agree that we do not yet know the resources of

British Columbia, and all joyfully bade me note the climate, which was

distinctly warm. "We never have killing cold here. It's the most perfect

climate in the world." Then there are three perfect climates, for I have

tasted 'em--California, Washington Territory, and British Columbia. I

cannot say which is the loveliest.

When I left by steamer and struck across the Sound to our naval station

at Victoria, Vancouver Island, I found in that quite English town of

beautiful streets quite a colony of old men doing nothing but talking,

fishing, and loafing at the Club. That means that the retired go to

Victoria. On a thousand a year pension a man would be a millionnaire in

these parts, and for four hundred he could live well. It was at Victoria

they told me the tale of the fire in Vancouver. How the inhabitants of

New Westminster, twelve miles from Vancouver, saw a glare in the sky at

six in the evening, but thought it was a forest fire; how later bits of

burnt paper flew about their streets, and they guessed that evil had

happened; how an hour later a man rode into the city crying that there

was no Vancouver left. All had been wiped out by the flames in sixteen

minutes. How, two hours later, the Mayor of New Westminster having voted

nine thousand dollars from the Municipal funds, relief-wagons with food

and blankets were pouring into where Vancouver stood. How fourteen

people were supposed to have died in the fire, but how even now when

they laid new foundations the workmen unearth charred skeletons, many

more than fourteen. "That night," said the teller, "all Vancouver was

houseless. The wooden town had gone in a breath. Next day they began to

build in brick, and you have seen what they have achieved."

The sight afar off of three British men-of-war and a torpedo-boat

consoled me as I returned from Victoria to Tacoma and discovered \_en

route\_ that I was surfeited with scenery. There is a great deal in the

remark of a discontented traveller: "When you have seen a fine forest, a

bluff, a river, and a lake you have seen all the scenery of western

America. Sometimes the pine is three hundred feet high, and sometimes

the rock is, and sometimes the lake is a hundred miles long. But it's

all the same, don't you know. I'm getting sick of it." I dare not say

getting sick. I'm only tired. If Providence could distribute all this

beauty in little bits where people most wanted it,--among you in

India,--it would be well. But it is \_en masse\_, overwhelming, with

nobody but the tobacco-chewing captain of a river steamboat to look at

it. Men said if I went to Alaska I should see islands even more wooded,

snow-peaks loftier, and rivers more lovely than those around me. That

decided me not to go to Alaska. I went east--east to Montana, after

another horrible night in Tacoma among the men who spat. Why does the

Westerner spit? It can't amuse him, and it doesn't interest his

neighbour.

But I am beginning to mistrust. Everything good as well as everything

bad is supposed to come from the East. Is there a shooting-scrape

between prominent citizens? Oh, you'll find nothing of that kind in the

East. Is there a more than usually revolting lynching? They don't do

that in the East. I shall find out when I get there whether this

unnatural perfection be real.

Eastward then to Montana I took my way for the Yellowstone National

Park, called in the guide-books "Wonderland." But the real Wonderland

began in the train. We were a merry crew. One gentleman announced his

intention of paying no fare and grappled the conductor, who neatly

cross-buttocked him through a double plate-glass window. His head was

cut open in four or five places. A doctor on the train hastily stitched

up the biggest gash, and he was dropped at a wayside station, spurting

blood at every hair--a scarlet-headed and ghastly sight. The conductor

guessed that he would die, and volunteered the information that there

was no profit in monkeying with the North Pacific Railway.

Night was falling as we cleared the forests and sailed out upon a

wilderness of sage brush. The desolation of Montgomery, the wilderness

of Sind, the hummock-studded desert of Bikaneer, are joyous and homelike

compared to the impoverished misery of the sage. It is blue, it is

stunted, it is dusty. It wraps the rolling hills as a mildewed shroud

wraps the body of a long-dead man. It makes you weep for sheer

loneliness, and there is no getting away from it. When Childe Roland

came to the dark Tower he traversed the sage brush.

Yet there is one thing worse than sage unadulterated, and that is a

prairie city. We stopped at Pasco Junction, and a man told me that it

was the Queen City of the Prairie. I wish Americans didn't tell such

useless lies. I counted fourteen or fifteen frame-houses, and a portion

of a road that showed like a bruise on the untouched surface of the blue

sage, running away and away up to the setting sun. The sailor sleeps

with a half-inch plank between himself and death. He is at home beside

the handful of people who curl themselves up o' nights with nothing but

a frail scantling, almost as thin as a blanket, to shut out the

unmeasurable loneliness of the sage.

When the train stopped on the road, as it did once or twice, the solid

silence of the sage got up and shouted at us. It was like a nightmare,

and one not in the least improved by having to sleep in an emigrant-car;

the regularly ordained sleepers being full. There was a row in our car

toward morning, a man having managed to get querulously drunk in the

night. Up rose a Cornishman with a red head full of strategy, and

strapped the obstreperous one, smiling largely as he did so, and a

delicate little woman in a far bunk watched the fray and called the

drunken man a "damned hog," which he certainly was, though she needn't

have put it quite so coarsely. Emigrant cars are clean, but the

accommodation is as hard as a plank bed.

Later we laid our bones down to crossing the Rockies. An American train

can climb up the side of a house if need be, but it is not pleasant to

sit in it. We clomb till we struck violent cold and an Indian

reservation, and the noble savage came to look at us. He was a Flathead

and unlovely. Most Americans are charmingly frank about the Indian. "Let

us get rid of him as soon as possible," they say. "We have no use for

him." Some of the men I meet have a notion that we in India are

exterminating the native in the same fashion, and I have been asked to

fix a date for the final extinguishment of the Aryan. I answer that it

will be a long business. Very many Americans have an offensive habit of

referring to natives as "heathen." Mahometans and Hindus are heathen

alike in their eyes, and they vary the epithet with "pagan" and

"idolater." But this is beside the matter, which is the Stampede

Tunnel--our actual point of crossing the Rockies. Thank Heaven, I need

never take that tunnel again! It is about two miles long, and in effect

is nothing more than the gallery of a mine shored with timber and

lighted with electric lamps. Black darkness would be preferable, for the

lamps just reveal the rough cutting of the rocks, and that is very rough

indeed. The train crawls through, brakes down, and you can hear the

water and little bits of stone falling on the roof of the car. Then you

pray, pray fervently, and the air gets stiller and stiller, and you dare

not take your unwilling eyes off the timber shoring, lest a prop should

fall, for lack of your moral support. Before the tunnel was built you

crossed in the open air by a switchback line. A watchman goes through

the tunnel after each train, but that is no protection. He just guesses

that another train will pull through, and the engine-driver guesses the

same thing. Some day between the two of them there will be a cave in the

tunnel. Then the enterprising reporter will talk about the shrieks and

groans of the buried and the heroic efforts of the Press in securing

first information, and--that will be all. Human life is of small account

out here.

I was listening to yarns in the smoking-compartment of the Pullman, all

the way to Helena, and with very few exceptions, each had for its point,

violent, brutal, and ruffianly murder--murder by fraud and the craft of

the savage--murder unavenged by the law, or at the most by an outbreak

of fresh lawlessness. At the end of each tale I was assured that the old

days had passed away, and that these were anecdotes of five years'

standing. One man in particular distinguished himself by holding up to

admiration the exploits of some cowboys of his acquaintance, and their

skill in the use of the revolver. Each tale of horror wound up with "and

that's the sort of man he was," as who should say: "Go and do likewise."

Remember that the shootings, the cuttings, and the stabbings were not

the outcome of any species of legitimate warfare; the heroes were not

forced to fight for their lives. Far from it. The brawls were bred by

liquor in which they assisted--in saloons and gambling-hells they were

wont to "pull their guns" on a man, and in the vast majority of cases

without provocation. The tales sickened me, but taught one thing. A man

who carries a pistol may be put down as a coward--a person to be shut

out from every decent mess and club, and gathering of civilised folk.

There is neither chivalry nor romance in the weapon, for all that

American authors have seen fit to write. I would I could make you

understand the full measure of contempt with which certain aspects of

Western life have inspired me. Let us try a comparison. Sometimes it

happens that a young, a very young, man, whose first dress-coat is yet

glossy, gets slightly flushed at a dinner-party among his seniors. After

the ladies are gone, he begins to talk. He talks, you will remember, as

a "man of the world" and a person of varied experiences, an authority on

all things human and divine. The grey heads of the elders bow

assentingly to his wildest statement; some one tries to turn the

conversation when what the youngster conceives to be wit has offended a

sensibility; and another deftly slides the decanters beyond him as they

circle round the table. You know the feeling of discomfort--pity mingled

with aversion--over the boy who is making an exhibition of himself. The

same emotion came back to me, when an old man who ought to have known

better appealed from time to time for admiration of his pitiful

sentiments. It was right in his mind to insult, to maim, and to kill;

right to evade the law where it was strong and to trample over it where

it was weak; right to swindle in politics, to lie in affairs of State,

and commit perjury in matters of municipal administration. The car was

full of little children, utterly regardless of their parents, fretful,

peevish, spoilt beyond anything I have ever seen in Anglo-India. They in

time would grow up into men such as sat in the smoker, and had no regard

for the law; men who would conduct papers siding with defiance of any

and every law. But it's of no consequence, as Mr. Toots says.

During the descent of the Rockies we journeyed for a season on a trestle

only two hundred and eighty-six feet high. It was made of iron, but up

till two years ago a wooden structure bore up the train, and was used

long after it had been condemned by the civil engineers. Some day the

iron one will come down, just as Stampede Tunnel will, and the results

will be even more startling.

Late in the night we ran over a skunk--ran over it in the dark.

Everything that has been said about the skunk is true. It is an Awesome

Stink.

No. XXIX

SHOWS HOW YANKEE JIM INTRODUCED ME TO DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS ON THE

BANKS OF THE YELLOWSTONE, AND HOW A GERMAN JEW SAID I WAS NO TRUE

CITIZEN. ENDS WITH THE CELEBRATION OF THE 4TH OF JULY AND A FEW LESSONS

THEREFROM.

Livingstone is a town of two thousand people, and the junction for the

little side-line that takes you to the Yellowstone National Park. It

lies in a fold of the prairie, and behind it is the Yellowstone River

and the gate of the mountains through which the river flows. There is

one street in the town, where the cowboy's pony and the little foal of

the brood-mare in the buggy rest contentedly in the blinding sunshine

while the cowboy gets himself shaved at the only other barber's shop,

and swaps lies at the bar. I exhausted the town, including the saloons,

in ten minutes, and got away on the rolling grass downs where I threw

myself to rest. Directly under the hill I was on, swept a drove of

horses in charge of two mounted men. That was a picture I shall not soon

forget. A light haze of dust went up from the hoof-trodden green,

scarcely veiling the unfettered deviltries of three hundred horses who

very much wanted to stop and graze. "Yow! Yow! Yow!" yapped the mounted

men in chorus like coyotes. The column moved forward at a trot, divided

as it met a hillock and scattered into fan shape all among the suburbs

of Livingstone. I heard the "snick" of a stock whip, half a dozen "Yow,

yows," and the mob had come together again, and, with neighing and

whickering and squealing and a great deal of kicking on the part of the

youngsters, rolled like a wave of brown water toward the uplands.

I was within twenty feet of the leader, a grey stallion--lord of many

brood-mares all deeply concerned for the welfare of their fuzzy foals. A

cream-coloured beast--I knew him at once for the bad character of the

troop--broke back, taking with him some frivolous fillies. I heard the

snick of the whips somewhere in the dust, and the fillies came back at a

canter, very shocked and indignant. On the heels of the last rode both

the stockmen--picturesque ruffians who wanted to know "what in hell" I

was doing there, waved their hats, and sped down the slope after their

charges. When the noise of the troop had died there came a wonderful

silence on all the prairie--that silence, they say, which enters into

the heart of the old-time hunter and trapper and marks him off from the

rest of his race. The town disappeared in the darkness, and a very young

moon showed herself over a bald-headed, snow-flecked peak. Then the

Yellowstone, hidden by the water-willows, lifted up its voice and sang a

little song to the mountains, and an old horse that had crept up in the

dusk breathed inquiringly on the back of my neck. When I reached the

hotel I found all manner of preparation under way for the 4th of July,

and a drunken man with a Winchester rifle over his shoulder patrolling

the sidewalk. I do not think he wanted any one. He carried the gun as

other folk carry walking-sticks. None the less I avoided the direct line

of fire and listened to the blasphemies of miners and stockmen till far

into the night. In every bar-room lay a copy of the local paper, and

every copy impressed it upon the inhabitants of Livingstone that they

were the best, finest, bravest, richest, and most progressive town of

the most progressive nation under Heaven; even as the Tacoma and

Portland papers had belauded their readers. And yet, all my purblind

eyes could see was a grubby little hamlet full of men without clean

collars and perfectly unable to get through one sentence unadorned by

three oaths. They raise horses and minerals round and about Livingstone,

but they behave as though they raised cherubims with diamonds in their

wings.

From Livingstone the National Park train follows the Yellowstone River

through the gate of the mountains and over arid volcanic country. A

stranger in the cars saw me look at the ideal trout-stream below the

windows and murmured softly: "Lie off at Yankee Jim's if you want good

fishing." They halted the train at the head of a narrow valley, and I

leaped literally into the arms of Yankee Jim, sole owner of a log hut,

an indefinite amount of hay-ground, and constructor of twenty-seven

miles of wagon-road over which he held toll right. There was the

hut--the river fifty yards away, and the polished line of metals that

disappeared round a bluff. That was all. The railway added the finishing

touch to the already complete loneliness of the place. Yankee Jim was a

picturesque old man with a talent for yarns that Ananias might have

envied. It seemed to me, presumptuous in my ignorance, that I might

hold my own with the old-timer if I judiciously painted up a few lies

gathered in the course of my wanderings. Yankee Jim saw every one of my

tales and went fifty better on the spot. He dealt in bears and

Indians--never less than twenty of each; had known the Yellowstone

country for years, and bore upon his body marks of Indian arrows; and

his eyes had seen a squaw of the Crow Indians burned alive at the stake.

He said she screamed considerable. In one point did he speak the

truth--as regarded the merits of that particular reach of the

Yellowstone. He said it was alive with trout. It was. I fished it from

noon till twilight, and the fish bit at the brown hook as though never a

fat trout-fly had fallen on the water. From pebbly reaches, quivering in

the heat-haze where the foot caught on stumps cut foursquare by the

chisel-tooth of the beaver; past the fringe of the water-willow crowded

with the breeding trout-fly and alive with toads and water-snakes; over

the drifted timber to the grateful shadow of big trees that darkened the

holes where the fattest fish lay, I worked for seven hours. The mountain

flanks on either side of the valley gave back the heat as the desert

gives it, and the dry sand by the railway track, where I found a

rattlesnake, was hot-iron to the touch. But the trout did not care for

the heat. They breasted the boiling river for my fly and they got it. I

simply dare not give my bag. At the fortieth trout I gave up counting,

and I had leached the fortieth in less than two hours. They were small

fish,--not one over two pounds,--but they fought like small tigers, and

I lost three flies before I could understand their methods of escape. Ye

gods! That was fishing, though it peeled the skin from my nose in

strips.

At twilight Yankee Jim bore me off, protesting, to supper in the hut.

The fish had prepared me for any surprise, wherefore when Yankee Jim

introduced me to a young woman of five-and-twenty, with eyes like the

deep-fringed eyes of the gazelle, and "on the neck the small head

buoyant, like a bell-flower in its bed," I said nothing. It was all in

the day's events. She was California-raised, the wife of a man who owned

a stock-farm "up the river a little ways," and, with her husband, tenant

of Yankee Jim's shanty. I know she wore list slippers and did not wear

stays; but I know also that she was beautiful by any standard of beauty,

and that the trout she cooked were fit for a king's supper. And after

supper strange men loafed up in the dim delicious twilight, with the

little news of the day--how a heifer had "gone strayed" from

Nicholson's; how the widow at Grant's Fork wouldn't part with a little

hayland nohow, though "she's an' her big brothers can't manage more than

ha-af their land now. She's so darned proud." Diana of the Crossways

entertained them in queenly wise, and her husband and Yankee Jim bade

them sit right down and make themselves at home. Then did Yankee Jim

uncurl his choicest lies on Indian warfare aforetime; then did the

whisky-flask circle round the little crowd; then did Diana's husband

'low that he was quite handy with the lariat, but had seen men rope a

steer by any foot or horn indicated; then did Diana unburden herself

about her neighbours. The nearest house was three miles away, "but the

women aren't nice, neighbourly folk. They talk so. They haven't got

anything else to do seemingly. If a woman goes to a dance and has a good

time, they talk, and if she wears a silk dress, they want to know how

jest ranchin' folks--folk on a ranche--come by such things; and they

make mischief down all the lands here from Gardiner City way back up to

Livingstone. They're mostly Montanna raised, and they haven't been

nowheres. Ah, how they talk!" "Were things like this," demanded Diana,

"in the big world outside, whence I had come?" "Yes," I said, "things

were very much the same all over the world," and I thought of a far-away

station in India where new dresses and the having of good times at

dances raised cackle more grammatical perhaps, but no less venomous than

the gossip of the "Montanna-raised" folk on the ranches of the

Yellowstone.

Next morn I fished again and listened to Diana telling the story of her

life. I forget what she told me, but I am distinctly aware that she had

royal eyes and a mouth that the daughter of a hundred earls might have

envied--so small and so delicately cut it was. "An' you come back an'

see us again," said the simple-minded folk. "Come back an' we'll show

you how to catch six-pound trout at the head of the caÃ±on."

To-day I am in the Yellowstone Park, and I wish I were dead. The train

halted at Cinnabar station, and we were decanted, a howling crowd of us,

into stages, variously horsed, for the eight-mile drive to the first

spectacle of the Park--a place called the Mammoth Hot Springs. "What

means this eager, anxious throng?" I asked the driver. "You've struck

one of Rayment's excursion parties--that's all--a crowd of

creator-condemned fools mostly. Aren't you one of 'em?" "No," I said.

"May I sit up here with you, great chief and man with a golden tongue? I

do not know Mister Rayment. I belong to T. Cook and Son." The other

person, from the quality of the material he handles, must be the son of

a sea-cook. He collects masses of Down-Easters from the New England

States and elsewhere and hurls them across the Continent and into the

Yellowstone Park on tour. A brake-load of Cook's Continental tourists

trapezing through Paris (I've seen 'em) are angels of light compared to

the Rayment trippers. It is not the ghastly vulgarity, the oozing,

rampant Bessemer-steel self-sufficiency and ignorance of the men that

revolts me, so much as the display of these same qualities in the

women-folk. I saw a new type in the coach, and all my dreams of a better

and more perfect East died away. "Are these--um--persons here any sort

of persons in their own places?" I asked a shepherd who appeared to be

herding them.

"Why, certainly. They include very many prominent and representative

citizens from seven States of the Union, and most of them are wealthy.

Yes, \_sir\_. Representative and prominent."

We ran across bare hills on an unmetalled road under a burning sun in

front of a volley of playful repartee from the prominent citizens

inside. It was the 4th of July. The horses had American flags in their

head-stalls, some of the women wore flags and coloured handkerchiefs in

their belts, and a young German on the box-seat with me was bewailing

the loss of a box of crackers. He said he had been sent to the Continent

to get his schooling and so had lost his American accent; but no

Continental schooling writes German Jew all over a man's face and nose.

He was a rabid American citizen--one of a very difficult class to deal

with. As a general rule, praise unsparingly, and without discrimination.

That keeps most men quiet: but some, if you fail to keep up a continuous

stream of praise, proceed to revile the Old Country--Germans and Irish

who are more Americans than the Americans are the chief offenders. This

young American began to attack the English army. He had seen some of it

on parade and he pitied the men in bearskins as "slaves." The citizen,

by the way, has a contempt for his own army which exceeds anything you

meet among the most illiberal classes in England. I admitted that our

army was very poor, had done nothing, and had been nowhere. This

exasperated him, for he expected an argument, and he trampled on the

British Lion generally. Failing to move me, he vowed that I had no

patriotism like his own. I said I had not, and further ventured that

very few Englishmen had; which, when you come to think of it, is quite

true. By the time he had proved conclusively that before the Prince of

Wales came to the throne we should be a blethering republic, we struck a

road that overhung a river, and my interest in "politics" was lost in

admiration of the driver's skill as he sent his four big horses along

that winding road. There was no room for any sort of accident--a shy or

a swerve would have dropped us sixty feet into the roaring Gardiner

River. Some of the persons in the coach remarked that the scenery, was

"elegant." Wherefore, even at the risk of my own life, I did urgently

desire an accident and the massacre of some of the more prominent

citizens. What "elegance" lies in a thousand-foot pile of honey-coloured

rock, riven into peak and battlement, the highest peak defiantly

crowned by an eagle's nest, the eaglet peering into the gulf and

screaming for his food, I could not for the life of me understand. But

they speak a strange tongue.

\_En route\_ we passed other carriages full of trippers, who had done

their appointed five days in the Park, and yelped at us fraternally as

they disappeared in clouds of red dust. When we struck the Mammoth Hot

Spring Hotel--a huge yellow barn--a sign-board informed us that the

altitude was six thousand two hundred feet. The Park is just a howling

wilderness of three thousand square miles, full of all imaginable freaks

of a fiery nature. An hotel company, assisted by the Secretary of State

for the Interior, appears to control it; there are hotels at all the

points of interest, guide-books, stalls for the sale of minerals, and so

forth, after the model of Swiss summer places.

The tourists--may their master die an evil death at the hand of a mad

locomotive!--poured into that place with a joyful whoop, and, scarce

washing the dust from themselves, began to celebrate the 4th of July.

They called it "patriotic exercises"; elected a clergyman of their own

faith as president, and, sitting on the landing of the first floor,

began to make speeches and read the Declaration of Independence. The

clergyman rose up and told them they were the greatest, freest,

sublimest, most chivalrous, and richest people on the face of the earth,

and they all said Amen. Another clergyman asserted in the words of the

Declaration that all men were created equal, and equally entitled to

Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. I should like to know

whether the wild and woolly West recognises this first right as freely

as the grantors intended. The clergyman then bade the world note that

the tourists included representatives of seven of the New England

States; whereat I felt deeply sorry for the New England States in their

latter days. He opined that this running to and fro upon the earth,

under the auspices of the excellent Rayment, would draw America more

closely together, especially when the Westerners remembered the perils

that they of the East had surmounted by rail and river. At duly

appointed intervals the congregation sang "My country, 'tis of thee" to

the tune of "God save the Queen" (here they did not stand up) and the

"Star-Spangled Banner" (here they did), winding up the exercise with

some doggrel of their own composition to the tune of "John Brown's

Body," movingly setting forth the perils before alluded to. They then

adjourned to the verandahs and watched fire-crackers of the feeblest,

exploding one by one, for several hours.

What amazed me was the calm with which these folks gathered together and

commenced to belaud their noble selves, their country, and their

"institootions" and everything else that was theirs. The language was,

to these bewildered ears, wild advertisement, gas, bunkum, blow,

anything you please beyond the bounds of common sense. An archangel,

selling town-lots on the Glassy Sea, would have blushed to the tips of

his wings to describe his property in similar terms. Then they gathered

round the pastor and told him his little sermon was "perfectly

glorious," really grand, sublime, and so forth, and he bridled

ecclesiastically. At the end a perfectly unknown man attacked me and

asked me what I thought of American patriotism. I said there was

nothing like it in the Old Country. By the way, always tell an American

this. It soothes him.

Then said he: "Are you going to get out your letters,--your letters of

naturalisation?"

"Why?" I asked.

"I presoom you do business in this country, and make money out of

it,--and it seems to me that it would be your dooty."

"Sir," said I, sweetly, "there is a forgotten little island across the

seas called England. It is not much bigger than the Yellowstone Park. In

that island a man of your country could work, marry, make his fortune or

twenty fortunes, and die. Throughout his career not one soul would ask

him whether he were a British subject or a child of the Devil. Do you

understand?"

I think he did, because he said something about "Britishers" which

wasn't complimentary.

No. XXX

SHOWS HOW I ENTERED MAZANDERAN OF THE PERSIANS AND SAW DEVILS OF EVERY

COLOUR, AND SOME TROOPERS. HELL AND THE OLD LADY FROM CHICAGO. THE

CAPTAIN AND THE LIEUTENANT.

"That desolate land and lone

Where the Big Horn and Yellowstone

Roar down their mountain path."

Twice have I written this letter from end to end. Twice have I torn it

up, fearing lest those across the water should say that I had gone mad

on a sudden. Now we will begin for the third time quite solemnly and

soberly. I have been through the Yellowstone National Park in a buggy,

in the company of an adventurous old lady from Chicago and her husband,

who disapproved of scenery as being "ongodly." I fancy it scared them.

We began, as you know, with the Mammoth Hot Springs. They are only a

gigantic edition of those pink and white terraces not long ago destroyed

by earthquake in New Zealand. At one end of the little valley in which

the hotel stands the lime-laden springs that break from the pine-covered

hillsides have formed a frozen cataract of white, lemon, and palest pink

formation, through and over and in which water of the warmest bubbles

and drips and trickles from pale-green lagoon to exquisitely fretted

basin. The ground rings hollow as a kerosene-tin, and some day the

Mammoth Hotel, guests and all, will sink into the caverns below and be

turned into a stalactite. When I set foot on the first of the terraces,

a tourist-trampled ramp of scabby grey stuff, I met a stream of iron-red

hot water which ducked into a hole like a rabbit. Followed a gentle

chuckle of laughter, and then a deep, exhausted sigh from nowhere in

particular. Fifty feet above my head a jet of steam rose up and died out

in the blue. It was worse than the boiling mountain at Myanoshita. The

dirty white deposit gave place to lime whiter than snow; and I found a

basin which some learned hotel-keeper has christened Cleopatra's

pitcher, or Mark Antony's whisky-jug, or something equally poetical. It

was made of frosted silver; it was filled with water as clear as the

sky. I do not know the depth of that wonder. The eye looked down beyond

grottoes and caves of beryl into an abyss that communicated directly

with the central fires of earth. And the pool was in pain, so that it

could not refrain from talking about it; muttering and chattering and

moaning. From the lips of the lime-ledges, forty feet under water,

spurts of silver bubbles would fly up and break the peace of the crystal

atop. Then the whole pool would shake and grow dim, and there were

noises. I removed myself only to find other pools all equally unhappy,

rifts in the ground, full of running, red-hot water, slippery sheets of

deposit overlaid with greenish grey hot water, and here and there

pit-holes dry as a rifled tomb in India, dusty and waterless. Elsewhere

the infernal waters had first boiled dead and then embalmed the pines

and underwood, or the forest trees had taken heart and smothered up a

blind formation with greenery, so that it was only by scraping the earth

you could tell what fires had raged beneath. Yet the pines will win the

battle in years to come, because Nature, who first forges all her work

in her great smithies, has nearly finished this job, and is ready to

temper it in the soft brown earth. The fires are dying down; the hotel

is built where terraces have overflowed into flat wastes of deposit; the

pines have taken possession of the high ground whence the terraces first

started. Only the actual curve of the cataract stands clear, and it is

guarded by soldiers who patrol it with loaded six-shooters, in order

that the tourist may not bring up fence-rails and sink them in a pool,

or chip the fretted tracery of the formations with a geological hammer,

or, walking where the crust is too thin, foolishly cook himself.

I manoeuvred round those soldiers. They were cavalry in a very

slovenly uniform, dark-blue blouse, and light-blue trousers unstrapped,

cut spoon-shape over the boot; cartridge belt, revolver, peaked cap, and

worsted gloves--black buttons! By the mercy of Allah I opened

conversation with a spectacled Scot. He had served the Queen in the

Marines and a Line regiment, and the "go-fever" being in his bones, had

drifted to America, there to serve Uncle Sam. We sat on the edge of an

extinct little pool, that under happier circumstances would have grown

into a geyser, and began to discuss things generally. To us appeared yet

another soldier. No need to ask his nationality or to be told that the

troop called him "The Henglishman." A cockney was he, who had seen

something of warfare in Egypt, and had taken his discharge from a

Fusilier regiment not unknown to you.

"And how do things go?"

"Very much as you please," said they. "There's not half the discipline

here that there is in the Queen's service--not half--nor the work

either, but what there is, is rough work. Why, there's a sergeant now

with a black eye that one of our men gave him. They won't say anything

about that, of course. Our punishments? Fines mostly, and then if you

carry on too much you go to the cooler--that's the clink. Yes, Sir.

Horses? Oh, they're devils, these Montanna horses. Bronchos mostly. We

don't slick 'em up for parade--not much. And the amount of schooling

that you put into one English troop-horse would be enough for a whole

squadron of these creatures. You'll meet more troopers further up the

Park. Go and look at their horses and their turnouts. I fancy it'll

startle you. I'm wearing a made tie and a breastpin under my blouse? Of

course I am! I can wear anything I darn please. We aren't particular

here. I shouldn't dare come on parade--no, nor yet fatigue duty--in this

condition in the Old Country; but it don't matter here. But don't you

forget, Sir, that it's taught me how to trust to myself, and my shooting

irons. I don't want fifty orders to move me across the Park, and catch a

poacher. Yes, they poach here. Men come in with an outfit and ponies,

smuggle in a gun or two, and shoot the bison. If you interfere, they

shoot at you. Then you confiscate all their outfit and their ponies. We

have a pound full of them now down below. There's our Captain over

yonder. Speak to him if you want to know anything special. This service

isn't a patch on the Old Country's service; but you look, if it was

worked up it would be just a Hell of a service. But these citizens

despise us, and they put us on to road-mending, and such like. 'Nough to

ruin any army."

To the Captain I addressed myself after my friends had gone. They told

me that a good many American officers dressed by the French army. The

Captain certainly might have been mistaken for a French officer of light

cavalry, and he had more than the courtesy of a Frenchman. Yes, he had

read a good deal about our Indian border warfare, and had been much

struck with the likeness it bore to Red Indian warfare. I had better,

when I reached the next cavalry post, scattered between two big geyser

basins, introduce myself to a Captain and Lieutenant. They could show me

things. He himself was devoting all his time to conserving the terraces,

and surreptitiously running hot water into dried-up basins that fresh

pools might form. "I get very interested in that sort of thing. It's not

duty, but it's what I'm put here for." And then he began to talk of his

troop as I have heard his brethren in India talk. Such a troop! Built up

carefully, and watched lovingly; "not a man that I'd wish to exchange,

and, what's more, I believe not a man that would wish to leave on his

own account. We're different, I believe, from the English. Your officers

value the horses; we set store on the men. We train them more than we do

the horses."

Of the American trooper I will tell you more hereafter. He is not a

gentleman to be trifled with.

Next dawning, entering a buggy of fragile construction, with the old

people from Chicago, I embarked on my perilous career. We ran straight

up a mountain till we could see, sixty miles away, the white houses of

Cook City on another mountain, and the whiplash-like trail leading

thereto. The live air made me drunk. If Tom, the driver, had proposed to

send the mares in a bee-line to the city, I should have assented, and so

would the old lady, who chewed gum and talked about her symptoms. The

tub-ended rock-dog, which is but the translated prairie-dog, broke

across the road under our horses' feet, the rabbit and the chipmunk

danced with fright; we heard the roar of the river, and the road went

round a corner. On one side piled rock and shale, that enjoined silence

for fear of a general slide-down; on the other a sheer drop, and a fool

of a noisy river below. Then, apparently in the middle of the road, lest

any should find driving too easy, a post of rock. Nothing beyond that

save the flank of a cliff. Then my stomach departed from me, as it does

when you swing, for we left the dirt, which was at least some guarantee

of safety, and sailed out round the curve, and up a steep incline, on a

plank-road built out from the cliff. The planks were nailed at the outer

edge, and did not shift or creak very much--but enough, quite enough.

That was the Golden Gate. I got my stomach back again when we trotted

out on to a vast upland adorned with a lake and hills. Have you ever

seen an untouched land--the face of virgin Nature? It is rather a

curious sight, because the hills are choked with timber that has never

known an axe, and the storm has rent a way through this timber, so that

a hundred thousand trees lie matted together in swathes; and, since each

tree lies where it falls, you may behold trunk and branch returning to

the earth whence they sprang--exactly as the body of man returns--each

limb making its own little grave, the grass climbing above the bark,

till at last there remains only the outline of a tree upon the rank

undergrowth.

Then we drove under a cliff of obsidian, which is black glass, some two

hundred feet high; and the road at its foot was made of black glass that

crackled. This was no great matter, because half an hour before Tom had

pulled up in the woods that we might sufficiently admire a mountain who

stood all by himself, shaking with laughter or rage.

The glass cliff overlooks a lake where the beavers built a dam about a

mile and a half long in a zig-zag line, as their necessities prompted.

Then came the Government and strictly preserved them, and, as you shall

learn later on, they be damn impudent beasts. The old lady had hardly

explained the natural history of beavers before we climbed some

hills--it really didn't matter in that climate, because we could have

scaled the stars--and (this mattered very much indeed) shot down a

desperate, dusty slope, brakes shrieking on the wheels, the mares

clicking among unseen rocks, the dust dense as a fog, and a wall of

trees on either side. "How do the heavy four-horse coaches take it,

Tom?" I asked, remembering that some twenty-three souls had gone that

way half an hour before. "Take it at the run!" said Tom, spitting out

the dust. Of course there was a sharp curve, and a bridge at the bottom,

but luckily nothing met us, and we came to a wooden shanty called an

hotel, in time for a crazy tiffin served by very gorgeous handmaids with

very pink cheeks. When health fails in other and more exciting

pursuits, a season as "help" in one of the Yellowstone hotels will

restore the frailest constitution.

Then by companies after tiffin we walked chattering to the uplands of

Hell. They call it the Norris Geyser Basin on Earth. It was as though

the tide of desolation had gone out, but would presently return, across

innumerable acres of dazzling white geyser formation. There were no

terraces here, but all other horrors. Not ten yards from the road a

blast of steam shot up roaring every few seconds, a mud volcano spat

filth to Heaven, streams of hot water rumbled under foot, plunged

through the dead pines in steaming cataracts and died on a waste of

white where green-grey, black-yellow, and pink pools roared, shouted,

bubbled, or hissed as their wicked fancies prompted. By the look of the

eye the place should have been frozen over. By the feel of the feet it

was warm. I ventured out among the pools, carefully following tracks,

but one unwary foot began to sink, a squirt of water followed, and

having no desire to descend quick into Tophet I returned to the shore

where the mud and the sulphur and the nameless fat ooze-vegetation of

Lethe lay. But the very road rang as though built over a gulf; and

besides, how was I to tell when the raving blast of steam would find its

vent insufficient and blow the whole affair into Nirvana? There was a

potent stench of stale eggs everywhere, and crystals of sulphur crumbled

under the foot, and the glare of the sun on the white stuff was

blinding. Sitting under a bank, to me appeared a young trooper--ex-Cape

mounted Rifles, this man: the real American seems to object to his

army--mounted on a horse half-maddened by the noise and steam and smell.

He carried only the six-shooter and cartridge-belt. On service the

Springfield carbine (which is clumsy) and a cartridge-belt slung

diagonally complete equipment. The sword is no earthly use for Border

warfare and, except at state parades, is never worn. The saddle is the

McClellan tree over a four-folded blanket. Sweat-leathers you must pay

for yourself. And the beauty of the tree is that it necessitates first

very careful girthing and a thorough knowledge of tricks with the

blanket to suit the varying conditions of the horse--a broncho will

bloat in a night if he can get at a bellyful--and, secondly, even more

careful riding to prevent galling. Crupper and breast-band do not seem

to be used,--but they are casual about their accoutrements,--and the bit

is the single, jaw-breaking curb which American war-pictures show us.

That young man was very handsome, and the grey service hat--most like

the under half of a seedy terai--shaded his strong face admirably as his

horse backed and shivered and sidled and plunged all over the road, and

he lectured from his saddle, one foot out of the heavy-hooded stirrup,

one hand on the sweating neck. "He's not used to the Park, this brute,

and he's a confirmed bolter on parade; but we understand each other."

\_Whoosh!\_ went the steam-blast down the road with a dry roar. Round spun

the troop horse prepared to bolt, and, his momentum being suddenly

checked, reared till I thought he would fall back on his rider. "Oh no;

we've settled that little matter when I was breaking him," said Centaur.

"He used to try to fall back on me. Isn't he a devil? I think you'd

laugh to see the way our regiments are horsed. Sometimes a big Montana

beast like mine has a thirteen-two broncho pony for neighbour, and it's

annoying if you're used to better things. And oh, how you have to ride

your mount! It's necessary; but I can tell you at the end of a long

day's march, when you'd give all the world to ride like a sack, it isn't

sweet to get extra drill for slouching. When we're turned out, we're

turned out for \_anything\_--not a fifteen-mile trot, but for the use and

behoof of all the Northern States. I've been in Arizona. A trooper there

who had been in India told me that Arizona was like Afghanistan. There's

nothing under Heaven there except horned toads and rattlesnakes--and

Indians. Our trouble is that we only deal with Indians and they don't

teach us much, and of course the citizens look down on us and all that.

As a matter of fact, I suppose we're really only mounted infantry, but

remember we're the best mounted infantry in the world." And the horse

danced a fandango in proof.

"My faith!" said I, looking at the dusty blouse, grey hat, soiled

leather accoutrements, and whalebone poise of the wearer. "If they are

all like you, you are."

"Thanks, whoever you may be. Of course if we were turned into a

lawn-tennis court and told to resist, say, your heavy cavalry, we'd be

ridden off the face of the earth if we couldn't get away. We have

neither the weight nor the drill for a charge. My horse, for instance,

by English standards, is half-broken, and like all the others, he bolts

when we're in line. But cavalry charge against cavalry charge doesn't

happen often, and if it did, well--all our men know that up to a hundred

yards they are absolutely safe behind this old thing." He patted his

revolver pouch. "Absolutely safe from any shooting of yours. What man do

you think would dare to use a pistol at even thirty yards, if his life

depended oh it? Not one of \_your\_ men. They can't shoot. We can. You'll

hear about that down the Park--further up."

Then he added, courteously: "Just now it seems that the English supply

all the men to the American Army. That's what makes them so good

perhaps." And with mutual expressions of good-will we parted--he to an

outlying patrol fifteen miles away, I to my buggy and the old lady, who,

regarding the horrors of the fire-holes, could only say, "Good Lord!" at

thirty-second intervals. Her husband talked about "dreffel waste of

steam-power," and we went on in the clear, crisp afternoon, speculating

as to the formation of geysers.

"What I say," shrieked the old lady \_apropos\_ of matters theological,

"and what I say more, after having seen all that, is that the Lord has

ordained a Hell for such as disbelieve his gracious works."

\_Nota bene.\_--Tom had profanely cursed the near mare for stumbling. He

looked straight in front of him and said no word, but the left corner of

his left eye flickered in my direction.

"And if," continued the old lady, "if we find a thing so dreffel as all

that steam and sulphur allowed on the face of the earth, musn't we

believe that there is something ten thousand times more terrible below

prepared un\_toe\_ our destruction?"

Some people have a wonderful knack of extracting comfort from things. I

am ashamed to say I agreed ostentatiously with the old lady. She

developed the personal view of the matter.

"\_Now\_ I shall be able to say something to Anna Fincher about her way

of living. Shan't I, Blake?" This to her husband.

"Yes," said he, speaking slowly after a heavy tiffin. "But the girl's a

good girl;" and they fell to arguing as to whether the luckless Anna

Fincher really stood in need of lectures edged with Hell fire (she went

to dances I believe), while I got out and walked in the dust alongside

of Tom.

"I drive blame cur'ous kinder folk through this place," said he. "Blame

cur'ous. 'Seems a pity that they should ha' come so far just to liken

Norris Basin to Hell. 'Guess Chicago would ha' served 'em, speaking in

comparison, jest as good."

We curved the hill and entered a forest of spruce, the path serpentining

between the tree-boles, the wheels running silent on immemorial mould.

There was nothing alive in the forest save ourselves. Only a river was

speaking angrily somewhere to the right. For miles we drove till Tom

bade us alight and look at certain falls. Wherefore we stepped out of

that forest and nearly fell down a cliff which guarded a tumbled river

and returned demanding fresh miracles. If the water had run uphill, we

should perhaps have taken more notice of it; but 'twas only a waterfall,

and I really forget whether the water was warm or cold. There is a

stream here called Firehole River. It is fed by the overflow from the

various geysers and basins,--a warm and deadly river wherein no fish

breed. I think we crossed it a few dozen times in the course of a day.

Then the sun began to sink, and there was a taste of frost about, and we

went swiftly from the forest into the open, dashed across a branch of

the Firehole River and found a wood shanty, even rougher than the last,

at which, after a forty-mile drive, we were to dine and sleep. Half a

mile from this place stood, on the banks of the Firehole River, a

"beaver-lodge," and there were rumours of bears and other cheerful

monsters in the woods on the hill at the back of the building.

In the cool, crisp quiet of the evening I sought that river, and found a

pile of newly gnawed sticks and twigs. The beaver works with the

cold-chisel, and a few clean strokes suffice to level a four-inch bole.

Across the water on the far bank glimmered, with the ghastly white of

peeled dead timber, the beaver-lodge--a mass of dishevelled branches.

The inhabitants had dammed the stream lower down and spread it into a

nice little lake. The question was would they come out for their walk

before it got too dark to see. They came--blessings on their blunt

muzzles, they came--as shadows come, drifting down the stream, stirring

neither foot nor tail. There were three of them. One went down to

investigate the state of the dam; the other two began to look for

supper. There is only one thing more startling than the noiselessness of

a tiger in the jungle, and that is the noiselessness of a beaver in the

water. The straining ear could catch no sound whatever till they began

to eat the thick green river-scudge that they call beaver-grass. I,

bowed among the logs, held my breath and stared with all my eyes. They

were not ten yards from me, and they would have eaten their dinner in

peace so long as I had kept absolutely still. They were dear and

desirable beasts, and I was just preparing to creep a step nearer when

that wicked old lady from Chicago clattered down the bank, an umbrella

in her hand, shrieking: "Beavers, beavers! Young man, whurr are those

beavers? Good Lord! What was that now?"

The solitary watcher might have heard a pistol shot ring through the

air. I wish it had killed the old lady, but it was only the beaver

giving warning of danger with the slap of his tail on the water. It was

exactly like the "phink" of a pistol fired with damp powder. Then there

were no more beavers--not a whisker-end. The lodge, however, was there,

and a beast lower than any beaver began to throw stones at it because

the old lady from Chicago said: "P'raps, if you rattle them up they'll

come out. I do so want to see a beaver."

Yet it cheers me to think I have seen the beaver in his wilds. Never

will I go to the Zoo. That even, after supper--'twere flattery to call

it dinner--a Captain and a Subaltern of the cavalry post appeared at the

hotel. These were the officers of whom the Mammoth Springs Captain had

spoken. The Lieutenant had read everything that he could lay hands on

about the Indian army, especially our cavalry arrangements, and was very

full of a scheme for raising the riding Red Indians--it is not every

noble savage that will make a trooper--into frontier levies--a sort of

Khyber guard. "Only," as he said ruefully, "there is no frontier these

days, and all our Indian wars are nearly over. Those beautiful beasts

will die out, and nobody will ever know what splendid cavalry they can

make."

The Captain told stories of Border warfare--of ambush, firing on the

rear-guard, heat that split the skull better than any tomahawk, cold

that wrinkled the very liver, night-stampedes of baggage-mules, raiding

of cattle, and hopeless stern-chases into inhospitable hills, when the

cavalry knew that they were not only being outpaced but outspied. Then

he spoke of one fair charge when a tribe gave battle in the open and the

troopers rode in swordless, firing right and left with their revolvers

and--it was excessively uncomfy for that tribe. And I spoke of what men

had told me of huntings in Burma, of hill-climbing in the Black Mountain

affair, and so forth.

"Exactly!" said the Captain. "Nobody knows and nobody cares. What does

it matter to the Down-Easter who Wrap-up-his-Tail was?"

"And what does the fat Briton know or care about Boh Hla-Oo?" said I.

Then both together: "Depend upon it, my dear Sir, the army in both

Anglo-Saxon countries is a mischievously underestimated institution, and

it's a pleasure to meet a man who," etc., etc. And we nodded

triangularly in all good will, and swore eternal friendship. The

Lieutenant made a statement which rather amazed me. He said that, on

account of the scarcity of business, many American officers were to be

found getting practical instruction from little troubles among the South

American Republics. When the need broke out they would return. "There is

so little for us to do, and the Republic has a trick of making us hedge

and ditch for our pay. A little road-making on service is not a bad

thing, but continuous navvying is enough to knock the heart out of any

army."

I agreed, and we sat up till two in the morning swapping the lies of

East and West. As that glorious chief Man-afraid-of-Pink-Rats once said

to the Agent on the Reservation: "'Melican officer good man. Heap good

man. Drink me. Drink he. Drink me. Drink he. Drink \_he\_. Me blind.

\_Heap\_ good man!"

No. XXXI

ENDS WITH THE CAÃON OF THE YELLOWSTONE. THE MAIDEN FROM NEW

HAMPSHIRE--LARRY--"WRAP-UP-HIS-TAIL"--TOM--THE OLD LADY FROM

CHICAGO--AND A FEW NATURAL PHENOMENA--INCLUDING ONE BRITON.

"What man would read and read the selfsame faces

And like the marbles which the windmill grinds,

Rub smooth forever with the same smooth minds,

This year retracing last year's every year's dull traces,

When there are woods and unmanstifled places?"

--\_Lowell.\_

Once upon a time there was a carter who brought his team and a friend

into the Yellowstone Park without due thought. Presently they came upon

a few of the natural beauties of the place, and that carter turned his

team into his friend's team howling: "Get back o' this, Jim. All Hell's

alight under our noses." And they call the place Hell's Half-acre to

this day. We, too, the old lady from Chicago, her husband, Tom, and the

good little mares came to Hell's Half-acre, which is about sixty acres,

and when Tom said: "Would you like to drive over it?" we said:

"Certainly no, and if you do, we shall report you to the authorities."

There was a plain, blistered and peeled and abominable, and it was given

over to the sportings and spoutings of devils who threw mud and steam

and dirt at each other with whoops and halloos and bellowing curses.

The place smelt of the refuse of the Pit, and that odour mixed with the

clean, wholesome aroma of the pines in our nostrils throughout the day.

Be it known that the Park is laid out, like Ollendorf, in exercises of

progressive difficulty. Hell's Half-acre was a prelude to ten or twelve

miles of geyser formation. We passed hot streams boiling in the forest;

saw whiffs of steam beyond these, and yet other whiffs breaking through

the misty green hills in the far distance; we trampled on sulphur, and

sniffed things much worse than any sulphur which is known to the upper

world; and so came upon a park-like place where Tom suggested we should

get out and play with the geysers.

Imagine mighty green fields splattered with lime beds: all the flowers

of the summer growing up to the very edge of the lime. That was the

first glimpse of the geyser basins. The buggy had pulled up close to a

rough, broken, blistered cone of stuff between ten and twenty feet high.

There was trouble in that place--moaning, splashing, gurgling, and the

clank of machinery. A spurt of boiling water jumped into the air and a

wash of water followed. I removed swiftly. The old lady from Chicago

shrieked. "What a wicked waste!" said her husband. I think they call it

the Riverside Geyser. Its spout was torn and ragged like the mouth of a

gun when a shell has burst there. It grumbled madly for a moment or two

and then was still. I crept over the steaming lime--it was the burning

marl on which Satan lay--and looked fearfully down its mouth. You should

never look a gift geyser in the mouth. I beheld a horrible slippery

slimy funnel with water rising and falling ten feet at a time. Then the

water rose to lip level with a rush and an infernal bubbling troubled

this Devil's Bethesda before the sullen heave of the crest of a wave

lapped over the edge and made me run. Mark the nature, of the human

soul! I had begun with awe, not to say terror. I stepped back from the

flanks of the Riverside Geyser saying: "Pooh! Is that all it can do?"

Yet for aught I knew the whole thing might have blown up at a minute's

notice; she, he, or it being an arrangement of uncertain temper.

We drifted on up that miraculous valley. On either side of us were hills

from a thousand to fifteen hundred feet high and wooded from heel to

crest. As far as the eye could range forward were columns of steam in

the air, misshapen lumps of lime, most like preadamite monsters, still

pools of turquoise blue, stretches of blue cornflowers, a river that

coiled on itself twenty times, boulders of strange colours, and ridges

of glaring, staring white.

The old lady from Chicago poked with her parasol at the pools as though

they had been alive. On one particularly innocent-looking little puddle

she turned her back for a moment, and there rose behind her a

twenty-foot column of water and steam. Then she shrieked and protested

that "she never thought it would ha' done it," and the old man chewed

his tobacco steadily, and mourned for steam power wasted. I embraced the

whitened stump of a middle-sized pine that had grown all too close to a

hot pool's lip, and the whole thing turned over under my hand as a tree

would do in a nightmare. From right and left came the trumpetings of

elephants at play. I stepped into a pool of old dried blood rimmed with

the nodding cornflowers; the blood changed to ink even as I trod; and

ink and blood were washed away in a spurt of boiling sulphurous water

spat out from the lee of a bank of flowers. This sounds mad, doesn't it?

A moonfaced trooper of German extraction--never was Park so carefully

patrolled--came up to inform us that as yet we had not seen any of the

real geysers, that they were all a mile or so up the valley, tastefully

scattered round the hotel in which we would rest for the night. America

is a free country, but the citizens look down on the soldier. \_I\_ had to

entertain that trooper. The old lady from Chicago would have none of

him; so we loafed along together, now across half-rotten pine logs sunk

in swampy ground, anon over the ringing geyser formation, then knee-deep

through long grass.

"And why did you 'list?" said I.

The moonfaced one's face began to work. I thought he would have a fit,

but he told me a story instead--such a nice tale of a naughty little

girl who wrote love letters to two men at once. She was a simple village

wife, but a wicked "Family Novelette" countess couldn't have

accomplished her ends better. She drove one man nearly wild with her

pretty little treachery; and the other man abandoned her and came West

to forget. Moonface was that man.

We rounded a low spur of hill, and came out upon a field of aching snowy

lime, rolled in sheets, twisted into knots, riven with rents and

diamonds and stars, stretching for more than half a mile in every

direction. In this place of despair lay most of the big geysers who know

when there is trouble in Krakatoa, who tell the pines when there is a

cyclone on the Atlantic seaboard, and who--are exhibited to visitors

under pretty and fanciful names. The first mound that I encountered

belonged to a goblin splashing in his tub. I heard him kick, pull a

shower-bath on his shoulders, gasp, crack his joints, and rub himself

down with a towel; then he let the water out of the bath, as a

thoughtful man should, and it all sank down out of sight till another

goblin arrived. Yet they called this place the Lioness and the Cubs. It

lies not very far from the Lion, which is a sullen, roaring beast, and

they say that when it is very active the other geysers presently follow

suit. After the Krakatoa eruption all the geysers went mad together,

spouting, spurting, and bellowing till men feared that they would rip up

the whole field. Mysterious sympathies exist among them, and when the

Giantess speaks (of her more anon) they all hold their peace.

I was watching a solitary spring, when, far across the fields, stood up

a plume of spun glass, iridescent and superb, against the sky. "That,"

said the trooper, "is Old Faithful. He goes off every sixty-five minutes

to the minute, plays for five minutes, and sends up a column of water a

hundred and fifty feet high. By the time you have looked at all the

other geysers he will be ready to play."

So we looked and we wondered at the Beehive, whose mouth is built up

exactly like a hive; at the Turban (which is not in the least like a

turban); and at many, many other geysers, hot holes, and springs. Some

of them rumbled, some hissed, some went off spasmodically, and others

lay still in sheets of sapphire and beryl.

Would you believe that even these terrible creatures have to be guarded

by the troopers to prevent the irreverent American from chipping the

cones to pieces, or worse still, making the geysers sick? If you take of

soft-soap a small barrelful and drop it down a geyser's mouth, that

geyser will presently be forced to lay all before you and for days

afterwards will be of an irritated and inconsistent stomach. When they

told me the tale I was filled with sympathy. Now I wish that I had

stolen soap and tried the experiment on some lonely little beast of a

geyser in the woods. It sounds so probable--and so human.

Yet he would be a bold man who would administer emetics to the Giantess.

She is flat-lipped, having no mouth, she looks like a pool, fifty feet

long and thirty wide, and there is no ornamentation about her. At

irregular intervals she speaks, and sends up a column of water over two

hundred feet high to begin with; then she is angry for a day and a

half--sometimes for two days. Owing to her peculiarity of going mad in

the night not many people have seen the Giantess at her finest; but the

clamour of her unrest, men say, shakes the wooden hotel, and echoes like

thunder among the hills. When I saw her trouble was brewing. The pool

bubbled seriously, and at five-minute intervals, sank a foot or two,

then rose, washed over the rim, and huge steam bubbles broke on the top.

Just before an eruption the water entirely disappears from view.

Whenever you see the water die down in a geyser-mouth get away as fast

as you can. I saw a tiny little geyser suck in its breath in this way,

and instinct made me retire while it hooted after me.

Leaving the Giantess to swear, and spit, and thresh about, we went over

to Old Faithful, who by reason of his faithfulness has benches close to

him whence you may comfortably watch. At the appointed hour we heard the

water flying up and down the mouth with the sob of waves in a cave. Then

came the preliminary gouts, then a roar and a rush, and that glittering

column of diamonds rose, quivered, stood still for a minute. Then it

broke, and the rest was a confused snarl of water not thirty feet high.

All the young ladies--not more than twenty--in the tourist band remarked

that it was "elegant," and betook themselves to writing their names in

the bottoms of shallow pools. Nature fixes the insult indelibly, and the

after-years will learn that "Hattie," "Sadie," "Mamie," "Sophie," and so

forth, have taken out their hair-pins, and scrawled on the face of Old

Faithful.

The congregation returned to the hotel to put down their impressions in

diaries and note-books which they wrote up ostentatiously in the

verandahs. It was a sweltering hot day, albeit we stood somewhat higher

than the summit of Jakko, and I left that raw pine-creaking caravanserai

for the cool shade of a clump of pines between whose trunks glimmered

tents. A batch of troopers came down the road, and flung themselves

across country into their rough lines. Verily the 'Melican cavalry-man

\_can\_ ride, though he keeps his accoutrements pig, and his horse

cow-fashion.

I was free of that camp in five minutes--free to play with the heavy

lumpy carbines, to have the saddles stripped, and punch the horses

knowingly in the ribs. One of the men had been in the fight with

"Wrap-up-his-Tail" before alluded to, and he told me how that great

chief, his horse's tail tied up in red calico, swaggered in front of

the United States cavalry, challenging all to single combat. But he was

slain, and a few of his tribe with him. "There's no use in an Indian,

anyway," concluded my friend.

A couple of cowboys--real cowboys, not the Buffalo Bill article--jingled

through the camp amid a shower of mild chaff. They were on their way to

Cook City, I fancy, and I know that they never washed. But they were

picturesque ruffians with long spurs, hooded stirrups, slouch hats, fur

weather-cloths over their knees, and pistol-butts easy to hand.

"The cowboy's goin' under before long," said my friend. "Soon as the

country's settled up he'll have to go. But he's mighty useful now. What

should we do without the cowboy?"

"As how?" said I, and the camp laughed.

"He has the money. We have the know-how. He comes in in winter to play

poker at the military posts. \_We\_ play poker--a few. When he's lost his

money we make him drunk and let him go. Sometimes we get the wrong man."

And he told a tale of an innocent cowboy who turned up, cleaned out, at

a post, and played poker for thirty-six hours. But it was the post that

was cleaned out when that long-haired Caucasian Ah Sin removed himself,

heavy with everybody's pay, and declining the proffered liquor. "Naow,"

said the historian, "I don't play with no cowboy unless he's a little

bit drunk first."

Ere I departed I gathered from more than one man that significant fact

that \_up to one hundred yards\_ he felt absolutely secure behind his

revolver.

"In England, I understand," quoth a limber youth from the South, "in

England a man aren't allowed to play with no firearms. He's got to be

taught all that when he enlists. I didn't want much teaching how to

shoot straight 'fore I served Uncle Sam. And that's just where it is.

But you was talking about your horse guards now?"

I explained briefly some peculiarities of equipment connected with our

crackest crack cavalry. I grieve to say the camp roared.

"Take 'em over swampy ground. Let 'em run around a bit an' work the

starch out of 'em, an' then, Almighty, if we wouldn't plug 'em at ease

I'd eat their horses!"

"But suppose they engaged in the open?" said I.

"Engage the Hades. Not if there was a tree-trunk within twenty miles

they \_couldn't\_ engage in the open!"

Gentlemen, the officers, have you ever seriously considered the

existence on earth of a cavalry who by preference would fight in timber?

The evident sincerity of the proposition made me think hard as I moved

over to the hotel and joined a party exploration, which, diving into the

woods, unearthed a pit pool of burningest water fringed with jet black

sand--all the ground near by being pure white. But miracles pall when

they arrive at the rate of twenty a day. A flaming dragonfly flew over

the pool, reeled and dropped on the water, dying without a quiver of his

gorgeous wings, and the pool said nothing whatever, but sent its thin

steam wreaths up to the burning sky. I prefer pools that talk.

There was a maiden--a very trim maiden--who had just stepped out of one

of Mr. James's novels. She owned a delightful mother and an equally

delightful father, a heavy-eyed, slow-voiced man of finance. The

parents thought that their daughter wanted change. She lived in New

Hampshire. Accordingly, she had dragged them up to Alaska, to the

Yosemite Valley, and was now returning leisurely \_via\_ the Yellowstone

just in time for the tail-end of the summer season at Saratoga. We had

met once or twice before in the Park, and I had been amazed and amused

at her critical commendation of the wonders that she saw. From that very

resolute little mouth I received a lecture on American literature, the

nature and inwardness of Washington society, the precise value of

Cable's works as compared with "Uncle Remus" Harris, and a few other

things that had nothing whatever to do with geysers, but were altogether

delightful. Now an English maiden who had stumbled on a dust-grimed,

lime-washed, sun-peeled, collarless wanderer come from and going to

goodness knows where, would, her mother inciting her and her father

brandishing his umbrella, have regarded him as a dissolute adventurer.

Not so those delightful people from New Hampshire. They were good enough

to treat me--it sounds almost incredible--as a human being, possibly

respectable, probably not in immediate need of financial assistance.

Papa talked pleasantly and to the point. The little maiden strove

valiantly with the accent of her birth and that of her reading, and

mamma smiled benignly in the background.

Balance this with a story of a young English idiot I met knocking about

inside his high collars, attended by a valet. He condescended to tell me

that "you can't be too careful who you talk to in these parts," and

stalked on, fearing, I suppose, every minute for his social chastity.

Now that man was a barbarian (I took occasion to tell him so), for he

comported himself after the manner of the head-hunters of Assam, who are

at perpetual feud one with another.

You will understand that these foolish tales are introduced in order to

cover the fact that this pen cannot describe the glories of the Upper

Geyser basin. The evening I spent under the lee of the Castle Geyser

sitting on a log with some troopers and watching a baronial keep forty

feet high spouting hot water. If the Castle went off first, they said

the Giantess would be quiet, and \_vice versa\_; and then they told tales

till the moon got up and a party of campers in the woods gave us all

something to eat.

Next morning Tom drove us on, promising new wonders. He pulled up after

a few miles at a clump of brushwood where an army was drowning. I could

hear the sick gasps and thumps of the men going under, but when I broke

through the brushwood the hosts had fled, and there were only pools of

pink, black, and white lime, thick as turbid honey. They shot up a pat

of mud every minute or two, choking in the effort. It was an uncanny

sight. Do you wonder that in the old days the Indians were careful to

avoid the Yellowstone? Geysers are permissible, but mud is terrifying.

The old lady from Chicago took a piece of it, and in half an hour it

died into lime-dust and blew away between her fingers. All

\_maya\_,--illusion,--you see! Then we clinked over sulphur in crystals;

there was a waterfall of boiling water; and a road across a level park

hotly contested by the beavers. Every winter they build their dam and

flood the low-lying land; every summer that dam is torn up by the

Government, and for half a mile you must plough axle-deep in water, the

willows brushing into the buggy, and little waterways branching off

right and left. The road is the main stream--just like the Bolan line in

flood. If you turn up a byway, there is no more of you, and the beavers

work your buggy into next year's dam.

Then came soft, turfy forest that deadened the wheels, and two

troopers--on detachment duty--came noiselessly behind us. One was the

Wrap-up-his-Tail man, and we talked merrily while the half-broken horses

bucked about among the trees till we came to a mighty hill all strewn

with moss agates, and everybody had to get out and pant in that thin

air. But how intoxicating it was! The old lady from Chicago clucked like

an emancipated hen as she scuttled about the road cramming pieces of

rock into her reticule. She sent me fifty yards down the hill to pick up

a piece of broken bottle which she insisted was moss agate! "I've some

o' that at home an' they shine. You go get it, young feller."

As we climbed the long path, the road grew viler and viler till it

became without disguise the bed of a torrent; and just when things were

at their rockiest we emerged into a little sapphire lake--but never

sapphire was so blue--called Mary's Lake; and that between eight and

nine thousand feet above the sea. Then came grass downs, all on a

vehement slope, so that the buggy following the new-made road ran on to

the two off-wheels mostly, till we dipped head-first into a ford,

climbed up a cliff, raced along a down, dipped again and pulled up

dishevelled at "Larry's" for lunch and an hour's rest. Only "Larry"

could have managed that school-feast tent on the lonely hillside. Need

I say that he was an Irishman? His supplies were at their lowest ebb,

but Larry enveloped us all in the golden glamour of his speech ere we

had descended, and the tent with the rude trestle-table became a palace,

the rough fare, delicacies of Delmonico, and we, the abashed recipients

of Larry's imperial bounty. It was only later that I discovered I had

paid eight shillings for tinned beef, biscuits, and beer, but on the

other hand Larry had said: "Will I go out an' kill a buffalo?" And I

felt that for me and for me alone would he have done it. Everybody else

felt that way. Good luck go with Larry!

"An' now you'll all go an' wash your pocket-handkerchiefs in that

beautiful hot spring round the corner," said he. "There's soap an' a

washboard ready, an' 'tis not every day that ye can get hot water for

nothing." He waved us large-handedly to the open downs while he put the

tent to rights. These was no sense of fatigue on the body or distance in

the air. Hill and dale rode on the eyeball. I could have clutched the

far-off snowy peaks by putting out my hand. Never was such maddening

air. Why we should have washed pocket-handkerchiefs Larry alone knows.

It appeared to be a sort of religious rite. In a little valley overhung

with gay painted rocks ran a stream of velvet brown and pink. It was

hot--hotter than the hand could bear--and it coloured the boulders in

its course.

There was the maiden from New Hampshire, the old lady from Chicago,

papa, mamma, the woman who chewed gum, and all the rest of them, gravely

bending over a washboard and soap. Mysterious virtues lay in that queer

stream. It turned the linen white as driven snow in five minutes, and

then we lay on the grass and laughed with sheer bliss of being alive.

This have I known once in Japan, once on the banks of the Columbia, what

time the salmon came in and "California" howled, and once again in the

Yellowstone by the light of the eyes of the maiden from New Hampshire.

Four little pools lay at my elbow: one was of black water (tepid), one

clear water (cold), one clear water (hot), one red water (boiling); my

newly washed handkerchief covered them all. We marvelled as children

marvel.

"This evening we shall do the grand caÃ±on of the Yellowstone?" said the

maiden.

"Together?" said I; and she said yes.

The sun was sinking when we heard the roar of falling waters and came to

a broad river along whose banks we ran. And then--oh, then! I might at a

pinch describe the infernal regions, but not the other place. Be it

known to you that the Yellowstone River has occasion to run through a

gorge about eight miles long. To get to the bottom of the gorge it makes

two leaps, one of about one hundred and twenty and the other of three

hundred feet. I investigated the upper or lesser fall, which is close to

the hotel. Up to that time nothing particular happens to the

Yellowstone, its banks being only rocky, rather steep, and plentifully

adorned with pines. At the falls it comes round a corner, green, solid,

ribbed with a little foam and not more than thirty yards wide. Then it

goes over still green and rather more solid than before. After a minute

or two you, sitting upon a rock directly above the drop, begin to

understand that something has occurred; that the river has jumped a huge

distance between solid cliff walls and what looks like the gentle froth

of ripples lapping the sides of the gorge below is really the outcome of

great waves. And the river yells aloud; but the cliffs do not allow the

yells to escape.

That inspection began with curiosity and finished in terror, for it

seemed that the whole world was sliding in chrysolite from under my

feet. I followed with the others round the corner to arrive at the brink

of the caÃ±on: we had to climb up a nearly perpendicular ascent to begin

with, for the ground rises more than the river drops. Stately pine woods

fringe either lip of the gorge, which is--the Gorge of the Yellowstone.

All I can say is that without warning or preparation I looked into a

gulf seventeen hundred feet deep with eagles and fish-hawks circling far

below. And the sides of that gulf were one wild welter of

colour--crimson, emerald, cobalt, ochre, amber, honey splashed with

port-wine, snow-white, vermilion, lemon, and silver-grey, in wide

washes. The sides did not fall sheer, but were graven by time and water

and air into monstrous heads of kings, dead chiefs, men and women of the

old time. So far below that no sound of its strife could reach us, the

Yellowstone River ran--a finger-wide strip of jade-green. The sunlight

took those wondrous walls and gave fresh hues to those that nature had

already laid there. Once I saw the dawn break over a lake in Rajputana

and the sun set over the Oodey Sagar amid a circle of Holman Hunt hills.

This time I was watching both performances going on below me--upside

down you understand--and the colours were real! The caÃ±on was burning

like Troy town; but it would burn for ever, and, thank goodness, neither

pen nor brush could ever portray its splendours adequately. The Academy

would reject the picture for a chromolithograph. The public would scoff

at the letter-press for \_Daily Telegraphese\_. "I will leave this thing

alone," said I; "'tis my peculiar property. Nobody else shall share it

with me." Evening crept through the pines that shadowed us, but the full

glory of the day flamed in that caÃ±on as we went out very cautiously to

a jutting piece of rock--blood-red or pink it was--that overhung the

deepest deeps of all. Now I know what it is to sit enthroned amid the

clouds of sunset. Giddiness took away all sensation of touch or form;

but the sense of blinding colour remained. When I reached the mainland

again I had sworn that I had been floating. The maid from New Hampshire

said no word for a very long time. She then quoted poetry, which was

perhaps the best thing she could have done.

"And to think that this show-place has been going on all these days an'

none of we ever saw it," said the old lady from Chicago, with an acid

glance at her husband.

"No, only the Injuns," said he, unmoved; and the maiden and I laughed

long. Inspiration is fleeting, beauty is vain, and the power of the mind

for wonder limited. Though the shining hosts themselves had risen

choiring from the bottom of the gorge they would not have prevented her

papa and one baser than himself from rolling stones down those

stupendous rainbow-washed slides. Seventeen hundred feet of steepest

pitch and rather more than seventeen hundred colours for log or boulder

to whirl through! So we heaved things and saw them gather way and bound

from white rock to red or yellow, dragging behind them torrents of

colour, till the noise of their descent ceased and they bounded a

hundred yards clear at the last into the Yellowstone.

"I've been down there," said Tom that evening. "It's easy to get down if

you're careful--just sit and slide; but getting up is worse. An' I

found, down below there, two rocks just marked with a picture of the

caÃ±on. I wouldn't sell those rocks not for fifteen dollars."

And papa and I crawled down to the Yellowstone--just above the first

little fall--to wet a line for good luck. The round moon came up and

turned the cliffs and pines into silver; a two-pound trout came up also,

and we slew him among the rocks, nearly tumbling into that wild river.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then out and away to Livingstone once more. The maiden from New

Hampshire disappeared; papa and mamma with her disappeared. Disappeared,

too, the old lady from Chicago and all the rest, while I thought of all

that I had \_not\_ seen--the forest of petrified trees with amethyst

crystals in their black hearts; the great Yellowstone Lake where you

catch your trout alive in one spring and drop him into another to boil

him; and most of all of that mysterious Hoodoo region where all the

devils not employed in the geysers live and kill the wandering bear and

elk, so that the scared hunter finds in Death Gulch piled carcasses of

the dead whom no man has smitten. Hoodoo-land with the overhead noises,

the bird and beast and devil-rocks, the mazes and the bottomless

pits,--all these things I missed. On the return road Yankee Jim and

Diana of the Crossways gave me kindly greeting as the train paused an

instant before their door, and at Livingstone whom should I see but Tom

the driver?

"I've done with the Yellowstone and decided to clear out East

somewheres," said he. "Your talkin' about movin' round so gay an'

careless made me kinder restless; I'm movin' out."

Lord forgie us for our responsibility one to another!

"And your partner?" said I.

"Here's him," said Tom, introducing a gawky youth with a bundle; and I

saw those two young men turn their faces to the East.

No. XXXII

OF THE AMERICAN ARMY AND THE CITY OF THE SAINTS. THE TEMPLE, THE BOOK OF

MORMON, AND THE GIRL FROM DORSET. AN ORIENTAL CONSIDERATION OF POLYGAMY.

"A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be;

and what shall be after him who can tell?"

It has just occurred to me with great force that delightful as these

letters are to myself their length and breadth and depth may be just the

least little bit in the world wearisome to you over there. I will

compress myself rigorously, though I should very much like to deliver a

dissertation on the American Army and the possibilities of its

extension.

The American army is a beautiful little army. Some day, when all the

Indians are happily dead or drunk, it ought to make the finest

scientific and survey corps that the world has ever seen. It does

excellent work now, but there is this defect in its nature: it is

officered, as you know, from West Point, but the mischief of it is that

West Point seems to be created for the purpose of spreading a general

knowledge of military matters among the people. A boy goes up to that

institution, gets his pass, and returns to civil life, so they tell me,

with a dangerous knowledge that he is a sucking Moltke, and may apply

his learning when occasion offers. Given trouble, that man will be a

nuisance, because he is a hideously versatile American to begin with,

as cocksure of himself as a man can be, and with all the racial

disregard for human life to back him through his demi-semi-professional

generalship. In a country where, as the records of the daily papers

show, men engaged in a conflict with police or jails are all too ready

to adopt a military formation, and get heavily shot in a sort of cheap,

half-instructed warfare instead of being decently scared by the

appearance of the military, this sort of arrangement does not seem wise.

The bond between the States is of amazing tenuity. So long as they do

not absolutely march into the District of Columbia, sit on the

Washington statues, and invent a flag of their own, they can legislate,

lynch, hunt negroes through swamps, divorce, railroad, and rampage as

much as ever they choose. They do not need knowledge of their own

military strength to back their genial lawlessness. That Regular Army,

which is a dear little army, should be kept to itself, blooded on

detachment duty, turned into the paths of science, and now and again

assembled at feasts of Freemasons and so forth. It's too tiny to be a

political power. The immortal wreck of the Grand Army of the Republic is

a political power of the largest and most unblushing description. It

ought not to help to lay the foundations of an amateur military power

that is blind and irresponsible....

Be thankful that the balance of this lecture is suppressed, and with it

the account of a "shiveree" which I attended in Livingstone City: and

the story of the editor and the sub-editor (the latter was a pet cougar,

or mountain lion, who used, they said, skilfully to sub-edit disputants

in the office) of the Livingstone daily paper.

Omitting a thousand matters of first importance, let me pick up the

thread of things on a narrow-gauge line that took me down to Salt Lake.

The run between Delhi and Ahmedabad on a May day would have been bliss

compared to this torture. There was nothing but glare and desert and

alkali dust. There was no smoking-accommodation. I sat in the lavatory

with the conductor and a prospector who told stories about Indian

atrocities in the voice of a dreaming child--oath following oath as

smoothly as clotted cream laps the mouth of the jug. I don't think he

knew he was saying anything out of the way, but nine or ten of those

oaths were new to me, and one even made the conductor raise his

eyebrows.

"And when a man's alone mostly, leadin' his horse across the hills, he

gets to talk aloud to himself as it was," said the weather-worn retailer

of tortures. A vision rose before me of this man trampling the Bannack

City trail under the stars--swearing, always swearing!

Bundles of rags that were pointed out as Red Indians, boarded the train

from time to time. Their race privileges allow them free transit on the

platforms of the cars. They mustn't come inside of course, and equally

of course the train never thinks of pulling up for them. I saw a squaw

take us flying and leave us in the same manner when we were spinning

round a curve. Like the Punjabi, the Red Indian gets out by preference

on the trackless plain and walks stolidly to the horizon. He never says

where he is going....

\_Salt Lake.\_ I am concerned for the sake of Mr. Phil Robinson, his soul.

You will remember that he wrote a book called \_Saints and Sinners\_ in

which he proved very prettily that the Mormon was almost altogether an

estimable person. Ever since my arrival at Salt Lake I have been

wondering what made him write that book. On mature reflection, and after

a long walk round the city, I am inclined to think it was the sun, which

is very powerful hereabouts.

By great good luck the evil-minded train, already delayed twelve hours

by a burnt bridge, brought me to the city on a Saturday by way of that

valley which the Mormons aver their efforts had caused to blossom like

the rose. Some hours previously I had entered a new world where, in

conversation, every one was either a Mormon or a Gentile. It is not

seemly for a free and independent citizen to dub himself a Gentile, but

the Mayor of Ogden--which is the Gentile city of the valley--told me

that there must be some distinction between the two flocks. Long before

the fruit orchards of Logan or the shining levels of the Salt Lake had

been reached that Mayor--himself a Gentile, and one renowned for his

dealings with the Mormons--told me that the great question of the

existence of the power within the power was being gradually solved by

the ballot and by education. "We have," quoth he, "hills round and about

here, stuffed full of silver and gold and lead, and all Hell atop of the

Mormon church can't keep the Gentile from flocking in when that's the

case. At Ogden, thirty miles from Salt Lake, this year the Gentile vote

swamped the Mormon at the Municipal elections, and next year we trust

that we shall be able to repeat our success in Salt Lake itself. In that

city the Gentiles are only one-third of the total population, but the

mass of 'em are grown men, capable of voting. Whereas the Mormons are

cluttered up with children. I guess as soon as we have purely Gentile

officers in the township, and the control of the policy of the city, the

Mormons will have to back down considerable. They're bound to go before

long. My own notion is that it's the older men who keep alive the

opposition to the Gentile and all his works. The younger ones, spite of

all the elders tell 'em, \_will\_ mix with the Gentile, and read Gentile

books, and you bet your sweet life there's a holy influence working

toward conversion in the kiss of an average Gentile--specially when the

girl knows that he won't think it necessary for her salvation to load

the house up with other woman-folk. I guess the younger generation are

giving sore trouble to the elders. What's that you say about polygamy?

It's a penal offence now under a Bill passed not long ago. The Mormon

has to elect one wife and keep to her. If he's caught visiting any of

the others--do you see that cool and restful brown stone building way

over there against the hillside? That's the penitentiary. He is sent

there to consider his sins, and he pays a fine, too. But most of the

police in Salt Lake are Mormons, and I don't suppose they are too hard

on their friends. I presoom there's a good deal of polygamy practised on

the sly. But the chief trouble is to get the Mormon to see that the

Gentile isn't the doubly-damned beast that the elders represent. Only

get the Gentiles well into the State, and the whole concern is bound to

go to pieces in a very little time."

And the wish being father to the thought, "Why, certainly," said I, and

began to take in the valley of Deseret, the home of the latter-day

saints, and the abode perhaps of as much misery as has ever been

compressed into forty years. The good folk at home will not understand,

but you will, what follows. You know how in Bengal to this day the

child-wife is taught to curse her possible co-wife, ere yet she has gone

to her husband's house? And the Bengali woman has been accustomed to

polygamy for a few hundred years. You know, too, the awful jealousy

between mother wife and barren behind the purdah--the jealousy that

culminates sometimes in the poisoning of the well-beloved son? Now and

again, an Englishwoman employs a high-caste Mussulman nurse, and in the

offices of that hire women are apt to forget the differences of colour,

and to speak unreservedly as twin daughters under Eve's curse. The nurse

tells very strange and awful things. She has, and this the Mormons count

a privilege, been born into polygamy; but she loathes and detests it

from the bottom of her jealous soul. And to the lot of the Bengali

co-wife--"the cursed of the cursed--the daughter of the dunghill--the

scald-head and the barren-mute" (you know the rest of that sweet

commination-service)--one creed, of all the White creeds to-day,

deliberately introduces the white woman taken from centuries of

training, which have taught her that it is right to control the

undivided heart of one man. To quench her most natural rebellion, that

amazing creed and fantastic jumble of Mahometanism, the Mosaical law,

and imperfectly comprehended fragments of Freemasonry, calls to its aid

all the powers of a hell conceived and elaborated by coarse-minded

hedgers and ditchers. A sweet view, isn't it?

All the beauty of the valley could not make me forget it. But the valley

is very fair. Bench after bench of land, flat as a table against the

flanks of the ringing hills, marks where the Salt Lake rested for a

while as it sunk from an inland sea to a lake fifty miles long and

thirty broad. Before long the benches will be covered with houses. At

present these are hidden among the green trees on the dead flat of the

valley. You have read a hundred times how the streets of Salt Lake City

are very broad, furnished with rows of shade trees and gutters of fresh

water. This is true, but I struck the town in a season of great

drouth--that same drouth which is playing havoc with the herds of

Montana. The trees were limp, and the rills of sparkling water that one

reads about were represented by dusty, paved courses. Main Street

appears to be inhabited by the commercial Gentile, who has made of it a

busy, bustling thoroughfare, and, in the eye of the sun, swigs the

ungodly lager and smokes the improper cigar all day long. For which I

like him. At the head of Main Street stand the lions of the place; the

Temple and the Tabernacle, the Tithing House, and the houses of Brigham

Young, whose portrait is on sale in most of the booksellers' shops.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the late Amir of Utah does not

unremotely resemble His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan, whom these

fortunate eyes have seen. And I have no desire to fall into the hands of

the Amir. The first thing to be seen was, of course, the Temple, the

outward exponent of a creed. Armed with a copy of the Book of Mormon,

for better comprehension, I went to form rash opinions. Some day the

Temple will be finished. It was begun only thirty years ago, and up to

date rather more than three million dollars and a half have been

expended in its granite bulk. The walls are ten feet thick; the edifice

itself is about a hundred feet high; and its towers will be nearly two

hundred. And that is all there is of it, unless you choose to inspect

more closely; always reading the Book of Mormon as you walk. Then the

wondrous puerility, of what I suppose we must call the design, becomes

apparent. These men, directly inspired from on High, heaped stone on

stone and pillar on pillar, without achieving either dignity, relief, or

interest. There is, over the main door, some pitiful scratching in stone

representing the all-seeing eye, the Masonic Grip, the sun, moon, and

stars, and, perhaps, other skittles. The flatness and meanness of the

thing almost makes you weep when you look at the magnificent granite in

blocks strewn abroad, and think of the art that three million dollars

might have called in to the aid of the church. It is as though a child

had said: "Let us draw a great, big, fine house--finer than any house

that ever was,"--and in that desire had laboriously smudged along with a

ruler and pencil, piling meaningless straight lines on compass-drawn

curves, with his tongue following every movement of the inept hand. Then

sat I down on a wheelbarrow and read the Book of Mormon, and behold the

spirit of the book was the spirit of the stone before me. The estimable

Joseph and Hyrum Smith struggling to create a new Bible, when they knew

nothing of the history of Old and New Testament, and the inspired

architect muddling with his bricks--they were brothers. But the book was

more interesting than the building. It is written, and all the world has

read, how to Joseph Smith an angel came down from Heaven with a pair of

celestial gig-lamps, whereby he was marvellously enabled to interpret

certain plates of gold scribbled over with dots and scratches, and

discovered by him in the ground. Which plates Joseph Smith did

translate--only he spelt the mysterious characters "caractors"--and out

of the dots and scratches produced a volume of six hundred closely

printed pages, containing the books of Nephi, first and second, Jacob,

Enos, Jarom, Omni, Mormon, Mosiah, the Record of Zeniff, the book of

Alma Helaman, the third of Nephi, the book of Ether (the whole thing is

a powerful anÃ¦sthetic, by the way), and the final book of Mononi. Three

men, of whom one I believe is now living, bear solemn witness that the

angel with the spectacles appeared unto them; eight other men swear

solemnly that they have seen the golden plates of the revelation; and

upon this testimony the book of Mormon stands. The Mormon Bible begins

at the days of Zedekiah, King of Judah, and ends in a wild and weltering

quagmire of tribal fights, bits of revelation, and wholesale cribs from

the Bible. Very sincerely did I sympathise with the inspired brothers as

I waded through their joint production. As a humble fellow-worker in the

field of fiction, I knew what it was to get good names for one's

characters. But Joseph and Hyrum were harder bestead than ever I have

been; and bolder men to boot. They created Teancum and Coriantumy,

Pakhoran, Kishkumen, and Gadianton, and other priceless names which the

memory does not hold; but of geography they wisely steered clear, and

were astutely vague as to the localities of places, because you see they

were by no means certain what lay in the next county to their own. They

marched and countermarched bloodthirsty armies across their pages; and

added new and amazing chapters to the records of the New Testament, and

reorganised the heavens and the earth as it is always lawful to do in

print. But they could not achieve style, and it was foolish of them to

let into their weird Mosaic pieces of the genuine Bible whenever the

labouring pen dropped from its toilsome parody to a sentence or two of

vile, bad English or downright "penny dreadfulism." "And Moses said unto

the people of Israel: 'Great Scott! what air you doing?'" There is no

sentence in the Book of Mormon word for word like the foregoing; but the

general tone is not widely different.

There are the makings of a very fine creed about Mormonism. To begin

with, the Church is rather more absolute than that of Rome. Drop the

polygamy plank in the platform, but on the other hand deal lightly with

certain forms of excess. Keep the quality of the recruits down to a low

mental level and see that the best of the agricultural science available

is in the hands of the Elders, and you have there a first-class engine

for pioneer work. The tawdry mysticism and the borrowings from

Freemasonry serve the low-caste Swede and the Dane, the Welshman and the

Cornish cottar, just as well as a highly organised Heaven.

I went about the streets and peeped into people's front windows, and the

decorations upon the tables were after the manner of the year 1850. Main

Street was full of country folk from the outside come in to trade with

the Zion Mercantile Co-operative Institute. The Church, I fancy, looks

after the finances of this thing, and it consequently pays good

dividends. The faces of the women were not lovely. Indeed, but for the

certainty that ugly persons are just as irrational in the matter of

undivided love as the beautiful, it seemed that polygamy was a blessed

institution for the women, and that only the spiritual power could drive

the hulking, board-faced men into it. The women wore hideous garments,

and the men seemed to be tied up with string. They would market all that

afternoon, and on Sunday go to the praying-place. I tried to talk to a

few of them, but they spoke strange tongues and stared and behaved like

cows. Yet one woman, and not an altogether ugly one, confided to me that

she hated the idea of Salt Lake City being turned into a show-place for

the amusement of the Gentile.

"If we 'ave our own institutions, that ain't no reason why people should

come 'ere and stare at us, his it?"

The dropped "h" betrayed her.

"And when did you leave England?" I said.

"Summer of '84. I am from Dorset," she said. "The Mormon agents was very

good to us, and we was very poor. Now we're better off--my father an'

mother an' me."

"Then you like the State?"

She misunderstood at first. "Oh, I ain't livin' in the state of

polygamy. Not me yet. I ain't married. I like where I am. I've got

things o' my own--and some land."

"But I suppose you will--"

"Not me. I ain't like them Swedes an' Danes. I ain't got nothin' to say

for or against polygamy. It's the Elders' business, an' between you an'

me I don't think it's going on much longer. You'll 'ear them in the

'ouse to-morrer talkin' as if it was spreadin' all over America. The

Swedes they think it \_his\_. I know it hisn't."

"But you've got your land all right."

"Oh, yes, we've got our land an' we never say aught against polygamy o'

course--father an' mother an' me."

It strikes me that there is a fraud somewhere. You've never heard of the

rice-Christians, have you?

I should have liked to have spoken to the maiden at length, but she

dived into the Zion Co-op. and a man captured me, saying that it was my

bounden duty to see the sights of Salt Lake. These comprised the

egg-shaped Tabernacle, the Beehive, and town houses of Brigham Young;

the same great ruffian's tomb with assorted samples of his wives

sleeping round him (just as the eleven faithful ones sleep round the

ashes of Runjit Singh outside Fort Lahore), and one or two other

curiosities. But all these things have been described by abler pens than

mine. The animal-houses where Brigham used to pack his wives are grubby

villas; the Tabernacle is a shingled fraud, and the Tithing House where

all the revenue returns seem to be made, much resembles a stable. The

Mormons have a paper currency of their own--ecclesiastical bank-notes

which are exchanged for local produce. But the little boys of the place

prefer the bullion of the Gentiles. It is not pleasant to be taken round

a township with your guide stopping before every third house to say:

"That's where Elder so and so kept Amelia Bathershins, his fifth

wife--no, his third. Amelia she was took on after Keziah, but Keziah was

the Elder's pet, an' he didn't dare to let Amelia come across Keziah for

fear of her spilin' Keziah's beauty." The Mussulmans are quite right.

The minute that all the domestic details of polygamy are discussed in

the mouths of the people, that institution is ready to fall. I shook off

my guide when he had told me his very last doubtful tale, and went on

alone. An ordered peace and a perfection of quiet luxury is the note of

the city of Salt Lake. The houses stand in generous and well-groomed

grass-plots, none very much worse or better than their neighbours.

Creepers grow over the house fronts, and there is a very pleasant music

of wind among the trees in the vast empty streets bringing a smell of

hay and the flowers of summer.

On a tableland overlooking all the city stands the United States

garrison of infantry and artillery. The State of Utah can do nearly

anything it pleases until that much-to-be-desired hour when the Gentile

vote shall quietly swamp out Mormonism; but the garrison is kept there

in case of accidents. The big, shark-mouthed, pig-eared, heavy-boned

farmers sometimes take to their creed with wildest fanaticism, and in

past years have made life excessively unpleasant for the Gentile when he

was few in the land. But to-day, so far from killing openly or secretly,

or burning Gentile farms, it is all the Mormon dares do to feebly try to

boycott the interloper. His journals preach defiance to the United

States Government, and in the Tabernacle of a Sunday the preachers

follow suit. When I went down there the place was full of people who

would have been much better for a washing. A man rose up and told them

that they were the chosen of God, the elect of Israel, that they were to

obey their priest, and that there was a good time coming. I fancy that

they had heard all this before so many times it produced no impression

whatever; even as the sublimest mysteries of another Faith lost salt

through constant iteration. They breathed heavily through their noses

and stared straight in front of them--impassive as flatfish.

And that evening I went up to the garrison post--one of the most coveted

of all the army commands--and overlooked the City of the Saints as it

lay in the circle of its forbidding hills. You can speculate a good deal

about the mass of human misery, the loves frustrated, the gentle hearts

broken, and the strong souls twisted from the law of life to a fiercer

following of the law of death, that the hills have seen. How must it

have been in the old days when the footsore emigrants broke through into

the circle and knew that they were cut off from hope of return or sight

of friends--were handed over to the power of the friends that called

themselves priests of the Most High? "But for the grace of God there

goes Richard Baxter," as the eminent divine once said. It seemed good

that fate did not order me to be a brick in the up-building of the

Mormon church, that has so aptly established herself by the borders of a

lake bitter, salt, and hopeless.

No. XXXIII

HOW I MET CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE BETWEEN SALT LAKE AND OMAHA.

"Much have I seen,

Cities and men."

Let there be no misunderstanding about the matter. I love this People,

and if any contemptuous criticism has to be done, I will do it myself.

My heart has gone out to them beyond all other peoples; and for the life

of me I cannot tell why. They are bleeding-raw at the edges, almost more

conceited than the English, vulgar with a massive vulgarity which is as

though the Pyramids were coated with Christmas-cake sugar-works.

Cocksure they are, lawless and as casual as they are cocksure; but I

love them, and I realised it when I met an Englishman who laughed at

them. He proved conclusively that they were all wrong, from their tariff

to their go-as-you-please Civil Service, and beneath the consideration

of a true Briton.

"I admit everything," said I. "Their Government's provisional; their

law's the notion of the moment; their railways are made of hair-pins and

match-sticks, and most of their good luck lives in their woods and mines

and rivers and not in their brains; but for all that, they be the

biggest, finest, and best people on the surface of the globe! Just you

wait a hundred years and see how they'll behave when they've had the

screw put on them and have forgotten a few of the patriarchal teachings

of the late Mister George Washington. Wait till the

Anglo-American-German-Jew--the Man of the Future--is properly equipped.

He'll have just the least little kink in his hair now and again; he'll

carry the English lungs above the Teuton feet that can walk for ever;

and he will wave long, thin, bony Yankee hands with the big blue veins

on the wrist, from one end of the earth to the other. He'll be the

finest writer, poet, and dramatist, 'specially dramatist, that the world

as it recollects itself has ever seen. By virtue of his Jew blood--just

a little, little drop--he'll be a musician and a painter too. At present

there is too much balcony and too little Romeo in the life-plays of his

fellow-citizens. Later on, when the proportion is adjusted and he sees

the possibilities of his land, he will produce things that will make the

effete East stare. He will also be a complex and highly composite

administrator. There is nothing known to man that he will not be, and

his country will sway the world with one foot as a man tilts a see-saw

plank!"

"But this is worse than the Eagle at its worst. Do you seriously believe

all that?" said the Englishman.

"If I believe anything seriously, all this I most firmly believe. You

wait and see. Sixty million people, chiefly of English instincts, who

are trained from youth to believe that nothing is impossible, don't

slink through the centuries like Russian peasantry. They are bound to

leave their mark somewhere, and don't you forget it."

But isn't it sad to think that with all Eternity behind and before us we

cannot, even though we would pay for it with sorrow, filch from the

Immensities one hundred poor years of life, wherein to watch the two

Great Experiments? A hundred years hence India and America will be worth

observing. At present the one is burned out and the other is only just

stoking up. When I left my opponent there was much need for faith,

because I fell into the hands of a perfectly delightful man whom I had

met casually in the street, sitting in a chair on the pavement, smoking

a huge cigar. He was a commercial traveller, and his beat lay through

Southern Mexico, and he told me tales, of forgotten cities, stone gods

up to their sacred eyes in forest growth, Mexican priests, rebellions,

and dictatorships, that made my hair curl. It was he who dragged me

forth to bathe in Salt Lake, which is some fifteen miles away from the

city, and reachable by many trains which are but open tram-cars. The

track, like all American tracks, was terrifying in its roughness; and

the end of the journey disclosed the nakedness of the accommodation.

There were piers and band houses and refreshment stalls built over the

solid grey levels of the lake, but they only accentuated the utter

barrenness of the place. Americans don't mix with their scenery as yet.

And "Have faith," said the commercial traveller as he walked into water

heavy as quicksilver. "Walk!" I walked, and I walked till my legs flew

up and I had to walk as one struggling with a high wind, but still I

rode head and shoulders above the water. It was a horrible feeling, this

inability to sink. Swimming was not much use. You couldn't get a grip of

the water, so I e'en sat me down and drifted like a luxurious anemone

among the hundreds that were bathing in that place. You could wallow for

three-quarters of an hour in that warm, sticky brine and fear no evil

consequences; but when you came out you were coated with white salt from

top to toe. And if you accidentally swallowed a mouthful of the water,

you died. This is true, because I swallowed half a mouthful and was

half-dead in consequence.

The commercial traveller on our return journey across the level flats

that fringe the lake's edge bade me note some of the customs of his

people. The great open railway car held about a hundred men and maidens,

"coming up with a song from the sea." They sang and they shouted and

they exchanged witticisms of the most poignant, and comported themselves

like their brothers and sisters over the seas--the 'Arries and 'Arriets

of the older world. And there sat behind me two modest maidens in white,

alone and unattended. To these the privileged youth of the car--a youth

of a marvellous range of voice--proffered undying affection. They

laughed, but made no reply in words. The suit was renewed, and with

extravagant imagery; the nearest seats applauding. When we arrived at

the city the maidens turned and went their way up a dark tree-shaded

street, and the boys elsewhere. Whereat, recollecting what the London

rough was like, I marvelled that they did not pursue. "It's all right,"

said the commercial traveller. "If they had followed--well, I guess some

one would ha' shot 'em." The very next day on those very peaceful cars

returning from the Lake some one was shot--dead. He was what they call a

"sport," which is American for a finished "leg," and he had an argument

with a police officer, and the latter slew him. I saw his funeral go

down the main street. There were nearly thirty carriages, filled with

doubtful men, and women not in the least doubtful, and the local papers

said that deceased had his merits, but it didn't much matter, because if

the Sheriff hadn't dropped him he would assuredly have dropped the

Sheriff. Somehow this jarred on my sensitive feelings, and I went away,

though the commercial traveller would fain have entertained me in his

own house, he knowing not my name. Twice through the long hot nights we

talked, tilting up our chairs on the sidewalk, of the future of America.

You should hear the Saga of the States reeled off by a young and

enthusiastic citizen who had just carved out for himself a home, filled

it with a pretty little wife, and is preparing to embark on commerce on

his own account. I was tempted to believe that pistol-shots were

regrettable accidents and lawlessness only the top scum on the great sea

of humanity. I am tempted to believe that still, though baked and dusty

Utah is very many miles behind me.

Then chance threw me into the arms of another and very different

commercial traveller, as we pulled out of Utah on our way to Omaha \_via\_

the Rockies. He travelled in biscuits, of which more anon, and Fate had

smitten him very heavily, having at one stroke knocked all the beauty

and joy out of his poor life. So he journeyed with a case of samples as

one dazed, and his eyes took no pleasure in anything that he saw. In his

despair he had withdrawn himself to his religion,--he was a

Baptist,--and spoke of its consolation with the artless freedom that an

American generally exhibits when he is talking about his most sacred

private affairs. There was a desert beyond Utah, hot and barren as Mian

Mir in May. The sun baked the car-roof, and the dust caked the windows,

and through the dust and the glare the man with the biscuits bore

witness to his creed, which seems to include one of the greatest

miracles in the world--the immediate unforeseen, self-conscious

redemption of the soul by means very similar to those which turned Paul

to the straight path.

"You must experi\_ence\_ religion," he repeated, his mouth twitching and

his eyes black-ringed with his recent loss. "You must experi\_ence\_

religion. You can't tell when you're goin' to get, or haow; but it will

come--it will come, Sir, like a lightning stroke, an' you will wrestle

with yourself before you receive full conviction and assurance."

"How long does that take?" I asked reverently.

"It may take hours. It may take days. I knew a man in San Jo who lay

under conviction for a month an' then he got the sperrit--as you \_must\_

git it."

"And then?"

"And then you are saved. You feel that, an' you kin endure anything," he

sighed. "Yes, anything. I don't care what it is, though I allow that

some things are harder than others."

"Then you have to wait for the miracle to be worked by powers outside

yourself. And if the miracle doesn't work?"

"But it \_must\_. I tell you it must. It comes to all who profess with

faith."

I learned a good deal about that creed as the train fled on; and I

wondered as I learned. It was a strange thing to watch that poor human

soul, broken and bowed by its loss, nerving itself against each new pang

of pain with the iterated assurance that it was safe against the pains

of Hell.

The heat was stifling. We quitted the desert and launched into the

rolling green plains of Colorado. Dozing uneasily with every removable

rag removed, I was roused by a blast of intense cold and the drumming of

a hundred drums. The train had stopped. Far as the eye could range the

land was white under two feet of hail--each hailstone as big as the top

of a sherry-glass. I saw a young colt by the side of the track standing

with his poor little fluffy back to the pitiless pelting. He was pounded

to death. An old horse met his doom on the run. He galloped wildly

towards the train, but his hind legs dropped into a hole half water and

half ice. He beat the ground with his fore-feet for a minute and then

rolling over on his side submitted quietly to be killed.

When the storm ceased, we picked our way cautiously and crippledly over

a track that might give way at any moment. The Western driver urges his

train much as does the Subaltern the bounding pony, and 'twould seem

with an equal sense of responsibility. If a foot does go wrong, why

there you are, don't you know, and if it is all right, why all right it

is, don't you know. But I would sooner be on the pony than the train.

This seems a good place wherein to preach on American versatility. When

Mr. Howells writes a novel, when a reckless hero dams a flood by heaving

a dynamite-shattered mountain into it, or when a notoriety-hunting

preacher marries a couple in a balloon, you shall hear the great

American press rise on its hind legs and walk round mouthing over the

versatility of the American citizen. And he is versatile--horribly so.

The unlimited exercise of the right of private judgment (which, by the

way, is a weapon not one man in ten is competent to handle), his blatant

cocksureness, and the dry-air-bred restlessness that makes him crawl all

over the furniture when he is talking to you, conspire to make him

versatile. But what he calls versatility the impartial bystander of

Anglo-Indian extraction is apt to deem mere casualness, and dangerous

casualness at that. No man can grasp the inwardness of an employ by the

light of pure reason--even though that reason be republican. He must

serve an apprenticeship to one craft and learn that craft all the days

of his life if he wishes to excel therein. Otherwise he merely "puts the

thing through somehow;" and occasionally he doesn't. But wherein lies

the beauty of this form of mental suppleness? Old man California, whom I

shall love and respect always, told me one or two anecdotes about

American versatility and its consequences that came back to my mind with

direful force as the train progressed. We didn't upset, but I don't

think that that was the fault of the driver or the men who made the

track. Take up--you can easily find them--the accounts of ten

consecutive railway catastrophes--not little accidents, but first-class

fatalities, when the long cars turn over, take fire, and roast the

luckless occupants alive. To seven out of the ten you shall find

appended the cheerful statement: "The accident is supposed to have been

due to the rails spreading." That means the metals were spiked down to

the ties with such versatility that the spikes or the tracks drew under

the constant vibration of the traffic, and the metals opened out. No one

is hanged for these little affairs.

We began to climb hills, and then we stopped--at night in darkness,

while men threw sand under the wheels and crowbarred the track and then

"guessed" that we might proceed. Not being in the least anxious to face

my Maker half asleep and rubbing my eyes, I went forward to a common

car, and was rewarded by two hours' conversation with the stranded,

broken-down, husband-abandoned actress of a fourth-rate, stranded,

broken-down, manager-bereft company. She was muzzy with beer, reduced to

her last dollar, fearful that there would be no one to meet her at

Omaha, and wept at intervals because she had given the conductor a

five-dollar bill to change, and he hadn't come back. He was an Irishman,

so I knew he couldn't steal, and I addressed myself to the task of

consolation. I was rewarded, after a decent interval, by the history of

a life so wild, so mixed, so desperately improbable, and yet so simply

probable, and above all so quick--not fast--in its kaleidoscopic changes

that the \_Pioneer\_ would reject any summary of it. And so you will never

know how she, the beery woman with the tangled blond hair, was once a

girl on a farm in far-off New Jersey. How he, a travelling actor, had

wooed and won her,--"but Paw he was always set against Alf,"--and how he

and she embarked all their little capital on the word of a faithless

manager who disbanded his company a hundred miles from nowhere, and how

she and Alf and a third person who had not yet made any noise in the

world, had to walk the railway-track and beg from the farm-houses; how

that third person arrived and went away again with a wail, and how Alf

took to the whisky and other things still more calculated to make a wife

unhappy; and how after barn-stormings, insults, shooting-scrapes, and

pitiful collapses of poor companies she had once won an encore. It was

not a cheerful tale to listen to. There was a real actress in the

Pullman,--such an one as travels sumptuously with a maid and

dressing-case,--and my draggle-tail thought of appealing to her for

help, but broke down after several attempts to walk into the car

jauntily as befitted a sister in the profession. Then the conductor

reappeared,--the five-dollar bill honestly changed,--and she wept by

reason of beer and gratitude together, and then fell asleep waveringly,

alone in the car, and became almost beautiful and quite kissable; while

the Man with the Sorrow stood at the door between actress and actress

and preached grim sermons on the certain end of each if they did not

mend their ways and find regeneration through the miracle of the Baptist

creed. Yes, we were a queer company going up to the Rockies together. I

was the luckiest, because when a breakdown occurred, and we were delayed

for twelve hours, I ate all the Baptist's sample-biscuits. They were

various in composition, but nourishing. Always travel with a "drummer."

No. XXXIV

ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE; AND HOW THE MAN GRING SHOWED ME THE GARMENTS OF

THE ELLEWOMEN.

After much dallying and more climbing we came to a pass like all the

Bolan Passes in the world, and the Black CaÃ±on of the Gunnison called

they it. We had been climbing for very many hours, and attained a modest

elevation of some seven or eight thousand feet above the sea, when we

entered a gorge, remote from the sun, where the rocks were two thousand

feet sheer, and where a rock-splintered river roared and howled ten feet

below a track which seemed to have been built on the simple principle of

dropping miscellaneous dirt into the river and pinning a few rails

a-top. There was a glory and a wonder and a mystery about that mad ride

which I felt keenly (you will find it properly dressed up in the

guide-books), until I had to offer prayers for the safety of the train.

There was no hope of seeing the track two hundred yards ahead. We seemed

to be running into the bowels of the earth at the invitation of an

irresponsible stream. Then the solid rock would open and disclose a

curve of awful twistfulness. Then the driver put on all steam, and we

would go round that curve on one wheel chiefly, the Gunnison River

gnashing its teeth below. The cars overhung the edge of the water, and

if a single one of the rails had chosen to spread, nothing in the wide

world could have saved us from drowning. I knew we should damage

something in the end--the sombre horrors of the gorge, the rush of the

jade-green water below, and the cheerful tales told by the conductor

made me certain of the catastrophe.

We had just cleared the Black CaÃ±on and another gorge, and were sailing

out into open country nine thousand feet above the level of the sea,

when we came most suddenly round a corner upon a causeway across a waste

water--half dam and half quarry-pool. The locomotive gave one wild "Hoo!

Hoo! Hoo!" but it was too late. He was a beautiful bull, and goodness

only knows why he had chosen the track for a constitutional with his

wife. \_She\_ was flung to the left, but the cow-catcher caught \_him\_, and

turning him round, heaved him shoulder deep into the pool. The

expression of blank, blind bewilderment on his bovine, jovine face was

wonderful to behold. He was not angry. I don't think he was even scared,

though he must have flown ten yards through the air. All he wanted to

know was: "Will somebody have the goodness to tell a respectable old

gentleman what in the world, or out of it, has occurred?" And five

minutes later the stream that had been snapping at our heels in the

gorges split itself into a dozen silver threads on a breezy upland, and

became an innocent trout beck, and we halted at a half-dead city, the

name of which does not remain with me. It had originally been built on

the crest of a wave of prosperity. Once ten thousand people had walked

its street; but the boom had collapsed. The great brick houses and the

factories were empty. The population lived in little timber shanties on

the fringes of the deserted town. There were some railway workshops and

things, and the hotel (whose pavement formed the platform of the

railway) contained one hundred and more rooms--empty. The place, in its

half-inhabitedness, was more desolate than Amber or Chitor. But a man

said: "Trout--six pounds--two miles away," and the Sorrowful Man and

myself went in search of 'em. The town was ringed by a circle of hills

all alive with little thunder-storms that broke across the soft green of

the plain in wisps and washes of smoke and amber.

To our tiny party associated himself a lawyer from Chicago. We

foregathered on the question of flies, but I didn't expect to meet

Elijah Pogram in the flesh. He delivered orations on the future of

England and America, and of the Great Federation that the years will

bring forth when America and England will belt the globe with their

linked hands. According to the notions of the British, he made an ass of

himself, but for all his high-falutin he talked sense. I might knock

through England on a four months' tour and not find a man capable of

putting into words the passionate patriotism that possessed the little

Chicago lawyer. And he was a man with points, for he offered me three

days' shooting in Illinois, if I would step out of my path a little. I

might travel for ten years up and down England ere I found a man who

would give a complete stranger so much as a sandwich, and for twenty ere

I squeezed as much enthusiasm out of a Britisher. He and I talked

politics and trout-flies all one sultry day as we wandered up and down

the shallows of the stream aforesaid. Little fish are sweet. I spent two

hours whipping a ripple for a fish that I knew was there, and in the

pasture-scented dusk caught a three-pounder on a ragged old brown hackle

and landed him after ten minutes' excited argument. He was a beauty. If

ever any man works the Western trout-streams, he would do well to bring

out with him the dingiest flies he possesses. The natives laugh at the

tiny English hooks, but they hold, and duns and drabs and sober greys

seem to tickle the Ã¦sthetic tastes of the trout. For salmon (but don't

say that I told you) use the spoon--gold on one side, silver on the

other. It is as killing as is a similar article with fish of another

calibre. The natives seem to use much too coarse tackle.

It was a search for a small boy who should know the river that revealed

to me a new phase of life--slack, slovenly, and shiftless, but very

interesting. There was a family in a packing-case hut on the outskirts

of the town. They had seen the city when it was on the boom and made

pretence of being the metropolis of the Rockies; and when the boom was

over, they did not go. She was affable, but deeply coated with dirt; he

was grim and grimy, and the little children were simply caked with filth

of various descriptions. But they lived in a certain sort of squalid

luxury, six or eight of them in two rooms; and they enjoyed the local

society. It was their eight-year-old son whom I tried to take out with

me, but he had been catching trout all his life and "guessed he didn't

feel like coming," though I proffered him six shillings for what ought

to have been a day's pleasuring. "I'll stay with Maw," he said, and from

that attitude I could not move him. Maw didn't attempt to argue with

him. "If he says he won't come, he won't," she said, as though he were

one of the elemental forces of nature instead of a spankable brat; and

"Paw," lounging by the store, refused to interfere. Maw told me that she

had been a school-teacher in her not-so-distant youth, but did not tell

me what I was dying to know--how she arrived at this mucky tenement at

the back of beyond, and why. Though preserving the prettinesses of her

New England speech, she had come to regard washing as a luxury. Paw

chewed tobacco and spat from time to time. Yet, when he opened his mouth

for other purposes, he spoke like a well-educated man. There was a story

there, but I couldn't get at it.

Next day the Man with the Sorrow and myself and a few others began the

real ascent of the Rockies; up to that time our climbing didn't count.

The train ran violently up a steep place and was taken to pieces. Five

cars were hitched on to two locomotives, and two cars to one locomotive.

This seemed to be a kind and thoughtful act, but I was idiot enough to

go forward and watch the coupling-on of the two rear cars in which CÃ¦sar

and his fortunes were to travel. Some one had lost or eaten the

regularly ordained coupling, and a man picked up from the tailboard of

the engine a single iron link about as thick as a fetter-link

watch-chain, and "guessed it would do." Get hauled up a Simla cliff by

the hook of a lady's parasol if you wish to appreciate my sentiments

when the cars moved uphill and the link drew tight. Miles away and two

thousand feet above our heads rose the shoulder of a hill epauletted

with the long line of a snow-tunnel. The first section of the cars

crawled a quarter of a mile ahead of us, the track snaked and looped

behind, and there was a black drop to the left. So we went up and up

and up till the thin air grew thinner and the \_chunk-chunk-chunk\_, of

the labouring locomotive was answered by the oppressed beating of the

exhausted heart. Through the chequed light and shade of the snow tunnels

(horrible caverns of rude timbering) we ground our way, halting now and

again to allow a down-train to pass. One monster of forty mineral-cars

slid past, scarce held by four locomotives, their brakes screaming and

chortling in chorus; and in the end, after a glimpse at half America

spread mapwise leagues below us, we halted at the head of the longest

snow tunnel of all, on the crest of the divide, between ten and eleven

thousand feet above the level of the sea. The locomotive wished to draw

breath, and the passengers to gather the flowers that nodded

impertinently through the chinks of the boarding. A lady passenger's

nose began to bleed, and other ladies threw themselves down on the seats

and gasped with the gasping train, while a wind as keen as a knife-edge

rioted down the grimy tunnel.

Then, despatching a pilot-engine to clear the way, we began the downward

portion of the journey with every available brake on, and frequent

shrieks, till after some hours we reached the level plain, and later the

city of Denver, where the Man with the Sorrow went his way and left me

to journey on to Omaha alone, after one hasty glance at Denver. The

pulse of that town was too like the rushing mighty wind in the Rocky

Mountain tunnel. It made me tired because complete strangers desired me

to do something to mines which were in mountains, and to purchase

building blocks upon inaccessible cliffs; and once, a woman urged that I

should supply her with strong drinks. I had almost forgotten that such

attacks were possible in any land, for the outward and visible signs of

public morality in American towns are generally safe-guarded. For that I

respect this people. Omaha, Nebraska, was but a halting-place on the

road to Chicago, but it revealed to me horrors that I would not

willingly have missed. The city to casual investigation seemed to be

populated entirely by Germans, Poles, Slavs, Hungarians, Croats,

Magyars, and all the scum of the Eastern European States, but it must

have been laid out by Americans. No other people would cut the traffic

of a main street with two streams of railway lines, each some eight or

nine tracks wide, and cheerfully drive tram-cars across the metals.

Every now and again they have horrible railway-crossing accidents at

Omaha, but nobody seems to think of building an overhead-bridge. That

would interfere with the vested interests of the undertakers.

Be blessed to hear some details of one of that class.

There was a shop the like of which I had never seen before. Its windows

were filled with dress-coats for men, and dresses for women. But the

studs of the shirts were made of stamped cloth upon the shirt front, and

there were no trousers to those coats--nothing but a sweep of cheap

black cloth falling like an abbÃ©'s frock. In the doorway sat a young man

reading Pollock's \_Course of Time\_, and by that I knew that he was an

undertaker. His name was Gring, which is a beautiful name, and I talked

to him on the mysteries of his Craft. He was an enthusiast and an

artist. I told him how corpses were burnt in India. Said he: "We're

vastly superior. We hold--that is to say, embalm--our dead. So!"

Whereupon he produced the horrible weapons of his trade, and most

practically showed me how you "held" a man back from that corruption

which is his birthright. "And I wish I could live a few generations just

to see how my people keep. But I'm sure it's all right. Nothing can

touch 'em after \_I\_'ve embalmed 'em." Then he displayed one of those

ghastly dress-suits, and when I laid a shuddering hand upon it, behold

it crumpled to nothing, for the white linen was sewn on to the black

cloth and--there was no back to it! That was the horror. The garment was

a shell. "We dress a man in that," said Gring, laying it out tastily on

the counter. "As you see here, our caskets have a plate-glass window in

front" (Oh me, but that window in the coffin was fitted with plush like

a brougham-window!), "and you don't see anything below the level of the

man's waistcoat. Consequently ..." He unrolled the terrible cheap black

cloth that falls down over the stark feet, and I jumped back. "Of course

a man can be dressed in his own clothes if he likes, but these are the

regular things: and for women look at this!" He took up the body of a

high-necked dinner-dress in subdued lilac, slashed and puffed and

bedeviled with black, but, like the dress-suit, backless, and below the

waist turning to shroud. "That's for an old maid. But for young girls we

give white with imitation pearls round the neck. That looks very pretty

through the window of the casket--you see there's a cushion for the

head--with flowers banked all round." Can you imagine anything more

awful than to take your last rest as much of a dead fraud as ever you

were a living lie--to go into the darkness one half of you shaved,

trimmed and dressed for an evening party, while the other half--the

half that your friends cannot see--is enwrapped in a flapping black

sheet?

I know a little about burial customs in various places in the world, and

I tried hard to make Mr. Gring comprehend dimly the awful heathendom

that he was responsible for--the grotesquerie--the giggling horror of it

all. But he couldn't see it. Even when he showed me a little boy's last

suit, he couldn't see it. He said it was quite right to embalm and trick

out and hypocritically bedizen the poor innocent dead in their superior

cushioned and pillowed caskets with the window in front.

Bury me cased in canvas like a fishing-rod, in the deep sea; burn me on

a back-water of the Hughli with damp wood and no oil; pin me under a

Pullman car and let the lighted stove do its worst; sizzle me with a

fallen electric wire or whelm me in the sludge of a broken river dam;

but may I never go down to the Pit grinning out of a plate-glass window,

in a backless dress-coat, and the front half of a black stuff

dressing-gown; not though I were "held" against the ravage of the grave

for ever and ever. Amen!

No. XXXV

HOW I STRUCK CHICAGO, AND HOW CHICAGO STRUCK ME. OF RELIGION, POLITICS,

AND PIG-STICKING, AND THE INCARNATION OF THE CITY AMONG SHAMBLES.

"I know thy cunning and thy greed,

Thy hard, high lust and wilful deed,

And all thy glory loves to tell

Of specious gifts material."

I have struck a city,--a real city,--and they call it Chicago. The other

places do not count. San Francisco was a pleasure-resort as well as a

city, and Salt Lake was a phenomenon. This place is the first American

city I have encountered. It holds rather more than a million people with

bodies, and stands on the same sort of soil as Calcutta. Having seen it,

I urgently desire never to see it again. It is inhabited by savages. Its

water is the water of the Hugli, and its air is dirt. Also it says that

it is the "boss" town of America.

I do not believe that it has anything to do with this country. They told

me to go to the Palmer House, which is a gilded and mirrored

rabbit-warren, and there I found a huge hall of tessellated marble,

crammed with people talking about money and spitting about everywhere.

Other barbarians charged in and out of this inferno with letters and

telegrams in their hands, and yet others shouted at each other. A man

who had drunk quite as much as was good for him told me that this was

"the finest hotel in the finest city on God Almighty's earth." By the

way, when an American wishes to indicate the next county or State he

says, "God A'mighty's earth." This prevents discussion and flatters his

vanity.

Then I went out into the streets, which are long and flat and without

end. And verily it is not a good thing to live in the East for any

length of time. Your ideas grow to clash with those held by every

right-thinking white man. I looked down interminable vistas flanked with

nine, ten, and fifteen storied houses, and crowded with men and women,

and the show impressed me with a great horror. Except in London--and I

have forgotten what London is like--I had never seen so many white

people together, and never such a collection of miserables. There was no

colour in the street and no beauty--only a maze of wire-ropes overhead

and dirty stone flagging underfoot. A cab-driver volunteered to show me

the glory of the town for so much an hour, and with him I wandered far.

He conceived that all this turmoil and squash was a thing to be

reverently admired; that it was good to huddle men together in fifteen

layers, one atop of the other, and to dig holes in the ground for

offices. He said that Chicago was a live town, and that all the

creatures hurrying by me were engaged in business. That is to say, they

were trying to make some money, that they might not die through lack of

food to put into their bellies. He took me to canals, black as ink, and

filled with untold abominations, and bade me watch the stream of traffic

across the bridges. He then took me into a saloon, and, while I drank,

made me note that the floor was covered with coins sunk into cement. A

Hottentot would not have been guilty of this sort of barbarism. The

coins made an effect pretty enough, but the man who put them there had

no thought to beauty, and therefore he was a savage. Then my cab-driver

showed me business-blocks, gay with signs and studded with fantastic and

absurd advertisements of goods, and looking down the long street so

adorned it was as though each vender stood at his door howling: "For the

sake of money, employ or buy of \_me\_ and me only!" Have you ever seen a

crowd at our famine relief distributions? You know then how men leap

into the air, stretching out their arms above the crowd in the hope of

being seen; while the women dolorously slap the stomachs of their

children and whimper. I had sooner watch famine-relief than the white

man engaged in what he calls legitimate competition. The one I

understand. The other makes me ill. And the cabman said that these

things were the proof of progress; and by that I knew he had been

reading his newspaper, as every intelligent American should. The papers

tell their readers in language fitted to their comprehension that the

snarling together of telegraph wires, the heaving up of houses, and the

making of money is progress.

I spent ten hours in that huge wilderness, wandering through scores of

miles of these terrible streets, and jostling some few hundred thousand

of these terrible people who talked money through their noses. The

cabman left me: but after a while I picked up another man who was full

of figures, and into my ears he poured them as occasion required or the

big blank factories suggested. Here they turned out so many hundred

thousand dollars' worth of such and such an article; there so many

million other things; this house was worth so many million dollars; that

one so many million more or less. It was like listening to a child

babbling of its hoard of shells. It was like watching a fool playing

with buttons. But I was expected to do more than listen or watch. He

demanded that I should admire; and the utmost that I could say was: "Are

these things so? Then I am very sorry for you." That made him angry, and

he said that insular envy made me unresponsive. So, you see, I could not

make him understand.

About four and a half hours after Adam was turned out of the garden of

Eden he felt hungry, and so, bidding Eve take care that her head was not

broken by the descending fruit, shinned up a cocoanut palm. That hurt

his legs, cut his breast, and made him breathe heavily, and Eve was

tormented with fear lest her lord should miss his footing and so bring

the tragedy of this world to an end ere the curtain had fairly risen.

Had I met Adam then, I should have been sorry for him. To-day I find

eleven hundred thousand of his sons just as far advanced as their father

in the art of getting food, and immeasurably inferior to him in that

they think that their palm-trees lead straight to the skies.

Consequently I am sorry in rather more than a million different ways. In

our East bread comes naturally even to the poorest by a little

scratching or the gift of a friend not quite so poor. In less favoured

countries one is apt to forget. Then I went to bed. And that was on a

Saturday night.

Sunday brought me the queerest experience of all--a revelation of

barbarism complete. I found a place that was officially described as a

church. It was a circus really, but that the worshippers did not know.

There were flowers all about the building, which was fitted up with

plush and stained oak and much luxury, including twisted brass

candlesticks of severest Gothic design. To these things, and a

congregation of savages, entered suddenly a wonderful man completely in

the confidence of their God, whom he treated colloquially and exploited

very much as a newspaper reporter would exploit a foreign potentate.

But, unlike the newspaper reporter, he never allowed his listeners to

forget that he and not He was the centre of attraction. With a voice of

silver and with imagery borrowed from the auction-room, he built up for

his hearers a heaven on the lines of the Palmer House (but with all the

gilding real gold and all the plate-glass diamond) and set in the centre

of it a loud-voiced, argumentative, and very shrewd creation that he

called God. One sentence at this point caught my delighted ear. It was

\_apropos\_ of some question of the Judgment Day and ran: "No! I tell you

God doesn't do business that way." He was giving them a deity whom they

could comprehend, in a gold and jewel heaven in which they could take a

natural interest. He interlarded his performance with the slang of the

streets, the counter, and the Exchange, and he said that religion ought

to enter into daily life. Consequently I presume he introduced it \_as\_

daily life--his own and the life of his friends.

Then I escaped before the blessing, desiring no benediction at such

hands. But the persons who listened seemed to enjoy themselves, and I

understood that I had met with a popular preacher. Later on when I had

perused the sermons of a gentleman called Talmage and some others, I

perceived that I had been listening to a very mild specimen. Yet that

man, with his brutal gold and silver idols, his hands-in-pocket,

cigar-in-mouth, and hat-on-the-back-of-the-head style of dealing with

the sacred vessels would count himself spiritually quite competent to

send a mission to convert the Indians. All that Sunday I listened to

people who said that the mere fact of spiking down strips of iron to

wood and getting a steam and iron thing to run along them was progress.

That the telephone was progress, and the network of wires overhead was

progress. They repeated their statements again and again. One of them

took me to their city hall and board of trade works and pointed it out

with pride. It was very ugly, but very big, and the streets in front of

it were narrow and unclean. When I saw the faces of the men who did

business in that building I felt that there had been a mistake in their

billeting.

By the way, 'tis a consolation to feel that I am not writing to an

English audience. Then should I have to fall into feigned ecstasies over

the marvellous progress of Chicago since the days of the great fire, to

allude casually to the raising of the entire city so many feet above the

level of the lake which it faces, and generally to grovel before the

golden calf. But you, who are desperately poor, and therefore by these

standards of no account, know things, and will understand when I write

that they have managed to get a million of men together on flat land,

and that the bulk of these men appear to be lower than \_mahajans\_ and

not so companionable as a punjabi \_jat\_ after harvest. But I don't think

it was the blind hurry of the people, their argot, and their grand

ignorance of things beyond their immediate interests that displeased me

so much as a study of the daily papers of Chicago. Imprimis, there was

some sort of dispute between New York and Chicago as to which town

should give an exhibition of products to be hereafter holden, and

through the medium of their more dignified journals the two cities were

ya-hooing and hi-yi-ing at each other like opposition newsboys. They

called it humour, but it sounded like something quite different. That

was only the first trouble. The second lay in the tone of the

productions. Leading articles which include gems such as: "Back of such

and such a place," or "We noticed, Tuesday, such an event," or "don't"

for "does not" are things to be accepted with thankfulness. All that

made me want to cry was that, in these papers, were faithfully

reproduced all the war-cries and "back-talk" of the Palmer House bar,

the slang of the barbers' shops, the mental elevation and integrity of

the Pullman-car porter, the dignity of the Dime Museum, and the accuracy

of the excited fishwife. I am sternly forbidden to believe that the

paper educates the public. Then I am compelled to believe that the

public educate the paper?

Just when the sense of unreality and oppression were strongest upon me,

and when I most wanted help, a man sat at my side and began to talk what

he called politics. I had chanced to pay about six shillings for a

travelling-cap worth eighteen pence, and he made of the fact a text for

a sermon. He said that this was a rich country and that the people liked

to pay two hundred per cent on the value of a thing. They could afford

it. He said that the Government imposed a protective duty of from ten

to seventy per cent on foreign-made articles, and that the American

manufacturer consequently could sell his goods for a healthy sum. Thus

an imported hat would, with duty, cost two guineas. The American

manufacturer would make a hat for seventeen shillings and sell it for

one pound fifteen. In these things, he said, lay the greatness of

America and the effeteness of England. Competition between factory and

factory kept the prices down to decent limits, but I was never to forget

that this people were a rich people, not like the pauper Continentals,

and that they enjoyed paying duties. To my weak intellect this seemed

rather like juggling with counters. Everything that I have yet purchased

costs about twice as much as it would in England, and when native-made

is of inferior quality. Moreover, since these lines were first thought

of I have visited a gentleman who owned a factory which used to produce

things. He owned the factory still. Not a man was in it, but he was

drawing a handsome income from a syndicate of firms for keeping it

closed in order that it might not produce things. This man said that if

protection were abandoned, a tide of pauper labour would flood the

country, and as I looked at his factory I thought how entirely better it

was to have no labour of any kind whatever, rather than face so horrible

a future. Meantime, do you remember that this peculiar country enjoys

paying money for value not received. I am an alien, and for the life of

me cannot see why six shillings should be paid for eighteen-penny caps,

or eight shillings for half-crown cigar-cases. When the country fills up

to a decently populated level a few million people who are not aliens

will be smitten with the same sort of blindness.

But my friend's assertion somehow thoroughly suited the grotesque

ferocity of Chicago. See now and judge! In the village of Isser Jang on

the road to Montgomery there be four \_changar\_ women who winnow

corn--some seventy bushels a year. Beyond their hut lives Puran Dass,

the money-lender, who on good security lends as much as five thousand

rupees in a year. Jowala Singh, the \_lohar\_, mends the village

ploughs--some thirty, broken at the share, in three hundred and

sixty-five days; and Hukm Chund, who is letter-writer and head of the

little club under the travellers' tree, generally keeps the village

posted in such gossip as the barber and the midwife have not yet made

public property. Chicago husks and winnows her wheat by the million

bushels, a hundred banks lend hundreds of millions of dollars in the

year, and scores of factories turn out plough gear and machinery by

steam. Scores of daily papers do work which Hukm Chund and the barber

and the midwife perform, with due regard for public opinion, in the

village of Isser Jang. So far as manufactures go, the difference between

Chicago on the lake and Isser Jang on the Montgomery road is one of

degree only, and not of kind. As far as the understanding of the uses of

life goes Isser Jang, for all its seasonal cholera, has the advantage

over Chicago. Jowala Singh knows and takes care to avoid the three or

four ghoul-haunted fields on the outskirts of the village; but he is not

urged by millions of devils to run about all day in the sun and swear

that his ploughshares are the best in the Punjab; nor does Puran Dass

fly forth in a cart more than once or twice a year, and he knows, on a

pinch, how to use the railway and the telegraph as well as any son of

Israel in Chicago. But this is absurd. The East is not the West, and

these men must continue to deal with the machinery of life, and to call

it progress. Their very preachers dare not rebuke them. They gloss over

the hunting for money and the twice-sharpened bitterness of Adam's curse

by saying that such things dower a man with a larger range of thoughts

and higher aspirations. They do not say: "Free yourself from your own

slavery," but rather, "If you can possibly manage it, do not set quite

so much store on the things of this world." And they do not know what

the things of this world are.

I went off to see cattle killed by way of clearing my head, which, as

you will perceive, was getting muddled. They say every Englishman goes

to the Chicago stockyards. You shall find them about six miles from the

city; and once having seen them will never forget the sight. As far as

the eye can reach stretches a township of cattle-pens, cunningly divided

into blocks so that the animals of any pen can be speedily driven out

close to an inclined timber path which leads to an elevated covered way

straddling high above the pens. These viaducts are two-storied. On the

upper storey tramp the doomed cattle, stolidly for the most part. On the

lower, with a scuffling of sharp hooves and multitudinous yells, run the

pigs. The same end is appointed for each. Thus you will see the gangs of

cattle waiting their turn--as they wait sometimes for days; and they

need not be distressed by the sight of their fellows running about in

the fear of death. All they know is that a man on horseback causes their

next-door neighbours to move by means of a whip. Certain bars and

fences are unshipped, and, behold, that crowd have gone up the mouth of

a sloping tunnel and return no more. It is different with the pigs. They

shriek back the news of the exodus to their friends, and a hundred pens

skirl responsive. It was to the pigs I first addressed myself. Selecting

a viaduct which was full of them, as I could hear though I could not

see, I marked a sombre building whereto it ran, and went there, not

unalarmed by stray cattle who had managed to escape from their proper

quarters. A pleasant smell of brine warned me of what was coming. I

entered the factory and found it full of pork in barrels, and on another

storey more pork unbarrelled, and in a huge room, the halves of swine

for whose use great lumps of ice were being pitched in at the window.

That room was the mortuary chamber where the pigs lie for a little while

in state ere they begin their progress through such passages as kings

may sometimes travel. Turning a corner and not noting an overhead

arrangement of greased rail, wheel, and pulley, I ran into the arms of

four eviscerated carcasses, all pure white and of a human aspect, being

pushed by a man clad in vehement red. When I leaped aside, the floor was

slippery under me. There was a flavour of farmyard in my nostrils and

the shouting of a multitude in my ears. But there was no joy in that

shouting! Twelve men stood in two lines--six a-side. Between them and

overhead ran the railway of death that had nearly shunted me through the

window. Each man carried a knife, the sleeves of his shirt were cut off

at the elbows, and from bosom to heel he was blood-red. The atmosphere

was stifling as a night in the Rains, by reason of the steam and the

crowd. I climbed to the beginning of things and, perched upon a narrow

beam, overlooked very nearly all the pigs ever bred in Wisconsin. They

had just been shot out of the mouth of the viaduct and huddled together

in a large pen. Thence they were flicked persuasively, a few at a time,

into a smaller chamber, and there a man fixed tackle on their hinder

legs so that they rose in the air suspended from the railway of death.

Oh! it was then they shrieked and called on their mothers and made

promises of amendment till the tackle-man punted them in their backs,

and they slid head down into a brick-floored passage, very like a big

kitchen sink that was blood-red. There awaited them a red man with a

knife which he passed jauntily through their throats, and the

full-voiced shriek became a sputter, and then a fall as of heavy

tropical rain. The red man who was backed against the passage wall stood

clear of the wildly kicking hoofs and passed his hand over his eyes, not

from any feeling of compassion, but because the spurted blood was in his

eyes, and he had barely time to stick the next arrival. Then that first

stuck swine dropped, still kicking, into a great vat of boiling water,

and spoke no more words, but wallowed in obedience to some unseen

machinery, and presently came forth at the lower end of the vat and was

heaved on the blades of a blunt paddle-wheel-thing which said, "Hough!

Hough! Hough!" and skelped all the hair off him except what little a

couple of men with knives could remove. Then he was again hitched by the

heels to that said railway and passed down the line of the twelve

men--each man with a knife--leaving with each man a certain amount of

his individuality which was taken away in a wheel-barrow, and when he

reached the last man he was very beautiful to behold, but immensely

unstuffed and limp. Preponderance of individuality was ever a bar to

foreign travel. That pig could have been in no case to visit you in

India had he not parted with some of his most cherished notions.

The dissecting part impressed me not so much as the slaying. They were

so excessively alive, these pigs. And then they were so excessively

dead, and the man in the dripping, clammy, hot passage did not seem to

care, and ere the blood of such an one had ceased to foam on the floor,

such another, and four friends with him, had shrieked and died. But a

pig is only the Unclean animal--forbidden by the Prophet.

I was destined to make rather a queer discovery when I went over to the

cattle-slaughter. All the buildings here were on a much larger scale,

and there was no sound of trouble, but I could smell the salt reek of

blood before I set foot in the place. The cattle did not come directly

through the viaduct as the pigs had done. They debouched into a yard by

the hundred, and they were big red brutes carrying much flesh. In the

centre of that yard stood a red Texan steer with a headstall on his

wicked head. No man controlled him. He was, so to speak, picking his

teeth and whistling in an open byre of his own when the cattle arrived.

As soon as the first one had fearfully quitted the viaduct, this red

devil put his hands in his pockets and slouched across the yard, no man

guiding him. Then he lowed something to the effect that he was the

regularly appointed guide of the establishment and would show them

round. They were country folk, but they knew how to behave; and so

followed Judas some hundred strong, patiently, and with a look of bland

wonder in their faces. I saw his broad back jogging in advance of them,

up a lime-washed incline where I was forbidden to follow. Then a door

shut, and in a minute back came Judas with the air of a virtuous

plough-bullock and took up his place in his byre. Somebody laughed

across the yard, but I heard no sound of cattle from the big brick

building into which the mob had disappeared. Only Judas chewed the cud

with a malignant satisfaction, and so I knew there was trouble, and ran

round to the front of the factory and so entered and stood aghast.

Who takes count of the prejudices which we absorb through the skin by

way of our surroundings? It was not the spectacle that impressed me. The

first thought that almost spoke itself aloud was: "They are killing

kine;" and it was a shock. The pigs were nobody's concern, but

cattle--the brothers of the Cow, the Sacred Cow--were quite otherwise.

The next time an M.P. tells me that India either Sultanises or

Brahminises a man, I shall believe about half what he says. It is

unpleasant to watch the slaughter of cattle when one has laughed at the

notion for a few years. I could not see actually what was done in the

first instance, because the row of stalls in which they lay was

separated from me by fifty impassable feet of butchers and slung

carcasses. All I know is that men swung open the doors of a stall as

occasion required, and there lay two steers already stunned, and

breathing heavily. These two they pole-axed, and half raising them by

tackle they cut their throats. Two men skinned each carcase, somebody

cut off the head, and in half a minute more the overhead rail carried

two sides of beef to their appointed place. There was clamour enough in

the operating room, but from the waiting cattle, invisible on the other

side of the line of pens, never a sound. They went to their death,

trusting Judas, without a word. They were slain at the rate of five a

minute, and if the pig men were spattered with blood, the cow butchers

were bathed in it. The blood ran in muttering gutters. There was no

place for hand or foot that was not coated with thicknesses of dried

blood, and the stench of it in the nostrils bred fear.

And then the same merciful Providence that has showered good things on

my path throughout sent me an embodiment of the city of Chicago, so that

I might remember it forever. Women come sometimes to see the slaughter,

as they would come to see the slaughter of men. And there entered that

vermilion hall a young woman of large mould, with brilliantly scarlet

lips, and heavy eyebrows, and dark hair that came in a "widow's peak" on

the forehead. She was well and healthy and alive, and she was dressed in

flaming red and black, and her feet (know you that the feet of American

women are like unto the feet of fairies?) her feet, I say, were cased in

red leather shoes. She stood in a patch of sunlight, the red blood under

her shoes, the vivid carcasses packed round her, a bullock bleeding its

life away not six feet away from her, and the death factory roaring all

round her. She looked curiously, with hard, bold eyes, and was not

ashamed.

Then said I: "This is a special Sending. I have seen the City of

Chicago." And I went away to get peace and rest.

No. XXXVI

HOW I FOUND PEACE AT MUSQUASH ON THE MONONGAHELA.

"Prince, blown by many a western breeze

Our vessels greet you treasure-laden;

We send them all--but best of these

A free and frank young Yankee maiden."

It is a mean thing and an unhandsome to "do" a continent in

five-hundred-mile jumps. But after those swine and bullocks at Chicago I

felt that complete change of air would be good. The United States at

present hinge in or about Chicago, as a double-leaved screen hinges. To

be sure, the tiny New England States call a trip to Pennsylvania "going

west," but the larger-minded citizen seems to reckon his longitude from

Chicago. Twenty years hence the centre of population--that shaded square

on the census map--will have shifted, men say, far west of Chicago.

Twenty years later it will be on the Pacific slope. Twenty years after

that America will begin to crowd up, and there will be some trouble.

People will demand manufactured goods for their reduced-establishment

households at the cheapest possible rates, and the cry that the land is

rich enough to afford protection will cease with a great abruptness. At

present it is the farmer who pays most dearly for the luxury of high

prices. In the old days, when the land was fresh and there was plenty

of it and it cropped like the garden of Eden, he did not mind paying.

Now there is not so much free land, and the old acres are needing

stimulants, which cost money, and the farmer, who pays for everything,

is beginning to ask questions. Also the great American nation, which

individually never shuts a door behind its noble self, very seldom

attempts to put back anything that it has taken from Nature's shelves.

It grabs all it can and moves on. But the moving-on is nearly finished

and the grabbing must stop, and then the Federal Government will have to

establish a Woods and Forests Department the like of which was never

seen in the world before. And all the people who have been accustomed to

hack, mangle, and burn timber as they please will object, with shots and

protestations, to this infringement of their rights. The nigger will

breed bounteously, and \_he\_ will have to be reckoned with; and the

manufacturer will have to be contented with smaller profits, and \_he\_

will have to be reckoned with; and the railways will no longer rule the

countries through which they run, and they will have to be reckoned

with. And nobody will approve of it in the least.

Yes; it will be a spectacle for all the world to watch, this big,

slashing colt of a nation, that has got off with a flying start on a

freshly littered course, being pulled back to the ruck by that very

mutton-fisted jockey Necessity. There will be excitement in America when

a few score millions of "sovereigns" discover that what they considered

the outcome of their own Government is but the rapidly diminishing

bounty of Nature; and that if they want to get on comfortably they must

tackle every single problem from labour to finance humbly, without

gasconade, and afresh. But at present they look "that all the to-morrows

shall be as to-day," and if you argue with them they say that the

Democratic Idea will keep things going. They believe in that Idea, and

the less well-informed fortify themselves in their belief by curious

assertions as to the despotism that exists in England. This is pure

provincialism, of course; but it is very funny to listen to, especially

when you compare the theory with the practice (pistol, chiefly) as

proven in the newspapers. I have striven to find out where the central

authority of the land lies. It isn't at Washington, because the Federal

Government can't do anything to the States save run the mail and collect

a Federal tax or two. It isn't in the States, because the townships can

do as they like; and it isn't in the townships, because these are bossed

by alien voters or rings of patriotic homebred citizens. And it

certainly is not in the citizens, because they are governed and coerced

by despotic power of public opinion as represented by their papers,

preachers, or local society. I found one man who told me that if

anything went wrong in this huge congress of kings,--if there was a

split or an upheaval or a smash,--the people in detail would be subject

to the Idea of the sovereign people in mass. This is a survival from the

Civil War, when, you remember, the people in a majority did with guns

and swords slay and wound the people in detail. All the same, the notion

seems very much like the worship by the savage of the unloaded rifle as

it leans against the wall.

But the men and women set Us an example in patriotism. They believe in

their land and its future, and its honour, and its glory, and they are

not ashamed to say so. From the largest to the least runs this same

proud, passionate conviction to which I take off my hat and for which I

love them. An average English householder seems to regard his country as

an abstraction to supply him with policemen and fire-brigades. The

cockney cad cannot understand what the word means. The bloomin' toffs he

knows, and the law, and the soldiers that supply him with a spectacle in

the Parks; but he would laugh in your face at the notion of any duty

being owed by himself to his land. Pick an American of the second

generation anywhere you please--from the cab-rank, the porter's room, or

the plough-tail,--'specially the plough-tail,--and that man will make

you understand in five minutes that he understands what manner of thing

his Republic is. He might laugh at a law that didn't suit his

convenience, draw your eye-teeth in a bargain, and applaud 'cuteness on

the outer verge of swindling: but you should hear him stand up and

sing:--

"My country 'tis of thee,

Sweet land of liberty,

Of thee I sing!"

I have heard a few thousand of them engaged in that employment. I

respect him. There is too much Romeo and too little balcony about our

National Anthem. With the American article it is all balcony. There must

be born a poet who shall give the English \_the\_ song of their own, own

country--which is to say, of about half the world. Remains then only to

compose the greatest song of all--The Saga of the Anglo-Saxon all round

the earth--a pÃ¦an that shall combine the terrible slow swing of the

\_Battle Hymn of the Republic\_ (which, if you know not, get chanted to

you) with \_Britannia needs no Bulwarks\_, the skirl of the \_British

Grenadiers\_ with that perfect quickstep, \_Marching through Georgia\_, and

at the end the wail of the \_Dead March\_. For We, even We who share the

earth between us as no gods have ever shared it, we also are mortal in

the matter of our single selves. Will any one take the contract?

It was with these rambling notions that I arrived at the infinite peace

of the tiny township of Musquash on the Monongahela River. The clang and

tumult of Chicago belonged to another world. Imagine a rolling, wooded,

English landscape, under softest of blue skies, dotted at three-mile

intervals with fat little, quiet little villages, or aggressive little

manufacturing towns that the trees and the folds of the hills mercifully

prevented from betraying their presence. The golden-rod blazed in the

pastures against the green of the mulleins, and the cows picked their

way home through the twisted paths between the blackberry bushes. All

summer was on the orchards, and the apples--such apples as we dream of

when we eat the woolly imitations of Kashmir--were ripe and toothsome.

It was good to lie in a hammock with half-shut eyes, and, in the utter

stillness, to hear the apples dropping from the trees, and the tinkle of

the cowbells as the cows walked statelily down the main road of the

village. Everybody in that restful place seemed to have just as much as

he wanted; a house with all comfortable appliances, a big or little

verandah wherein to spend the day, a neatly shaved garden with a wild

wealth of flowers, some cows, and an orchard. Everybody knew everybody

else intimately, and what they did not know, the local daily paper--a

daily for a village of twelve hundred people!--supplied. There was a

court-house where justice was done, and a jail where some most enviable

prisoners lived, and there were four or five churches of four or five

denominations. Also it was impossible to buy openly any liquor in that

little paradise. But--and this is a very serious \_but\_--you could by

procuring a medical certificate get strong drinks from the chemist. That

is the drawback of prohibition. It makes a man who wants a drink a

shirker and a contriver, which things are not good for the soul of a

man, and presently, 'specially if he be young, causes him to believe

that he may just as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb; and the

end of that young man is not pretty. Nothing except a rattling fall will

persuade an average colt that a fence is not meant to be jumped over;

whereas if he be turned out into the open he learns to carry himself

with discretion. One heard a good deal of this same dread of drink in

Musquash, and even the maidens seemed to know too much about its effects

upon certain unregenerate youths, who, if they had been once made

thoroughly, effectually, and persistently drunk--with a tepid brandy and

soda thrust before their goose-fleshed noses on the terrible Next

Morning--would perhaps have seen the futility of their ways. It was a

sin by village canons to imbibe lager, though--\_experto crede\_--you can

get dropsy on that stuff long before you can get drunk. "But what man

knows his mind?" Besides, it was all their own affair.

The little community seemed to be as self-contained as an Indian

village. Had the rest of the land sunk under the sea, Musquash would

have gone on sending its sons to school in order to make them "good

citizens," which is the constant prayer of the true American father,

settling its own road-making, local cesses, town-lot arbitrations, and

internal government by ballot and vote and due respect to the voices of

the headmen (which is the salvation of the ballot), until such time as

all should take their places in the cemetery appointed for their faith.

Here were Americans and no aliens--men ruling themselves by themselves

and for themselves and their wives and their children--in peace, order,

and decency.

But what went straightest to this heart, though they did not know it,

was that they were Methody folk for the most part--ay, Methody as ever

trod a Yorkshire Moor, or drove on a Sunday to some chapel of the Faith

in the Dales. The old Methody talk was there, with the discipline

whereby the souls of the Just are, sometimes to their intense vexation,

made perfect on this earth in order that they may "take out their

letters and live and die in good standing." If you don't know the talk,

you won't know what that means. The discipline, or dis\_cip\_line, is no

thing to be trifled with, and its working among a congregation depends

entirely upon the tact, humanity, and sympathy of the leader who works

it. He, knowing what youth's desires are, can turn the soul in the

direction of good, gently, instead of wrenching it savagely towards the

right path only to see it break away quivering and scared. The arm of

the Dis\_cip\_line is long. A maiden told me, as a new and strange fact

and one that would interest a foreigner, of a friend of hers who had

once been admonished by some elders somewhere--not in Musquash--for the

heinous crime of dancing. She, the friend, did not in the least like it.

She would not. Can't you imagine the delightful results of a formal

wigging administered by a youngish and austere elder who was not

accustomed to make allowances for the natural dancing instincts of the

young of the human animal? The hot irons that are held forth to scare

may also sear, as those who have ever lain under an unfortunate

exposition of the old Faith can attest.

But it was all immensely interesting--the absolutely fresh, wholesome,

sweet life that paid due reverence to the things of the next world, but

took good care to get enough tennis in the cool of the evening; that

concerned itself as honestly and thoroughly with the daily round, the

trivial task (and that same task is anything but trivial when you are

"helped" by an American "help") as with the salvation of the soul. I had

the honour of meeting in the flesh, even as Miss Louisa Alcott drew

them, Meg and Joe and Beth and Amy, whom you ought to know. There was no

affectation of concealment in their lives who had nothing to conceal.

There were many "little women" in that place, because, even as is the

case in England, the boys had gone out to seek their fortunes. Some were

working in the thundering, clanging cities, others had removed to the

infinite West, and others had disappeared in the languid, lazy South;

and the maidens waited their return, which is the custom of maidens all

over the world. Then the boys would come back in the soft sunlight,

attired in careful raiment, their tongues cleansed of evil words and

discourtesy. They had just come to call--bless their carefully groomed

heads so they had,--and the maidens in white dresses glimmered like

ghosts on the stoop and received them according to their merits. Mamma

had nothing to do with this, nor papa either, for he was down-town

trying to drive reason into the head of a land surveyor; and all along

the shaded, lazy, intimate street you heard the garden-gates click and

clash, as the mood of the man varied, and bursts of pleasant laughter

where three or four--be sure the white muslins were among

them,--discussed a picnic past or a buggy-drive to come. Then the

couples went their ways and talked together till the young men had to go

at last on account of the trains, and all trooped joyously down to the

station and thought no harm of it. And, indeed, why should they? From

her fifteenth year the American maiden moves among "the boys" as a

sister among brothers. They are her servants to take her out

riding,--which is driving,--to give her flowers and candy. The last two

items are expensive, and this is good for the young man, as teaching him

to value friendship that costs a little in cash and may necessitate

economy on the cigar side. As to the maiden, she is taught to respect

herself, that her fate is in her own hands, and that she is the more

stringently bound by the very measure of the liberty so freely accorded

to her. Wherefore, in her own language, "she has a lovely time" with

about two or three hundred boys who have sisters of their own, and a

very accurate perception that if they were unworthy of their trust a

syndicate of other boys would probably pass them into a world where

there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. And so time goes till

the maiden knows the other side of the house,--knows that a man is not a

demi-god nor a mysteriously veiled monster, but an average, egotistical,

vain, gluttonous, but on the whole companionable, sort of person, to be

soothed, fed, and managed--knowledge that does not come to her sister in

England till after a few years of matrimony. And then she makes her

choice. The Golden Light touches eyes that are full of comprehension;

but the light is golden none the less, for she makes just the same

sweet, irrational choices that an English girl does. With this

advantage: she knows a little more, has experience in entertaining,

insight into the businesses, employ, and hobbies of men, gathered from

countless talks with the boys, and talks with the other girls who find

time at those mysterious conclaves to discuss what Tom, Ted, Stuke, or

Jack have been doing. Thus it happens that she is a companion, in the

fullest sense of the word, of the man she weds, zealous for the interest

of the firm, to be consulted in time of stress and to be called upon for

help and sympathy in time of danger. Pleasant it is that one heart

should beat for you; but it is better when the head above that heart has

been thinking hard on your behalf, and when the lips, that are also very

pleasant to kiss, give wise counsel.

When the American maiden--I speak now for the rank and file of that

noble army--is once married, why, it is finished. She has had her lovely

time. It may have been five, seven, or ten years according to

circumstances. She abdicates promptly with startling speed, and her

place knows her no more except as with her husband. The Queen is dead,

or looking after the house. This same household work seems to be the

thing that ages the American woman. She is infamously "helped" by the

Irish trollop and the negress alike. It is not fair upon her, because

she has to do three parts of the housework herself, and in dry,

nerve-straining air the "chores" are a burden. Be thankful, O my people,

for Mauz Baksh, Kadir Baksh, and the \_ayah\_ while they are with you.

They are twice as handy as the unkempt slatterns of the furnished

apartments to which you will return, Commissioners though you be; and

five times as clever as the Amelia Araminta Rebellia Secessia Jackson

(coloured) under whose ineptitude and insolence the young American

housewife groans. But all this is far enough from peaceful, placid

Musquash and its boundless cordiality, its simple, genuine hospitality,

and its--what's the French word that just covers

all?--\_gra\_--\_gracieuseness\_, isn't it? Oh, be good to an American

wherever you meet him. Put him up for the club, and he will hold you

listening till three in the morning; give him the best tent, and the

gram-fed mutton. I have incurred a debt of salt that I can never repay,

but do you return it piecemeal to any of that Nation, and the account

will be on my head till our paths in the world cross again. He drinks

iced water just as we do; but he doesn't quite like our cigars.

And how shall I finish the tale? Would it interest you to learn of the

picnics in the hot, still woods that overhang the Monongahela, when

those idiotic American buggies that can't turn round got stuck among the

brambles and all but capsized; of boating in the blazing sun on the

river that but a little time before had cast at the feet of the

horrified village the corpses of the Johnstown tragedy? I saw one, only

one, remnant of that terrible wreck. He had been a minister. House,

church, congregation, wife, and children had been swept away from him

in one night of terror. He had no employment; he could have employed

himself at nothing; but God had been very good to him. He sat in the sun

and smiled a little weakly. It was in his poor blurred mind that

something had happened--he was not sure what it was, but undoubtedly

something had occurred. One could only pray that the light would never

return.

But there be many pictures on my mind. Of a huge manufacturing city of

three hundred thousand souls lighted and warmed by natural gas, so that

the great valley full of flaming furnaces sent up no smoke wreaths to

the clear sky. Of Musquash itself lighted by the same mysterious agency,

flares of gas eight feet long, roaring day and night at the corners of

the grass-grown streets because it wasn't worth while to turn them out;

of fleets of coal-flats being hauled down the river on an interminable

journey to St. Louis; of factories nestling in woods where all the

axe-handles and shovels in the world seemed to be manufactured daily;

and last, of that quaint forgotten German community, the Brotherhood of

Perpetual Separation, who founded themselves when the State was yet

young and land cheap, and are now dying out because they will neither

marry nor give in marriage and their recruits are very few. The advance

in the value of land has almost smothered these poor old people in a

golden affluence that they never desired. They live in a little village

where the houses are built old Dutch fashion, with their front doors

away from the road, and cobbled paths all about. The cloistered peace of

Musquash is a metropolitan riot beside the hush of that village. And

there is, too, a love-tale tucked away among the flowers. It has taken

seventy years in the telling, for the brother and sister loved each

other well, but they loved their duty to the brotherhood more. So they

have lived and still do live, seeing each other daily, and separated for

all time. Any trouble that might have been is altogether wiped out of

their faces, which are as calm as those of very little children. To the

uninitiated those constant ones resemble extremely old people in

garments of absurd cut. But they love each other, and that seems to

bring one back quite naturally to the girls and the boys in Musquash.

The boys were nice boys--graduates of Yale of course; you mustn't

mention Harvard here--but none the less skilled in business, in stocks

and shares, the boring for oil, and the sale of everything that can be

sold by one sinner to another. Skilled, too, in baseball,

big-shouldered, with straight eyes and square chins--but not above

occasional diversion and mild orgies. They will make good citizens and

possess the earth, and eventually wed one of the nice white muslin

dresses. There are worse things in this world than being "one of the

boys" in Musquash.

No. XXXVII

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK TWAIN.

You are a contemptible lot, over yonder. Some of you are Commissioners,

and some Lieutenant-Governors, and some have the V. C., and a few are

privileged to walk about the Mall arm in arm with the Viceroy; but \_I\_

have seen Mark Twain this golden morning, have shaken his hand, and

smoked a cigar--no, two cigars--with him, and talked with him for more

than two hours! Understand clearly that I do not despise you; indeed, I

don't. I am only very sorry for you, from the Viceroy downward. To

soothe your envy and to prove that I still regard you as my equals, I

will tell you all about it.

They said in Buffalo that he was in Hartford, Conn.; and again they said

"perchance he is gone upon a journey to Portland"; and a big, fat

drummer vowed that he knew the great man intimately, and that Mark was

spending the summer in Europe--which information so upset me that I

embarked upon the wrong train, and was incontinently turned out by the

conductor three-quarters of a mile from the station, amid the wilderness

of railway tracks. Have you ever, encumbered with great-coat and valise,

tried to dodge diversely-minded locomotives when the sun was shining in

your eyes? But I forgot that you have not seen Mark Twain, you people

of no account!

Saved from the jaws of the cow-catcher, me wandering devious a stranger

met.

"Elmira is the place. Elmira in the State of New York--this State, not

two hundred miles away;" and he added, perfectly unnecessarily, "Slide,

Kelley, slide."

I slid on the West Shore line, I slid till midnight, and they dumped me

down at the door of a frowzy hotel in Elmira. Yes, they knew all about

"that man Clemens," but reckoned he was not in town; had gone East

somewhere. I had better possess my soul in patience till the morrow, and

then dig up the "man Clemens'" brother-in-law, who was interested in

coal.

The idea of chasing half a dozen relatives in addition to Mark Twain up

and down a city of thirty thousand inhabitants kept me awake. Morning

revealed Elmira, whose streets were desolated by railway tracks, and

whose suburbs were given up to the manufacture of door-sashes and

window-frames. It was surrounded by pleasant, fat, little hills, rimmed

with timber and topped with cultivation. The Chemung River flowed

generally up and down the town, and had just finished flooding a few of

the main streets.

The hotel-man and the telephone-man assured me that the much-desired

brother-in-law was out of town, and no one seemed to know where "the man

Clemens" abode. Later on I discovered that he had not summered in that

place for more than nineteen seasons, and so was comparatively a new

arrival.

A friendly policeman volunteered the news that he had seen Twain or

"some one very like him" driving a buggy the day before. This gave me a

delightful sense of nearness. Fancy living in a town where you could see

the author of \_Tom Sawyer\_, or "some one very like him," jolting over

the pavements in a buggy!

"He lives out yonder at East Hill," said the policeman; "three miles

from here."

Then the chase began--in a hired hack, up an awful hill, where

sunflowers blossomed by the roadside, and crops waved, and \_Harper's

Magazine\_ cows stood in eligible and commanding attitudes knee-deep in

clover, all ready to be transferred to photogravure. The great man must

have been persecuted by outsiders aforetime, and fled up the hill for

refuge.

Presently the driver stopped at a miserable, little, white wood shanty,

and demanded "Mister Clemens."

"I know he's a big-bug and all that," he explained, "but you can never

tell what sort of notions those sort of men take into their heads to

live in, anyways."

There rose up a young lady who was sketching thistle-tops and goldenrod,

amid a plentiful supply of both, and set the pilgrimage on the right

path.

"It's a pretty Gothic house on the left-hand side a little way farther

on."

"Gothic h----," said the driver. "Very few of the city hacks take this

drive, specially if they know they are coming out here," and he glared

at me savagely.

It was a very pretty house, anything but Gothic, clothed with ivy,

standing in a very big compound, and fronted by a verandah full of

chairs and hammocks. The roof of the verandah was a trellis-work of

creepers, and the sun peeping through moved on the shining boards

below.

Decidedly this remote place was an ideal one for work, if a man could

work among these soft airs and the murmur of the long-eared crops.

Appeared suddenly a lady used to dealing with rampageous outsiders. "Mr.

Clemens has just walked down-town. He is at his brother-in-law's house."

Then he was within shouting distance, after all, and the chase had not

been in vain. With speed I fled, and the driver, skidding the wheel and

swearing audibly, arrived at the bottom of that hill without accidents.

It was in the pause that followed between ringing the brother-in-law's

bell and getting an answer that it occurred to me for the first time

Mark Twain might possibly have other engagements than the entertainment

of escaped lunatics from India, be they never so full of admiration. And

in another man's house--anyhow, what had I come to do or say? Suppose

the drawing-room should be full of people,--suppose a baby were sick,

how was I to explain that I only wanted to shake hands with him?

Then things happened somewhat in this order. A big, darkened

drawing-room; a huge chair; a man with eyes, a mane of grizzled hair, a

brown mustache covering a mouth as delicate as a woman's, a strong,

square hand shaking mine, and the slowest, calmest, levellest voice in

all the world saying:--

"Well, you think you owe me something, and you've come to tell me so.

That's what I call squaring a debt handsomely."

"Piff!" from a cob-pipe (I always said that a Missouri meerschaum was

the best smoking in the world), and, behold! Mark Twain had curled

himself up in the big armchair, and I was smoking reverently, as befits

one in the presence of his superior.

The thing that struck me first was that he was an elderly man; yet,

after a minute's thought, I perceived that it was otherwise, and in five

minutes, the eyes looking at me, I saw that the grey hair was an

accident of the most trivial. He was quite young. I was shaking his

hand. I was smoking his cigar, and I was hearing him talk--this man I

had learned to love and admire fourteen thousand miles away.

Reading his books, I had striven to get an idea of his personality, and

all my preconceived notions were wrong and beneath the reality. Blessed

is the man who finds no disillusion when he is brought face to face with

a revered writer. That was a moment to be remembered; the landing of a

twelve-pound salmon was nothing to it. I had hooked Mark Twain, and he

was treating me as though under certain circumstances I might be an

equal.

About this time I became aware that he was discussing the copyright

question. Here, so far as I remember, is what he said. Attend to the

words of the oracle through this unworthy medium transmitted. You will

never be able to imagine the long, slow surge of the drawl, and the

deadly gravity of the countenance, the quaint pucker of the body, one

foot thrown over the arm of the chair, the yellow pipe clinched in one

corner of the mouth, and the right hand casually caressing the square

chin:--

"Copyright? Some men have morals, and some men have--other things. I

presume a publisher is a man. He is not born. He is created--by

circumstances. Some publishers have morals. Mine have. They pay me for

the English productions of my books. When you hear men talking of Bret

Harte's works and other works and my books being pirated, ask them to be

sure of their facts. I think they'll find the books are paid for. It was

ever thus.

"I remember an unprincipled and formidable publisher. Perhaps he's dead

now. He used to take my short stories--I can't call it steal or pirate

them. It was beyond these things altogether. He took my stories one at a

time and made a book of it. If I wrote an essay on dentistry or theology

or any little thing of that kind--just an essay that long (he indicated

half an inch on his finger), any sort of essay--that publisher would

amend and improve my essay.

"He would get another man to write some more to it or cut it about

exactly as his needs required. Then he would publish a book called

\_Dentistry by Mark Twain\_, that little essay and some other things not

mine added. Theology would make another book, and so on. I do not

consider that fair. It's an insult. But he's dead now, I think. I didn't

kill him.

"There is a great deal of nonsense talked about international copyright.

The proper way to treat a copyright is to make it exactly like

real-estate in every way.

"It will settle itself under these conditions. If Congress were to bring

in a law that a man's life was not to extend over a hundred and sixty

years, somebody would laugh. That law wouldn't concern anybody. The man

would be out of the jurisdiction of the court. A term of years in

copyright comes to exactly the same thing. No law can make a book live

or cause it to die before the appointed time.

"Tottletown, Cal., was a new town, with a population of three

thousand--banks, fire-brigade, brick buildings, and all the modern

improvements. It lived, it flourished, and it disappeared. To-day no man

can put his foot on any remnant of Tottletown, Cal. It's dead. London

continues to exist. Bill Smith, author of a book read for the next year

or so, is real-estate in Tottletown. William Shakespeare, whose works

are extensively read, is real-estate in London. Let Bill Smith, equally

with Mr. Shakespeare now deceased, have as complete a control over his

copyright as he would over his real-estate. Let him gamble it away,

drink it away, or--give it to the church. Let his heirs and assigns

treat it in the same manner.

"Every now and again I go up to Washington, sitting on a board to drive

that sort of view into Congress. Congress takes its arguments against

international copyright delivered ready made, and--Congress isn't very

strong. I put the real-estate view of the case before one of the

Senators.

"He said: 'Suppose a man has written a book that will live for ever?'

"I said: 'Neither you nor I will ever live to see that man, but we'll

assume it. What then?'

"He said: 'I want to protect the world against that man's heirs and

assigns, working under your theory.'

"I said: 'You think that all the world has no commercial sense. The book

that will live for ever can't be artificially kept up at inflated

prices. There will always be very expensive editions of it and cheap

ones issuing side by side.'

"Take the case of Sir Walter Scott's novels," Mark Twain continued,

turning to me. "When the copyright notes protected them, I bought

editions as expensive as I could afford, because I liked them. At the

same time the same firm were selling editions that a cat might buy. They

had their real estate, and not being fools, recognised that one portion

of the plot could be worked as a gold mine, another as a vegetable

garden, and another as a marble quarry. Do you see?"

What I saw with the greatest clearness was Mark Twain being forced to

fight for the simple proposition that a man has as much right to the

work of his brains (think of the heresy of it!) as to the labour of his

hands. When the old lion roars, the young whelps growl. I growled

assentingly, and the talk ran on from books in general to his own in

particular.

Growing bold, and feeling that I had a few hundred thousand folk at my

back, I demanded whether Tom Sawyer married Judge Thatcher's daughter

and whether we were ever going to hear of Tom Sawyer as a man.

"I haven't decided," quoth Mark Twain, getting up, filling his pipe, and

walking up and down the room in his slippers. "I have a notion of

writing the sequel to \_Tom Sawyer\_ in two ways. In one I would make him

rise to great honour and go to Congress, and in the other I should hang

him. Then the friends and enemies of the book could take their choice."

Here I lost my reverence completely, and protested against any theory of

the sort, because, to me at least, Tom Sawyer was real.

"Oh, he \_is\_ real," said Mark Twain. "He's all the boy that I have known

or recollect; but that would be a good way of ending the book"; then,

turning round, "because, when you come to think of it, neither

religion, training, nor education avails anything against the force of

circumstances that drive a man. Suppose we took the next four and twenty

years of Tom Sawyer's life, and gave a little joggle to the

circumstances that controlled him. He would, logically and according to

the joggle, turn out a rip or an angel."

"Do you believe that, then?"

"I think so. Isn't it what you call Kismet?"

"Yes; but don't give him two joggles and show the result, because he

isn't your property any more. He belongs to us."

He laughed--a large, wholesome laugh--and this began a dissertation on

the rights of a man to do what he liked with his own creations, which

being a matter of purely professional interest, I will mercifully omit.

Returning to the big chair, he, speaking of truth and the like in

literature, said that an autobiography was the one work in which a man,

against his own will and in spite of his utmost striving to the

contrary, revealed himself in his true light to the world.

"A good deal of your life on the Mississippi is autobiographical, isn't

it?" I asked.

"As near as it can be--when a man is writing to a book and about

himself. But in genuine autobiography, I believe it is impossible for a

man to tell the truth about himself or to avoid impressing the reader

with the truth about himself.

"I made an experiment once. I got a friend of mine--a man painfully

given to speak the truth on all occasions--a man who wouldn't dream of

telling a lie--and I made him write his autobiography for his own

amusement and mine. He did it. The manuscript would have made an octavo

volume, but--good, honest man that he was--in every single detail of his

life that I knew about he turned out, on paper, a formidable liar. He

could not help himself.

"It is not in human nature to write the truth about itself. None the

less the reader gets a general impression from an autobiography whether

the man is a fraud or a good man. The reader can't give his reasons any

more than a man can explain why a woman struck him as being lovely when

he doesn't remember her hair, eyes, teeth, or figure. And the impression

that the reader gets is a correct one."

"Do you ever intend to write an autobiography?"

"If I do, it will be as other men have done--with the most earnest

desire to make myself out to be the better man in every little business

that has been to my discredit; and I shall fail, like the others, to

make my readers believe anything except the truth."

This naturally led to a discussion on conscience. Then said Mark Twain,

and his words are mighty and to be remembered:--

"Your conscience is a nuisance. A conscience is like a child. If you pet

it and play with it and let it have everything that it wants, it becomes

spoiled and intrudes on all your amusements and most of your griefs.

Treat your conscience as you would treat anything else. When it is

rebellious, spank it--be severe with it, argue with it, prevent it from

coming to play with you at all hours, and you will secure a good

conscience; that is to say, a properly trained one. A spoiled one simply

destroys all the pleasure in life. I think I have reduced mine to

order. At least, I haven't heard from it for some time. Perhaps I have

killed it from over-severity. It's wrong to kill a child, but, in spite

of all I have said, a conscience differs from a child in many ways.

Perhaps it's best when it's dead."

Here he told me a little--such things as a man may tell a stranger--of

his early life and upbringing, and in what manner he had been influenced

for good by the example of his parents. He spoke always through his

eyes, a light under the heavy eyebrows; anon crossing the room with a

step as light as a girl's, to show me some book or other; then resuming

his walk up and down the room, puffing at the cob pipe. I would have

given much for nerve enough to demand the gift of that pipe--value, five

cents when new. I understood why certain savage tribes ardently desired

the liver of brave men slain in combat. That pipe would have given me,

perhaps, a hint of his keen insight into the souls of men. But he never

laid it aside within stealing reach.

Once, indeed, he put his hand on my shoulder. It was an investiture of

the Star of India, blue silk, trumpets, and diamond-studded jewel, all

complete. If hereafter, in the changes and chances of this mortal life,

I fall to cureless ruin, I will tell the superintendent of the workhouse

that Mark Twain once put his hand on my shoulder; and he shall give me a

room to myself and a double allowance of paupers' tobacco.

"I never read novels myself," said he, "except when the popular

persecution forces me to--when people plague me to know what I think of

the last book that every one is reading."

"And how did the latest persecution affect you?"

"Robert?" said he, interrogatively.

I nodded.

"I read it, of course, for the workmanship. That made me think I had

neglected novels too long--that there might be a good many books as

graceful in style somewhere on the shelves; so I began a course of novel

reading. I have dropped it now; it did not amuse me. But as regards

Robert, the effect on me was exactly as though a singer of street

ballads were to hear excellent music from a church organ. I didn't stop

to ask whether the music was legitimate or necessary. I listened, and I

liked what I heard. I am speaking of the grace and beauty of the style."

"You see," he went on, "every man has his private opinion about a book.

But that is my private opinion. If I had lived in the beginning of

things, I should have looked around the township to see what popular

opinion thought of the murder of Abel before I openly condemned Cain. I

should have had my private opinion, of course, but I shouldn't have

expressed it until I had felt the way. You have my private opinion about

that book. I don't know what my public ones are exactly. They won't

upset the earth."

He recurled himself into the chair and talked of other things.

"I spend nine months of the year at Hartford. I have long ago satisfied

myself that there is no hope of doing much work during those nine

months. People come in and call. They call at all hours, about

everything in the world. One day I thought I would keep a list of

interruptions. It began this way:--

"A man came and would see no one but Mr. Clemens. He was an agent for

photogravure reproductions of Salon pictures. I very seldom use Salon

pictures in my books.

"After that man another man, who refused to see any one but Mr. Clemens,

came to make me write to Washington about something. I saw him. I saw a

third man, then a fourth. By this time it was noon. I had grown tired of

keeping the list. I wished to rest.

"But the fifth man was the only one of the crowd with a card of his own.

He sent up his card. 'Ben Koontz, Hannibal, Mo.' I was raised in

Hannibal. Ben was an old schoolmate of mine. Consequently I threw the

house wide open and rushed with both hands out at a big, fat, heavy man,

who was not the Ben I had ever known--nor anything like him.

"'But \_is\_ it you, Ben?' I said. 'You've altered in the last thousand

years.'

"The fat man said: 'Well, I'm not Koontz exactly, but I met him down in

Missouri, and he told me to be sure and call on you, and he gave me his

card, and'--here he acted the little scene for my benefit--'if you can

wait a minute till I can get out the circulars--I'm not Koontz exactly,

but I'm travelling with the fullest line of rods you ever saw.'"

"And what happened?" I asked breathlessly.

"I shut-the door. He was not Ben Koontz--exactly--not my old

school-fellow, but I had shaken him by both hands in love, and ... I had

been bearded by a lightning-rod man in my own house.

"As I was saying, I do very little work in Hartford. I come here for

three months every year, and I work four or five hours a day in a study

down the garden of that little house on the hill. Of course, I do not

object to two or three interruptions. When a man is in the full swing

of his work these little things do not affect him. Eight or ten or

twenty interruptions retard composition."

I was burning to ask him all manner of impertinent questions, as to

which of his works he himself preferred, and so forth; but, standing in

awe of his eyes, I dared not. He spoke on, and I listened, grovelling.

It was a question of mental equipment that was on the carpet, and I am

still wondering whether he meant what he said.

"Personally I never care for fiction or story-books. What I like to read

about are facts and statistics of any kind. If they are only facts about

the raising of radishes, they interest me. Just now, for instance,

before you came in"--he pointed to an encyclopÃ¦dia on the shelves--"I

was reading an article about 'Mathematics.' Perfectly pure mathematics.

"My own knowledge of mathematics stops at 'twelve times twelve,' but I

enjoyed that article immensely. I didn't understand a word of it: but

facts, or what a man believes to be facts, are always delightful. That

mathematical fellow believed in his facts. So do I. Get your facts

first, and"--the voice dies away to an almost inaudible drone--"then you

can distort 'em as much as you please."

Bearing this precious advice in my bosom, I left; the great man assuring

me with gentle kindness that I had not interrupted him in the least.

Once outside the door, I yearned to go back and ask some questions--it

was easy enough to think of them now--but his time was his own, though

his books belonged to me.

I should have ample time to look back to that meeting across the graves

of the days. But it was sad to think of the things he had not spoken

about.

In San Francisco the men of \_The Call\_ told me many legends of Mark's

apprenticeship in their paper five and twenty years ago; how he was a

reporter delightfully incapable of reporting according to the needs of

the day. He preferred, so they said, to coil himself into a heap and

meditate until the last minute. Then he would produce copy bearing no

sort of relationship to his legitimate work--copy that made the editor

swear horribly, and the readers of \_The Call\_ ask for more.

I should like to have heard Mark's version of that, with some stories of

his joyous and variegated past. He has been journeyman printer (in those

days he wandered from the banks of the Missouri even to Philadelphia),

pilot cub and full-blown pilot, soldier of the South (that was for three

weeks only), private secretary to a Lieutenant-Governor of Nevada (that

displeased him), miner, editor, special correspondent in the Sandwich

Islands, and the Lord only knows what else. If so experienced a man

could by any means be made drunk, it would be a glorious thing to fill

him up with composite liquors, and, in the language of his own country,

"let him retrospect." But these eyes will never see that orgy fit for

the gods!

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

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CHAPTER I

JAN.-FEB., 1888

A REAL LIVE CITY

We are all backwoodsmen and barbarians together--we others dwelling

beyond the Ditch, in the outer darkness of the Mofussil. There are no

such things as commissioners and heads of departments in the world, and

there is only one city in India. Bombay is too green, too pretty, and

too stragglesome; and Madras died ever so long ago. Let us take off our

hats to Calcutta, the many-sided, the smoky, the magnificent, as we

drive in over the Hugli Bridge in the dawn of a still February morning.

We have left India behind us at Howrah Station, and now we enter foreign

parts. No, not wholly foreign. Say rather too familiar.

All men of a certain age know the feeling of caged irritation--an

illustration in the \_Graphic\_, a bar of music or the light words of a

friend from home may set it ablaze--that comes from the knowledge of our

lost heritage of London. At Home they, the other men, our equals, have

at their disposal all that Town can supply--the roar of the streets, the

lights, the music, the pleasant places, the millions of their own kind,

and a wilderness full of pretty, fresh-coloured Englishwomen, theatres

and restaurants. It is their right. They accept it as such, and even

affect to look upon it with contempt. And we--we have nothing except the

few amusements that we painfully build up for ourselves--the dolorous

dissipations of gymkhanas where every one knows everybody else, or the

chastened intoxication of dances where all engagements are booked, in

ink, ten days ahead, and where everybody's antecedents are as patent as

his or her method of waltzing. We have been deprived of our inheritance.

The men at home are enjoying it all, not knowing how fair and rich it

is, and we at the most can only fly westward for a few months and gorge

what, properly speaking, should take seven or eight or ten luxurious

years. That is the lost heritage of London; and the knowledge of the

forfeiture, wilful or forced, comes to most men at times and seasons,

and they get cross.

Calcutta holds out false hopes of some return. The dense smoke hangs

low, in the chill of the morning, over an ocean of roofs, and, as the

city wakes, there goes up to the smoke a deep, full-throated boom of

life and motion and humanity. For this reason does he who sees Calcutta

for the first time hang joyously out of the \_ticca-ghari\_[11] and sniff

the smoke, and turn his face toward the tumult, saying: "This is, at

last, some portion of my heritage returned to me. This is a City. There

is life here, and there should be all manner of pleasant things for the

having, across the river and under the smoke."

[11] hired carriage.

The litany is an expressive one and exactly describes the first emotions

of a wandering savage adrift in Calcutta. The eye has lost its sense of

proportion, the focus has contracted through overmuch residence in

up-country stations--twenty minutes' canter from hospital to

parade-ground, you know--and the mind has shrunk with the eye. Both say

together, as they take in the sweep of shipping above and below the

Hugli Bridge: "Why, this is London! This is the docks. This is Imperial.

This is worth coming across India to see!"

Then a distinctly wicked idea takes possession of the mind: "What a

divine--what a heavenly place to \_loot\_!" This gives place to a much

worse devil--that of Conservatism. It seems not only a wrong but a

criminal thing to allow natives to have any voice in the control of such

a city--adorned, docked, wharfed, fronted, and reclaimed by Englishmen,

existing only because England lives, and dependent for its life on

England. All India knows of the Calcutta Municipality; but has any one

thoroughly investigated the Big Calcutta Stink? There is only one.

Benares is fouler in point of concentrated, pent-up muck, and there are

local stenches in Peshawar which are stronger than the B. C. S.; but,

for diffused, soul-sickening expansiveness, the reek of Calcutta beats

both Benares and Peshawar. Bombay cloaks her stenches with a veneer of

assafoetida and tobacco; Calcutta is above pretence. There is no

tracing back the Calcutta plague to any one source. It is faint, it is

sickly, and it is indescribable; but Americans at the Great Eastern

Hotel say that it is something like the smell of the Chinese quarter in

San Francisco. It is certainly not an Indian smell. It resembles the

essence of corruption that has rotted for the second time--the clammy

odour of blue slime. And there is no escape from it. It blows across the

\_maidan\_; it comes in gusts into the corridors of the Great Eastern

Hotel; what they are pleased to call the "Palaces of Chowringhi" carry

it; it swirls round the Bengal Club; it pours out of by-streets with

sickening intensity, and the breeze of the morning is laden with it. It

is first found, in spite of the fume of the engines, in Howrah Station.

It seems to be worst in the little lanes at the back of Lai Bazar where

the drinking-shops are, but it is nearly as bad opposite Government

House and in the Public Offices. The thing is intermittent. Six

moderately pure mouthfuls of air may be drawn without offence. Then

comes the seventh wave and the queasiness of an uncultured stomach. If

you live long enough in Calcutta you grow used to it. The regular

residents admit the disgrace, but their answer is: "Wait till the wind

blows off the Salt Lakes where all the sewage goes, and \_then\_ you'll

smell something." That is their defence! Small wonder that they consider

Calcutta is a fit place for a permanent Viceroy. Englishmen who can

calmly extenuate one shame by another are capable of asking for

anything--and expecting to get it.

If an up-country station holding three thousand troops and twenty

civilians owned such a possession as Calcutta does, the Deputy

Commissioner or the Cantonment Magistrate would have all the natives off

the board of management or decently shovelled into the background until

the mess was abated. Then they might come on again and talk of

"high-handed oppression" as much as they liked. That stink, to an

unprejudiced nose, damns Calcutta as a City of Kings. And, in spite of

that stink, they allow, they even encourage, natives to look after the

place! The damp, drainage-soaked soil is sick with the teeming life of a

hundred years, and the Municipal Board list is choked with the names of

natives--men of the breed born in and raised off this surfeited

muck-heap! They own property, these amiable Aryans on the Municipal and

the Bengal Legislative Council. Launch a proposal to tax them on that

property, and they naturally howl. They also howl up-country, but there

the halls for mass-meetings are few, and the vernacular papers fewer,

and with a strong Secretary and a President whose favour is worth the

having and whose wrath is undesirable, men are kept clean despite

themselves, and may not poison their neighbours. Why, asks a savage, let

them vote at all? They can put up with this filthiness. They \_cannot\_

have any feelings worth caring a rush for. Let them live quietly and

hide away their money under our protection, while we tax them till they

know through their purses the measure of their neglect in the past, and

when a little of the smell has been abolished, let us bring them back

again to talk and take the credit of enlightenment. The better classes

own their broughams and barouches; the worse can shoulder an Englishman

into the kennel and talk to him as though he were a cook. They can refer

to an English lady as an \_aurat\_[12]; they are permitted a freedom--not

to put it too coarsely--of speech which, if used by an Englishman toward

an Englishman, would end in serious trouble. They are fenced and

protected and made inviolate. Surely they might be content with all

those things without entering into matters which they cannot, by the

nature of their birth, understand.

[12] woman.

Now, whether all this genial diatribe be the outcome of an unbiassed

mind or the result first of sickness caused by that ferocious stench,

and secondly of headache due to day-long smoking to drown the stench,

is an open question. Anyway, Calcutta is a fearsome place for a man not

educated up to it.

A word of advice to other barbarians. Do not bring a north-country

servant into Calcutta. He is sure to get into trouble, because he does

not understand the customs of the city. A Punjabi in this place for the

first time esteems it his bounden duty to go to the \_Ajaib-ghar\_--the

Museum. Such an one has gone and is even now returned very angry and

troubled in the spirit. "I went to the Museum," says he, "and no one

gave me any abuse. I went to the market to buy my food, and then I sat

upon a seat. There came an orderly who said, 'Go away, I want to sit

here.' I said, 'I am here first.' He said, 'I am a \_chaprassi\_![13] get

out!' and he hit me. Now that sitting-place was open to all, so I hit

him till he wept. He ran away for the Police, and I went away too, for

the Police here are all Sahibs. Can I have leave from two o'clock to go

and look for that man and hit him again?"

[13] messenger.

Behold the situation! An unknown city full of smell that makes one long

for rest and retirement, and a champing servant, not yet six hours in

the stew, who has started a blood-feud with an unknown \_chaprassi\_ and

clamours to go forth to the fray.

Alas! for the lost delusion of the heritage that was to be restored. Let

us sleep, let us sleep, and pray that Calcutta may be better to-morrow.

At present it is remarkably like sleeping with a corpse.

CHAPTER II

THE REFLECTIONS OF A SAVAGE.

Morning brings counsel. \_Does\_ Calcutta smell so pestiferously after

all? Heavy rain has fallen in the night. She is newly washed, and the

clear sunlight shows her at her best. Where, oh where, in all this

wilderness of life shall a man go?

The Great Eastern hums with life through all its hundred rooms. Doors

slam merrily, and all the nations of the earth run up and down the

staircases. This alone is refreshing, because the passers bump you and

ask you to stand aside. Fancy finding any place outside the LevÃ©e-room

where Englishmen are crowded together to this extent! Fancy sitting down

seventy strong to \_tÃ¢ble d'hÃ´te\_ and with a deafening clatter of knives

and forks! Fancy finding a real bar whence drinks may be obtained! and,

joy of joys, fancy stepping out of the hotel into the arms of a live,

white, helmeted, buttoned, truncheoned Bobby! What would happen if one

spoke to this Bobby? Would he be offended? He is not offended. He is

affable. He has to patrol the pavement in front of the Great Eastern and

to see that the crowding carriages do not jam. Toward a presumably

respectable white he behaves as a man and a brother. There is no

arrogance, about him. And this is disappointing. Closer inspection shows

that he is not a \_real\_ Bobby after all. He is a Municipal Police

Something and his uniform is not correct; at least if they have not

changed the dress of the men at Home. But no matter. Later on we will

inquire into the Calcutta Bobby, because he is a white man, and has to

deal with some of the "toughest" folk that ever set out of malice

aforethought to paint Job Charnock's city vermilion. You must not, you

cannot cross Old Court House Street without looking carefully to see

that you stand no chance of being run over. This is beautiful. There is

a steady roar of traffic, cut every two minutes by the deep roll of the

trams. The driving is eccentric, not to say bad, but there is the

traffic--more than unsophisticated eyes have beheld for a certain number

of years. It means business, it means money-making, it means crowded and

hurrying life, and it gets into the blood and makes it move. Here be big

shops with plate-glass fronts--all displaying the well-known names of

firms that we savages only correspond with through the Parcels Post.[14]

They are all here, as large as life, ready to supply anything you need

if you only care to sign. Great is the fascination of being able to

obtain a thing on the spot without having to write for a week and wait

for a month, and then get something quite different. No wonder pretty

ladies, who live anywhere within a reasonable distance, come down to do

their shopping personally.

[14] C.O.D.

"Look here. If you want to be respectable you mustn't smoke in the

streets. Nobody does it." This is advice kindly tendered by a friend in

a black coat. There is no LevÃ©e or Lieutenant-Governor in sight; but he

wears the frock-coat because it is daylight, and he can be seen. He

refrains from smoking for the same reason. He admits that Providence

built the open air to be smoked in, but he says that "it isn't the

thing." This man has a brougham, a remarkably natty little pill-box with

a curious wabble about the wheels. He steps into the brougham and puts

on--a top-hat, a shiny black "plug."

There was a man up-country once who owned a top-hat. He leased it to

amateur theatrical companies for some seasons until the nap wore off.

Then he threw it into a tree and wild bees hived in it. Men were wont to

come and look at the hat, in its palmy days, for the sake of feeling

homesick. It interested all the station, and died with two seers of

\_babul\_-flower honey in its bosom. But top-hats are not intended to be

worn in India. They are as sacred as home letters and old rosebuds. The

friend cannot see this. He allows that if he stepped out of his brougham

and walked about in the sunshine for ten minutes he would get a bad

headache. In half-an-hour he would probably die of sunstroke. He allows

all this, but he keeps to his Hat and cannot see why a barbarian is

moved to inextinguishable laughter at the sight. Every one who owns a

brougham and many people who hire \_ticca-gharis\_ keep top-hats and black

frock-coats. The effect is curious, and at first fills the beholder with

surprise.

And now, "let us see the handsome houses where the wealthy nobles

dwell." Northerly lies the great human jungle of the native city,

stretching from Burra Bazar to Chitpore. That can keep. Southerly is the

\_maidan\_ and Chowringhi. "If you get out into the centre of the \_maidan\_

you will understand why Calcutta is called the City of Palaces." The

travelled American said so at the Great Eastern. There is a short

tower, falsely called a "memorial," standing in a waste of soft, sour

green. That is as good a place to get to as any other. The size of the

\_maidan\_ takes the heart out of any one accustomed to the "gardens" of

up-country, just as they say Newmarket Heath cows a horse accustomed to

more a shut-in course. The huge level is studded with brazen statues of

eminent gentlemen riding fretful horses on diabolically severe curbs.

The expanse dwarfs the statues, dwarfs everything except the frontage of

the far-away Chowringhi Road. It is big--it is impressive. There is no

escaping the fact. They built houses in the old days when the rupee was

two shillings and a penny. Those houses are three-storied, and

ornamented with service-staircases like houses in the Hills. They are

very close together, and they have garden walls of masonry pierced with

a single gate. In their shut-upness they are British. In their

spaciousness they are Oriental, but those service-staircases do not look

healthy. We will form an amateur sanitary commission and call upon

Chowringhi.

A first introduction to the Calcutta \_durwÃ¢n\_ or door-keeper is not

nice. If he is chewing \_pÃ¢n\_, he does not take the trouble to get rid of

his quid. If he is sitting on his cot chewing sugar-cane, he does not

think it worth his while to rise. He has to be taught those things, and

he cannot understand why he should be reproved. Clearly he is a survival

of a played-out system. Providence never intended that any native should

be made a \_concierge\_ more insolent than any of the French variety. The

people of Calcutta put a man in a little lodge close to the gate of

their house, in order that loafers may be turned away, and the houses

protected from theft. The natural result is that the \_durwÃ¢n\_ treats

everybody whom he does not know as a loafer, has an intimate and

vendible knowledge of all the outgoings and incomings in that house, and

controls, to a large extent, the nomination of the servants. They say

that one of the estimable class is now suing a bank for about three

lakhs of rupees.[15] Up-country, a Lieutenant-Governor's servant has to

work for thirty years before he can retire on seventy thousand rupees of

savings. The Calcutta \_durwÃ¢n\_ is a great institution. The head and

front of his offence is that he will insist upon trying to talk English.

How he protects the houses Calcutta only knows. He can be frightened out

of his wits by severe speech, and is generally asleep in calling hours.

If a rough round of visits be any guide, three times out of seven he is

fragrant of drink. So much for the \_durwÃ¢n\_. Now for the houses he

guards.

[15] Say $100,000.

Very pleasant is the sensation of being ushered into a pestiferously

stablesome drawing-room. "Does this always happen?" "No, not unless you

shut up the room for some time; but if you open the shutters there are

other smells. You see the stables and the servants' quarters are close

to." People pay five hundred a month for half-a-dozen rooms filled with

scents of this kind. They make no complaint. When they think the honour

of the city is at stake they say defiantly: "Yes, but you must remember

we're a metropolis. We are crowded here. We have no room. We aren't like

your little stations." Chowringhi is a stately place full of sumptuous

houses, but it is best to look at it hastily. Stop to consider for a

moment what the cramped compounds, the black soaked soil, the netted

intricacies of the service-staircases, the packed stables, the seethment

of human life round the \_durwÃ¢ns'\_ lodges and the curious arrangement of

little open drains mean, and you will call it a whited sepulchre.

Men living in expensive tenements suffer from chronic sore throat, and

will tell you cheerily that "we've got typhoid in Calcutta now." Is the

pest ever out of it? Everything seems to be built with a view to its

comfort. It can lodge comfortably on roofs, climb along from the

gutter-pipe to piazza, or rise from sink to verandah and thence to the

topmost story. But Calcutta says that all is sound and produces figures

to prove it; at the same time admitting that healthy cut flesh will not

readily heal. Further evidence may be dispensed with.

Here come pouring down Park Street on the \_maidÃ¢n\_ a rush of broughams,

neat buggies, the lightest of gigs, trim office brownberrys, shining

victorias, and a sprinkling of veritable hansom cabs. In the broughams

sit men in top-hats. In the other carts, young men, all very much alike,

and all immaculately turned out. A fresh stream from Chowringhi joins

the Park Street detachment, and the two together stream away across the

\_maidÃ¢n\_ toward the business quarter of the city. This is Calcutta going

to office--the civilians to the Government Buildings and the young men

to their firms and their blocks and their wharves. Here one sees that

Calcutta has the best turn-out in the Empire. Horses and traps alike are

enviably perfect, and--mark the touchstone of civilization--\_the lamps

are in their sockets!\_ The country-bred is a rare beast here; his place

is taken by the Waler,[16] and the Waler, though a ruffian at heart, can

be made to look like a gentleman. It would be indecorous to applaud the

winking harness, the perfectly lacquered panels, and the liveried

\_saises\_. They show well in the outwardly fair roads shadowed by the

Palaces.

[16] Imported Australian horse.

How many sections of the complex society of the place do the carts

carry? \_First\_, the Bengal Civilian who goes to Writers' Buildings and

sits in a perfect office and speaks flippantly of "sending things to

India," meaning thereby referring matters to the Supreme Government. He

is a great person, and his mouth is full of promotion-and-appointment

"shop." Generally he is referred to as a "rising man." Calcutta seems

full of "rising men." \_Secondly\_, the Government of India man, who wears

a familiar Simla face, rents a flat when he is not up in the Hills, and

is rational on the subject of the drawbacks of Calcutta. \_Thirdly\_, the

man of the "firms," the pure non-official who fights under the banner of

one of the great houses of the City, or for his own hand in a neat

office, or dashes about Clive Street in a brougham doing "share work" or

something of the kind. He fears not "Bengal," nor regards he "India." He

swears impartially at both when their actions interfere with his

operations. His "shop" is quite unintelligible. He is like the English

city man with the chill off, lives well and entertains hospitably. In

the old days he was greater than he is now, but still he bulks large. He

is rational in so far that he will help the abuse of the Municipality,

but womanish in his insistence on the excellencies of Calcutta. Over and

above these who are hurrying to work are the various brigades, squads,

and detachments of the other interests. But they are sets and not

sections, and revolve round Belvedere, Government House, and Fort

William. Simla and Darjeeling claim them in the hot weather. Let them

go. They wear top-hats and frock-coats.

It is time to escape from Chowringhi Road and get among the long-shore

folk, who have no prejudices against tobacco, and who all use very much

the same sort of hat.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS.

He set up conclusions to the number of nine thousand seven

hundred and sixty-four ... he went afterwards to the Sorbonne,

where he maintained argument against the theologians for the

space of six weeks, from four o'clock in the morning till six in

the evening, except for an interval of two hours to refresh

themselves and take their repasts, and at this were present the

greatest part of the lords of the court, the masters of request,

presidents, counsellors, those of the accompts, secretaries,

advocates, and others; as also the sheriffs of the said

town.--\_Pantagruel.\_

"The Bengal Legislative Council is sitting now. You will find it in an

octagonal wing of Writers' Buildings: straight across the \_maidÃ¢n\_. It's

worth seeing." "What are they sitting on?" "Municipal business. No end

of a debate." So much for trying to keep low company. The long-shore

loafers must stand over. Without doubt this Council is going to hang

some one for the state of the City, and Sir Steuart Bayley will be chief

executioner. One does not come across councils every day.

Writers' Buildings are large. You can trouble the busy workers of

half-a-dozen departments before you stumble upon the black-stained

staircase that leads to an upper chamber looking out over a populous

street. Wild orderlies block the way. The Councillor Sahibs are sitting,

but any one can enter. "To the right of the LÃ¢t Sahib's chair, and go

quietly." Ill-mannered minion! Does he expect the awe-stricken spectator

to prance in with a war-whoop or turn Catherine-wheels round that

sumptuous octagonal room with the blue-domed roof? There are gilt

capitals to the half pillars and an Egyptian patterned lotus-stencil

makes the walls gay. A thick piled carpet covers all the floor, and must

be delightful in the hot weather. On a black wooden throne, comfortably

cushioned in green leather, sits Sir Steuart Bayley, Ruler of Bengal.

The rest are all great men, or else they would not be there. Not to know

them argues oneself unknown. There are a dozen of them, and sit six

aside at two slightly curved lines of beautifully polished desks. Thus

Sir Steuart Bayley occupies the frog of a badly made horse-shoe split at

the toe. In front of him, at a table covered with books and pamphlets

and papers, toils a secretary. There is a seat for the Reporters, and

that is all. The place enjoys a chastened gloom, and its very atmosphere

fills one with awe. This is the heart of Bengal, and uncommonly well

upholstered. If the work matches the first-class furniture, the inkpots,

the carpet, and the resplendent ceilings, there will be something worth

seeing. But where is the criminal who is to be hanged for the stench

that runs up and down Writers' Buildings staircases; for the rubbish

heaps in the Chitpore Road; for the sickly savour of Chowringhi; for the

dirty little tanks at the back of Belvedere; for the street full of

small-pox; for the reeking ghari-stand outside the Great Eastern; for

the state of the stone and dirt pavements; for the condition of the

gullies of Shampooker, and for a hundred other things?

"This, I submit, is an artificial scheme in supersession of Nature's

unit, the individual." The speaker is a slight, spare native in a flat

hat-turban, and a black alpaca frock-coat. He looks like a scribe to the

boot-heels, and, with his unvarying smile and regulated gesticulation,

recalls memories of up-country courts. He never hesitates, is never at a

loss for a word, and never in one sentence repeats himself. He talks and

talks and talks in a level voice, rising occasionally half an octave

when a point has to be driven home. Some of his periods sound very

familiar. This, for instance, might be a sentence from the \_Indian

Mirror\_: "So much for the principle. Let us now examine how far it is

supported by precedent." This sounds bad. When a fluent native is

discoursing of "principles" and "precedents," the chances are that he

will go on for some time. Moreover, where is the criminal, and what is

all this talk about abstractions? They want shovels not sentiments, in

this part of the world.

A friendly whisper brings enlightenment: "They are ploughing through the

Calcutta Municipal Bill--plurality of votes, you know. Here are the

papers." And so it is! A mass of motions and amendments on matters

relating to ward votes. Is \_A\_ to be allowed to give two votes in one

ward and one in another? Is section 10 to be omitted, and is one man to

be allowed one vote and no more? How many votes does three hundred

rupees' worth of landed property carry? Is it better to kiss a post or

throw it in the fire? Not a word about carbolic acid and gangs of

sweepers. The little man in the black dressing-gown revels in his

subject. He is great on principles and precedents, and the necessity of

"popularising our system." He fears that under certain circumstances

"the status of the candidates will decline." He riots in "self-adjusting

majorities," and "the healthy influence of the educated middle classes."

For a practical answer to this, there steals across the council chamber

just one faint whiff of the Stink. It is as though some one laughed low

and bitterly. But no man heeds. The Englishmen look supremely bored, the

native members stare stolidly in front of them. Sir Steuart Bayley's

face is as set as the face of the Sphinx. For these things he draws his

pay,--a low wage for heavy labour. But the speaker, now adrift, is not

altogether to be blamed. He is a Bengali, who has got before him just

such a subject as his soul loveth,--an elaborate piece of academical

reform leading nowhere. Here is a quiet room full of pens and papers,

and there are men who must listen to him. Apparently there is no time

limit to the speeches. Can you wonder that he talks? He says "I submit"

once every ninety seconds, varying the form with "I do submit, the

popular element in the electoral body should have prominence." Quite so.

He quotes one John Stuart Mill to prove it. There steals over the

listener a numbing sense of nightmare. He has heard all this before

somewhere--yea; even down to J. S. Mill and the references to the "true

interests of the ratepayers." He sees what is coming next. Yes, there is

the old Sabha, Anjuman journalistic formula--"Western education is an

exotic plant of recent importation." How on earth did this man drag

Western education into this discussion? Who knows? Perhaps Sir Steuart

Bayley does. He seems to be listening. The others are looking at their

watches. The spell of the level voice sinks the listener yet deeper into

a trance. He is haunted by the ghosts of all the cant of all the

political platforms of Great Britain. He hears all the old, old vestry

phrases, and once more he smells the Smell. \_That\_ is no dream. Western

education is an exotic plant. It is the upas tree, and it is all our

fault. We brought it out from England exactly as we brought out the

ink-bottles and the patterns for the chairs. We planted it and it

grew--monstrous as a banian. Now we are choked by the roots of it

spreading so thickly in this fat soil of Bengal. The speaker continues.

Bit by bit we builded this dome, visible and invisible, the crown of

Writers' Buildings, as we have built and peopled the buildings. Now we

have gone too far to retreat, being "tied and bound with the chain of

our own sins." The speech continues. We made that florid sentence. That

torrent of verbiage is Ours. We taught him what was constitutional and

what was unconstitutional in the days when Calcutta smelt. Calcutta

smells still, but We must listen to all that he has to say about the

plurality of votes and the threshing of wind and the weaving of ropes of

sand. It is Our own fault.

The speech ends, and there rises a grey Englishman in a black

frock-coat. He looks a strong man, and a worldly. Surely he will say,

"Yes, Lala Sahib, all this may be true talk, but there's a vile smell in

this place, and everything must be cleaned in a week, or the Deputy

Commissioner will not take any notice of you in \_durbar\_." He says

nothing of the kind. This is a Legislative Council, where they call each

other "Honourable So-and-So's." The Englishman in the frock-coat begs

all to remember that "we are discussing principles, and no consideration

of the details ought to influence the verdict on the principles." Is he

then like the rest? How does this strange thing come about? Perhaps

these so English office fittings are responsible for the warp. The

Council Chamber might be a London Board-room. Perhaps after long years

among the pens and papers its occupants grew to think that it really is,

and in this belief give \_rÃ©sumÃ©s\_ of the history of Local

Self-Government in England.

The black frock-coat, emphasising his points with his spectacle-case, is

telling his friends how the parish was first the unit of

self-government. He then explains how burgesses were elected, and in

tones of deep fervour announces, "Commissioners of Sewers are elected in

the same way." Whereunto all this lecture? Is he trying to run a motion

through under cover of a cloud of words, essaying the well-known

"cuttle-fish trick" of the West?

He abandons England for a while, and \_now\_ we get a glimpse of the

cloven hoof in a casual reference to Hindus and Mahometans. The Hindus

will lose nothing by the complete establishment of plurality of votes.

They will have the control of their own wards as they used to have. So

there is race-feeling, to be explained away, even among these beautiful

desks. Scratch the Council, and you come to the old, old trouble. The

black frock-coat sits down, and a keen-eyed, black-bearded Englishman

rises with one hand in his pocket to explain his views on an alteration

of the vote qualification. The idea of an amendment seems to have just

struck him. He hints that he will bring it forward later on. He is

academical like the others, but not half so good a speaker. All this is

dreary beyond words. Why do they talk and talk about owners and

occupiers and burgesses in England and the growth of autonomous

institutions when the city, the great city, is here crying out to be

cleansed? What has England to do with Calcutta's evil, and why should

Englishmen be forced to wander through mazes of unprofitable argument

against men who cannot understand the iniquity of dirt?

A pause follows the black-bearded man's speech. Rises another native, a

heavily built Babu, in a black gown and a strange head-dress. A snowy

white strip of cloth is thrown duster-wise over his shoulders. His voice

is high, and not always under control. He begins, "I will try to be as

brief as possible." This is ominous. By the way, in Council there seems

to be no necessity for a form of address. The orators plunge \_in medias

res\_, and only when they are well launched throw an occasional "Sir"

towards Sir Steuart Bayley, who sits with one leg doubled under him and

a dry pen in his hand. This speaker is no good. He talks, but he says

nothing, and he only knows where he is drifting to. He says: "We must

remember that we are legislating for the Metropolis of India, and

therefore we should borrow our institutions from large English towns,

and not from parochial institutions." If you think for a minute, that

shows a large and healthy knowledge of the history of Local

Self-Government. It also reveals the attitude of Calcutta. If the city

thought less about itself as a metropolis and more as a midden, its

state would be better. The speaker talks patronisingly of "my friend,"

alluding to the black frock-coat. Then he flounders afresh, and his

voice gallops up the gamut as he declares, "and \_therefore\_ that makes

all the difference." He hints vaguely at threats, something to do with

the Hindus and the Mahometans, but what he means it is difficult to

discover. Here, however, is a sentence taken \_verbatim\_. It is not

likely to appear in this form in the Calcutta papers. The black

frock-coat had said that if a wealthy native "had eight votes to his

credit, his vanity would prompt him to go to the polling-booth, because

he would feel better than half-a-dozen \_ghari-wans\_ or petty traders."

(Fancy allowing a \_ghari-wan\_ to vote! He has yet to learn how to

drive!) Hereon the gentleman with the white cloth: "Then the complaint

is that influential voters will not take the trouble to vote? In my

humble opinion, if that be so, adopt voting-papers. \_That\_ is the way to

meet them. In the same way--The Calcutta Trades' Association--you

abolish all plurality of votes: and that is the way to meet \_them\_."

Lucid, is it not? Up flies the irresponsible voice, and delivers this

statement, "In the election for the House of Commons plurality are

allowed for persons having interest in different districts." Then

hopeless, hopeless fog. It is a great pity that India ever heard of

anybody higher than the heads of the Civil Service. Once more a whiff of

the Stink. The gentleman gives a defiant jerk of his shoulder-cloth, and

sits down.

Then Sir Steuart Bayley: "The question before the Council is," etc.

There is a ripple of "Ayes" and "Noes," and the "Noes" have it, whatever

it may be. The black-bearded gentleman springs his amendment about the

voting qualifications. A large senator in a white waistcoat, and with a

most genial smile, rises and proceeds to smash up the amendment. Can't

see the use of it. Calls it in effect rubbish. The black dressing-gown,

he who spoke first of all, speaks again, and talks of the "sojourner who

comes here for a little time, and then leaves the land." Well it is for

the black gown that the sojourner does come, or there would be no comfy

places wherein to talk about the power that can be measured by wealth

and the intellect "which, sir, I submit, cannot be so measured." The

amendment is lost; and trebly and quadruply lost is the listener. In the

name of sanity and to preserve the tattered shirt-tails of a torn

illusion, let us escape! This is the Calcutta Municipal Bill. They have

been at it for several Saturdays. Last Saturday Sir Steuart Bayley

pointed out that at their present rate they would be about two years in

getting it through. Now they will sit till dusk, unless Sir Steuart

Bayley, who wants to see Lord Connemara off, puts up the black

frock-coat to move an adjournment. It is not good to watch a Government

close to. This leads to the formation of blatantly self-satisfied

judgments, which may be quite as wrong as the cramping system with which

we have encompassed ourselves. And in the streets outside Englishmen

summarise the situation brutally, thus: "The whole thing is a farce.

Time is money to us. We can't stick out those everlasting speeches in

the municipality. The natives choke us off, but we know that if things

get too bad the Government will step in and interfere, and so we worry

along somehow."

Meantime Calcutta continues to cry out for the bucket and the broom.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE BANKS OF THE HUGLI.

The clocks of the city have struck two. Where can a man get food?

Calcutta is not rich in respect of dainty accommodation. You can stay

your stomach at Peliti's or Bonsard's, but their shops are not to be

found in Hastings Street, or in the places where brokers fly to and fro

in office-jauns, sweating and growing visibly rich. There must be some

sort of entertainment where sailors congregate. "Honest Bombay Jack"

supplies nothing but Burma cheroots and whisky in liqueur-glasses, but

in Lal Bazar, not far from "The Sailors' Coffee-rooms," a board gives

bold advertisement that "officers and seamen can find good quarters." In

evidence a row of neat officers and seamen are sitting on a bench by the

"hotel" door smoking. There is an almost military likeness in their

clothes. Perhaps "Honest Bombay Jack" only keeps one kind of felt hat

and one brand of suit. When Jack of the mercantile marine is sober, he

is very sober. When he is drunk he is--but ask the river police what a

lean, mad Yankee can do with his nails and teeth. These gentlemen

smoking on the bench are impassive almost as Red Indians. Their

attitudes are unrestrained, and they do not wear braces. Nor, it would

appear from the bill of fare, are they particular as to what they eat

when they attend \_tÃ¢ble d'hÃ´te\_. The fare is substantial and the

regulation "peg"--every house has its own depth of peg if you will

refrain from stopping Ganymede--something to wonder at. Three fingers

and a trifle over seems to be the use of the officers and seamen who are

talking so quietly in the doorway. One says--he has evidently finished a

long story--"and so he shipped for four pound ten with a first mate's

certificate and all. And that was in a German barque." Another spits

with conviction and says genially, without raising his voice, "That was

a hell of a ship. Who knows her?" No answer from the assembly, but a

Dane or a German wants to know whether the \_Myra\_ is "up" yet. A dry,

red-haired man gives her exact position in the river--(How in the world

can he know?)--and the probable hour of her arrival. The grave debate

drifts into a discussion of a recent river accident, whereby a big

steamer was damaged, and had to put back and discharge cargo. A burly

gentleman who is taking a constitutional down Lal Bazar strolls up and

says: "I tell you she fouled her own chain with her own forefoot. Hev

you seen the plates?" "No." "Then how the ---- can any ---- like you

---- say what it ---- well was?" He passes on, having delivered his

highly flavored opinion without heat or passion. No one seems to resent

the garnish.

Let us get down to the river and see this stamp of men more thoroughly.

Clarke Russell has told us that their lives are hard enough in all

conscience. What are their pleasures and diversions? The Port Office,

where live the gentlemen who make improvements in the Port of Calcutta,

ought to supply information. It stands large and fair, and built in an

orientalised manner after the Italians at the corner of Fairlie Place

upon the great Strand Road, and a continual clamour of traffic by land

and by sea goes up throughout the day and far into the night against its

windows. This is a place to enter more reverently than the Bengal

Legislative Council, for it controls the direction of the uncertain

Hugli down to the Sandheads, owns enormous wealth, and spends huge sums

on the frontaging of river banks, the expansion of jetties, and the

manufacture of docks costing two hundred lakhs of rupees. Two million

tons of sea-going shippage yearly find their way up and down the river

by the guidance of the Port Office, and the men of the Port Office know

more than it is good for men to hold in their heads. They can without

reference to telegraphic bulletins give the position of all the big

steamers, coming up or going down, from the Hugli to the sea, day by

day, with their tonnage, the names of their captains and the nature of

their cargo. Looking out from the verandah of their office over a

lancer-regiment of masts, they can declare truthfully the name of every

ship within eye-scope, with the day and hour when she will depart.

In a room at the bottom of the building lounge big men, carefully

dressed. Now there is a type of face which belongs almost exclusively to

Bengal Cavalry officers--majors for choice. Everybody knows the bronzed,

black-moustached, clear-speaking Native Cavalry officer. He exists

unnaturally in novels, and naturally on the Frontier. These men in the

big room have his cast of face so strongly marked that one marvels what

officers are doing by the river. "Have they come to book passages for

home?" "Those men? They're pilots. Some of them draw between two and

three thousand rupees a month. They are responsible for half-a-million

pounds' worth of cargo sometimes." They certainly are men, and they

carry themselves as such. They confer together by twos and threes, and

appeal frequently to shipping lists.

"\_Isn't\_ a pilot a man who always wears a pea-jacket and shouts through

a speaking-trumpet?" "Well, you can ask those gentlemen if you like.

You've got your notions from Home pilots. Ours aren't that kind exactly.

They are a picked service, as carefully weeded as the Indian Civil. Some

of 'em have brothers in it, and some belong to the old Indian army

families." But they are not all equally well paid. The Calcutta papers

echo the groans of the junior pilots who are not allowed the handling of

ships over a certain tonnage. As it is yearly growing cheaper to build

one big steamer than two little ones, these juniors are crowded out,

and, while the seniors get their thousands, some of the youngsters make

at the end of one month exactly thirty rupees. This is a grievance with

them, and it seems well-founded.

In the flats above the pilot's room are hushed and chapel-like offices,

all sumptuously fitted, where Englishmen write and telephone and

telegraph, and deft Babus for ever draw maps of the shifting Hugli. Any

hope of understanding the work of the Port Commissioners is thoroughly

dashed by being taken through the Port maps of a quarter of a century

past. Men have played with the Hugli as children play with a

gutter-runnel, and, in return, the Hugli once rose and played with men

and ships till the Strand Road was littered with the raffle and the

carcasses of big ships. There are photos on the walls of the cyclone of

'64, when the \_Thunder\_ came inland and sat upon an American barque,

obstructing all the traffic. Very curious are these photos, and almost

impossible to believe. How can a big, strong steamer have her three

masts razed to deck level? How can a heavy, country boat be pitched on

to the poop of a high-walled liner? and how can the side be bodily torn

out of a ship? The photos say that all these things are possible, and

men aver that a cyclone may come again and scatter the craft like chaff.

Outside the Port Office are the export and import sheds, buildings that

can hold a ship's cargo apiece, all standing on reclaimed ground. Here

be several strong smells, a mass of railway lines, and a multitude of

men. "Do you see where that trolly is standing, behind the big P. and O.

berth? In that place as nearly as may be the \_Govindpur\_ went down about

twenty years ago, and began to shift out!" "But that is solid ground."

"She sank there, and the next tide made a scour-hole on one side of her.

The returning tide knocked her into it. Then the mud made up behind her.

Next tide the business was repeated--always the scour-hole in the mud

and the filling up behind her. So she rolled, and was pushed out and out

until she got in the way of the shipping right out yonder, and we had to

blow her up. When a ship sinks in mud or quicksand she regularly digs

her own grave and wriggles herself into it deeper and deeper till she

reaches moderately solid stuff. Then she sticks." Horrible idea, is it

not, to go down and down with each tide into the foul Hugli mud?

Close to the Port Offices is the Shipping Office, where the captains

engage their crews. The men must produce their discharges from their

last ships in the presence of the shipping master, or, as they call him,

"The Deputy Shipping." He passes them after having satisfied himself

that they are not deserters from other ships, and they then sign

articles for the voyage. This is the ceremony, beginning with the

"dearly beloved" of the crew-hunting captain down to the "amazement" of

the deserter. There is a dingy building, next door to the Sailors' Home,

at whose gate stand the cast-ups of all the seas in all manner of

raiment. There are the Seedee boys, Bombay \_serangs\_ and Madras

fishermen of the salt villages, Malays who insist upon marrying Calcutta

women, grow jealous and run \_amok\_; Malay-Hindus, Hindu-Malay-Whites,

Burmese, Burma-Whites, Burma-Native-Whites, Italians with gold earrings

and a thirst for gambling, Yankees of all the States, with Mulattoes and

pure buck-niggers, red and rough Danes, Cingalese, Cornish boys fresh

taken from the plough-tail, "corn-stalks" from colonial ships where they

got four pound ten a month as seamen, tun-bellied Germans, Cockney mates

keeping a little aloof from the crowd and talking in knots together,

unmistakable "Tommies" who have tumbled into seafaring life by some

mistake, cockatoo-tufted Welshmen spitting and swearing like cats,

broken-down loafers, grey-headed, penniless, and pitiful, swaggering

boys, and very quiet men with gashes and cuts on their faces. It is an

ethnological museum where all the specimens are playing comedies and

tragedies. The head of it all is the "Deputy Shipping," and he sits,

supported by an English policeman whose fists are knobby, in a great

Chair of State. The "Deputy Shipping" knows all the iniquity of the

river-side, all the ships, all the captains, and a fair amount of the

men. He is fenced off from the crowd by a strong wooden railing behind

which are gathered the unemployed of the mercantile marine. They have

had their spree--poor devils--and now they will go to sea again on as

low a wage as three pound ten a month, to fetch up at the end in some

Shanghai stew or San Francisco hell. They have turned their backs on the

seductions of the Howrah boarding-houses and the delights of

Colootollah. If Fate will, "Nightingale's" will know them no more for a

season. But what skipper will take some of these battered, shattered

wrecks whose hands shake and whose eyes are red?

Enter suddenly a bearded captain, who has made his selection from the

crowd on a previous day, and now wants to get his men passed. He is not

fastidious in his choice. His eleven seem a tough lot for such a

mild-eyed, civil-spoken man to manage. But the captain in the Shipping

Office and the captain on his ship are two different things. He brings

his crew up to the "Deputy Shipping's" bar, and hands in their greasy,

tattered discharges. But the heart of the "Deputy Shipping" is hot

within him, because, two days ago, a Howrah crimp stole a whole crew

from a down-dropping ship, insomuch that the captain had to come back

and whip up a new crew at one o'clock in the day. Evil will it be if the

"Deputy Shipping" finds one of these bounty-jumpers in the chosen crew

of the \_Blenkindoon\_.

The "Deputy Shipping" tells the story with heat. "I didn't know they did

such things in Calcutta," says the captain. "Do such things! They'd

steal the eye-teeth out of your head there, Captain." He picks up a

discharge and calls for Michael Donelly, a loose-knit, vicious-looking

Irish-American who chews. "Stand up, man, stand up!" Michael Donelly

wants to lean against the desk, and the English policeman won't have it.

"What was your last ship?" "\_Fairy Queen.\_" "When did you leave her?"

"'Bout 'leven days." "Captain's name?" "Flahy." "That'll do. Next man:

Jules Anderson." Jules Anderson is a Dane. His statements tally with the

discharge-certificate of the United States, as the Eagle attesteth. He

is passed and falls back. Slivey, the Englishman, and David, a huge

plum-coloured negro who ships as cook, are also passed. Then comes

Bassompra, a little Italian, who speaks English. "What's your last

ship?" "\_Ferdinand.\_" "No, after that?" "German barque." Bassompra does

not look happy. "When did she sail?" "About three weeks ago." "What's

her name?" "\_HaidÃ©e.\_" "You deserted from her?" "Yes, but she's left

port." The "Deputy Shipping" runs rapidly through a shipping-list,

throws it down with a bang. "'Twon't do. No German barque \_HaidÃ©e\_ here

for three months. How do I know you don't belong to the \_Jackson's\_

crew? Cap'en, I'm afraid you'll have to ship another man. He must stand

over. Take the rest away and make 'em sign."

The bead-eyed Bassompra seems to have lost his chance of a voyage, and

his case will be inquired into. The captain departs with his men and

they sign articles for the voyage, while the "Deputy Shipping" tells

strange tales of the sailorman's life. "They'll quit a good ship for the

sake of a spree, and catch on again at three pound ten, and by Jove,

they'll let their skippers pay 'em at ten rupees to the sovereign--poor

beggars. As soon as the money's gone they'll ship, but not before. Every

one under rank of captain engages here. The competition makes

first-mates ship sometimes for five pounds or as low as four ten a

month." (The gentleman in the boarding-house was right, you see.) "A

first mate's wages are seven ten or eight, and foreign captains ship for

twelve pounds a month and bring their own small stores--everything, that

is to say, except beef, peas, flour, coffee, and molasses."

These things are not pleasant to listen to while the hungry-eyed men in

the bad clothes lounge and scratch and loaf behind the railing. What

comes to them in the end? They die, it seems, though that is not

altogether strange. They die at sea in strange and horrible ways; they

die, a few of them, in the Kintals, being lost and suffocated in the

great sink of Calcutta; they die, in strange places by the water-side,

and the Hugli takes them away under the mooring chains and the buoys,

and casts them up on the sands below, if the River Police have missed

the capture. They sail the sea because they must live; and there is no

end to their toil. Very, very few find haven of any kind, and the earth,

whose ways they do not understand, is cruel to them, when they walk upon

it to drink and be merry after the manner of beasts. Jack ashore is a

pretty thing when he is in a book or in the blue jacket of the Navy.

Mercantile Jack is not so lovely. Later on, we will see where his

"sprees" lead him.

CHAPTER V

WITH THE CALCUTTA POLICE.

"The City was of Night--perchance of Death,

But certainly of Night."

--\_The City of Dreadful Night.\_

In the beginning, the Police were responsible. They said in a

patronising way that they would prefer to take a wanderer round the

great city themselves, sooner than let him contract a broken head on his

own account in the slums. They said that there were places and places

where a white man, unsupported by the arm of the Law, would be robbed

and mobbed; and that there were other places where drunken seamen would

make it very unpleasant for him.

"Come up to the fire look-out in the first place, and then you'll be

able to see the city." This was at No. 22, Lal Bazar, which is the

headquarters of the Calcutta Police, the centre of the great web of

telephone wires where Justice sits all day and all night looking after

one million people and a floating population of one hundred thousand.

But her work shall be dealt with later on. The fire look-out is a little

sentry-box on the top of the three-storied police offices. Here a native

watchman waits to give warning to the brigade below if the smoke rises

by day or the flames by night in any ward of the city. From this eyrie,

in the warm night, one hears the heart of Calcutta beating. Northward,

the city stretches away three long miles, with three more miles of

suburbs beyond, to Dum-Dum and Barrackpore. The lamplit dusk on this

side is full of noises and shouts and smells. Close to the Police

Office, jovial mariners at the sailors' coffee-shop are roaring hymns.

Southerly, the city's confused lights give place to the orderly

lamp-rows of the \_maidÃ¢n\_ and Chowringhi, where the respectabilities

live and the Police have very little to do. From the east goes up to the

sky the clamour of Sealdah, the rumble of the trams, and the voices of

all Bow Bazar chaffering and making merry. Westward are the business

quarters, hushed now; the lamps of the shipping on the river; and the

twinkling lights on the Howrah side. "Does the noise of traffic go on

all through the hot weather?" "Of course. The hot months are the busiest

in the year and money's tightest. You should see the brokers cutting

about at that season. Calcutta \_can't\_ stop, my dear sir." "What happens

then?" "Nothing happens; the death-rate goes up a little. That's all!"

Even in February, the weather would, up-country, be called muggy and

stifling, but Calcutta is convinced that it is her cold season. The

noises of the city grow perceptibly; it is the night side of Calcutta

waking up and going abroad. Jack in the sailors' coffee-shop is singing

joyously: "Shall we gather at the River--the beautiful, the beautiful,

the River?" There is a clatter of hoofs in the courtyard below. Some of

the Mounted Police have come in from somewhere or other out of the great

darkness. A clog-dance of iron hoofs follows, and an Englishman's voice

is heard soothing an agitated horse who seems to be standing on his

hind legs. Some of the Mounted Police are going out into the great

darkness. "What's on?" "A dance at Government House. The Reserve men are

being formed up below. They're calling the roll." The Reserve men are

all English, and big English at that. They form up and tramp out of the

courtyard to line Government Place, and see that Mrs. Lollipop's

brougham does not get smashed up by Sirdar Chuckerbutty Bahadur's

lumbering C-spring barouche with the two raw Walers. Very military men

are the Calcutta European Police in their set-up, and he who knows their

composition knows some startling stories of gentleman-rankers and the

like. They are, despite the wearing climate they work in and the wearing

work they do, as fine a five-score of Englishmen as you shall find east

of Suez.

Listen for a moment from the fire look-out to the voices of the night,

and you will see why they must be so. Two thousand sailors of fifty

nationalities are adrift in Calcutta every Sunday, and of these perhaps

two hundred are distinctly the worse for liquor. There is a mild row

going on, even now, somewhere at the back of Bow Bazar, which at

nightfall fills with sailormen who have a wonderful gift of falling foul

of the native population. To keep the Queen's peace is of course only a

small portion of Police duty, but it is trying. The burly president of

the lock-up for European drunks--Calcutta central lock-up is worth

seeing--rejoices in a sprained thumb just now, and has to do his work

left-handed in consequence. But his left hand is a marvellously

persuasive one, and when on duty his sleeves are turned up to the

shoulder that the jovial mariner may see that there is no deception. The

president's labours are handicapped in that the road of sin to the

lock-up runs through a grimy little garden--the brick paths are worn

deep with the tread of many drunken feet--where a man can give a great

deal of trouble by sticking his toes into the ground and getting mixed

up with the shrubs. A straight run-in would be much more convenient both

for the president and the drunk. Generally speaking--and here Police

experience is pretty much the same all over the civilised world--a

woman-drunk is a good deal worse than a man-drunk. She scratches and

bites like a Chinaman and swears like several fiends. Strange people may

be unearthed in the lock-ups. Here is a perfectly true story, not three

weeks old. A visitor, an unofficial one, wandered into the native side

of the spacious accommodation provided for those who have gone or done

wrong. A wild-eyed Babu rose from the fixed charpoy and said in the best

of English, "Good morning, sir." "\_Good\_ morning. Who are you, and what

are you in for?" Then the Babu, in one breath: "I would have you know

that I do not go to prison as a criminal but as a reformer. You've read

the \_Vicar of Wakefield\_?" "Ye-es." "Well, \_I\_ am the Vicar of

Bengal--at least that's what I call myself." The visitor collapsed. He

had not nerve enough to continue the conversation. Then said the voice

of the authority: "He's down in connection with a cheating case at

Serampore. May be shamming insane, but he'll be looked to in time."

The best place to hear about the Police is the fire look-out. From that

eyrie one can see how difficult must be the work of control over the

great, growling beast of a city. By all means let us abuse the Police,

but let us see what the poor wretches have to do with their three

thousand natives and one hundred Englishmen. From Howrah and Bally and

the other suburbs at least a hundred thousand people come in to Calcutta

for the day and leave at night. Then, too, Chandernagore is handy for

the fugitive law-breaker, who can enter in the evening and get away

before the noon of the next day, having marked his house and broken into

it.

"But how can the prevalent offence be house-breaking in a place like

this?" "Easily enough. When you've seen a little of the city you'll see.

Natives sleep and lie about all over the place, and whole quarters are

just so many rabbit-warrens. Wait till you see the Machua Bazar. Well,

besides the petty theft and burglary, we have heavy cases of forgery and

fraud, that leave us with our wits pitted against a Bengali's. When a

Bengali criminal is working a fraud of the sort he loves, he is about

the cleverest soul you could wish for. He gives us cases a year long to

unravel. Then there are the murders in the low houses--very curious

things they are. You'll see the house where Sheikh Babu was murdered

presently, and you'll understand. The Burra Bazar and Jora Bagan

sections are the two worst ones for heavy cases; but Colootollah is the

most aggravating. There's Colootollah over yonder--that patch of

darkness beyond the lights. That section is full of tuppenny-ha'penny

petty cases, that keep the men up all night and make 'em swear. You'll

see Colootollah, and then perhaps you'll understand. Bamun Bustee is the

quietest of all, and Lal Bazar and Bow Bazar, as you can see for

yourself, are the rowdiest. You've no notion what the natives come to

the police station for. A man will come on and want a summons against

his master for refusing him half-an-hour's leave. I suppose it \_does\_

seem rather revolutionary to an up-country man, but they try to do it

here. Now wait a minute, before we go down into the city and see the

Fire Brigade turned out. Business is slack with them just now, but you

time 'em and see." An order is given, and a bell strikes softly thrice.

There is a rush of men, the click of a bolt, a red fire-engine, spitting

and swearing with the sparks flying from the furnace, is dragged out of

its shelter. A huge brake, which holds supplementary horses, men, and

hatchets, follows, and a hose-cart is the third on the list. The men

push the heavy things about as though they were pith toys. The men

clamber up, some one says softly, "All ready there," and with an angry

whistle the fire-engine, followed by the other two, flies out into Lal

Bazar. Time--1 min. 40 secs. "They'll find out it's a false alarm, and

come back again in five minutes." "Why?" "Because there will be no

constables on the road to give 'em the direction of the fire, and

because the driver wasn't told the ward of the outbreak when he went

out!" "Do you mean to say that you can from this absurd pigeon-loft

locate the wards in the night-time?" "What would be the good of a

look-out if the man couldn't tell where the fire was?" "But it's all

pitchy black, and the lights are so confusing."

"You'll be more confused in ten minutes. You'll have lost your way as

you never lost it before. You're going to go round Bow Bazar section."

"And the Lord have mercy on my soul!" Calcutta, the darker portion of

it, does not look an inviting place to dive into at night.

CHAPTER VI

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT.

"And since they cannot spend or use aright

The little time here given them in trust,

But lavish it in weary undelight

Of foolish toil, and trouble, strife and lust--

They naturally clamour to inherit

The Everlasting Future--that their merit

May have full scope.... As surely is most just."

--\_The City of Dreadful Night.\_

The difficulty is to prevent this account from growing steadily

unwholesome. But one cannot rake through a big city without encountering

muck.

The Police kept their word. In five short minutes, as they had

prophesied, their charge was lost as he had never been lost before.

"Where are we now?" "Somewhere off the Chitpore Road, but you wouldn't

understand if you were told. Follow now, and step pretty much where we

step--there's a good deal of filth hereabouts."

The thick, greasy night shuts in everything. We have gone beyond the

ancestral houses of the Ghoses of the Boses, beyond the lamps, the

smells, and the crowd of Chitpore Road, and have come to a great

wilderness of packed houses--just such mysterious, conspiring tenements

as Dickens would have loved. There is no breeze here, and the air is

perceptibly warmer. If Calcutta keeps such luxuries as Commissioners of

Sewers and Paving, they die before they reach this place. The air is

heavy with a faint, sour stench--the essence of long-neglected

abominations--and it cannot escape from among the tall, three-storied

houses. "This, my dear Sir, is a \_perfectly\_ respectable quarter as

quarters go. That house at the head of the alley, with the elaborate

stucco-work round the top of the door, was built long ago by a

celebrated midwife. Great people used to live here once. Now it's

the--Aha! Look out for that carriage." A big mail-phaeton crashes out of

the darkness and, recklessly driven, disappears. The wonder is how it

ever got into this maze of narrow streets, where nobody seems to be

moving, and where the dull throbbing of the city's life only comes

faintly and by snatches. "Now it's the what?" "The St. John's Wood of

Calcutta--for the rich Babus. That 'fitton' belonged to one of them."

"Well, it's not much of a place to look at!" "Don't judge by

appearances. About here live the women who have beggared kings. We

aren't going to let you down into unadulterated vice all at once. You

must see it first with the gilding on--and mind that rotten board."

Stand at the bottom of a lift shaft and look upwards. Then you will get

both the size and the design of the tiny courtyard round which one of

these big dark houses is built. The central square may be perhaps ten

feet every way, but the balconies that run inside it overhang, and seem

to cut away half the available space. To reach the square a man must go

round many corners, down a covered-in way, and up and down two or three

baffling and confused steps. "Now you will understand," say the Police,

kindly, as their charge blunders, shin-first into a well-dark winding

staircase, "that these are not the sort of places to visit alone." "Who

wants to? Of all the disgusting, inaccessible dens--Holy Cupid, what's

this?"

A glare of light on the stair-head, a clink of innumerable bangles, a

rustle of much fine gauze, and the Dainty Iniquity stands revealed,

blazing--literally blazing--with jewellery from head to foot. Take one

of the fairest miniatures that the Delhi painters draw, and multiply it

by ten; throw in one of Angelica Kaufmann's best portraits, and add

anything that you can think of from Beckford to Lalla Rookh, and you

will still fall short of the merits of that perfect face! For an

instant, even the grim, professional gravity of the Police is relaxed in

the presence of the Dainty Iniquity with the gems, who so prettily

invites every one to be seated, and proffers such refreshments as she

conceives the palates of the barbarians would prefer. Her maids are only

one degree less gorgeous than she. Half a lakh, or fifty thousand

pounds' worth--it is easier to credit the latter statement than the

former--are disposed upon her little body. Each hand carries five

jewelled rings which are connected by golden chains to a great jewelled

boss of gold in the centre of the back of the hand. Ear-rings weighted

with emeralds and pearls, diamond nose-rings, and how many other hundred

articles make up the list of adornments. English furniture of a gorgeous

and gimcrack kind, unlimited chandeliers, and a collection of atrocious

Continental prints are scattered about the house, and on every landing

squats or loafs a Bengali who can talk English with unholy fluency. The

recurrence suggests--only suggests, mind--a grim possibility of the

affectation of excessive virtue by day, tempered with the sort of

unwholesome enjoyment after dusk--this loafing and lobbying and

chattering and smoking, and unless the bottles lie, tippling, among the

foul-tongued handmaidens of the Dainty Iniquity. How many men follow

this double, deleterious sort of life? The Police are discreetly dumb.

"Now don't go talking about 'domiciliary visits' just because this one

happens to be a pretty woman. We've \_got\_ to know these creatures. They

make the rich man and the poor spend their money; and when a man can't

get money for 'em honestly, he comes under \_our\_ notice. Now do you see?

If there was any domiciliary 'visit' about it, the whole houseful would

be hidden past our finding as soon as we turned up in the courtyard.

We're friends--to a certain extent." And, indeed, it seemed no difficult

thing to be friends to any extent with the Dainty Iniquity who was so

surpassingly different from all that experience taught of the beauty of

the East. Here was the face from which a man could write \_Lalla Rookhs\_

by the dozen, and believe every work that he wrote. Hers was the beauty

that Byron sang of when he wrote--

"Remember, if you come here alone, the chances are that you'll be

clubbed, or stuck, or, anyhow, mobbed. You'll understand that this part

of the world is shut to Europeans--absolutely. Mind the steps, and

follow on." The vision dies out in the smells and gross darkness of the

night, in evil, time-rotten brickwork, and another wilderness of shut-up

houses.

Follows, after another plunge into a passage of a courtyard, and up a

staircase, the apparition of a Fat Vice, in whom is no sort of romance,

nor beauty, but unlimited coarse humour. She too is studded with jewels,

and her house is even finer than the house of the other, and more

infested with the extraordinary men who speak such good English and are

so deferential to the Police. The Fat Vice has been a great leader of

fashion in her day, and stripped a zemindar Raja to his last

acre--insomuch that he ended in the House of Correction for a theft

committed for her sake. Native opinion has it that she is a "monstrous

well-preserved woman." On this point, as on some others, the races will

agree to differ.

The scene changes suddenly as a slide in a magic lantern. Dainty

Iniquity and Fat Vice slide away on a roll of streets and alleys, each

more squalid than its predecessor. We are "somewhere at the back of the

Machua Bazar," well in the heart of the city. There are no houses

here--nothing but acres and acres, it seems, of foul wattle-and-dab

huts, any one of which would be a disgrace to a frontier village. The

whole arrangement is a neatly contrived germ and fire trap, reflecting

great credit upon the Calcutta Municipality.

"What happens when these pigsties catch fire?" "They're built up again,"

say the Police, as though this were the natural order of things. "Land

is immensely valuable here." All the more reason, then, to turn several

Hausmanns loose into the city, with instructions to make barracks for

the population that cannot find room in the huts and sleeps in the open

ways, cherishing dogs and worse, much worse, in its unwashen bosom.

"Here is a licensed coffee-shop. This is where your servants go for

amusement and to see nautches." There is a huge thatch shed,

ingeniously ornamented with insecure kerosene lamps, and crammed with

drivers, cooks, small store-keepers and the like. Never a sign of a

European. Why? "Because if an Englishman messed about here, he'd get

into trouble. Men don't come here unless they're drunk or have lost

their way." The hack-drivers--they have the privilege of voting, have

they not?--look peaceful enough as they squat on tables or crowd by the

doors to watch the nautch that is going forward. Five pitiful

draggle-tails are huddled together on a bench under one of the lamps,

while the sixth is squirming and shrieking before the impassive crowd.

She sings of love as understood by the Oriental--the love that dries the

heart and consumes the liver. In this place, the words that would look

so well on paper have an evil and ghastly significance. The men stare or

sup tumblers and cups of a filthy decoction, and the \_kunchenee\_ howls

with renewed vigour in the presence of the Police. Where the Dainty

Iniquity was hung with gold and gems, she is trapped with pewter and

glass; and where there was heavy embroidery on the Fat Vice's dress,

defaced, stamped tinsel faithfully reduplicates the pattern on the

tawdry robes of the \_kunchenee\_.

Two or three men with uneasy consciences have quietly slipped out of the

coffee-shop into the mazes of the huts. The Police laugh, and those

nearest in the crowd laugh applausively, as in duty bound. Perhaps the

rabbits grin uneasily when the ferret lands at the bottom of the burrow

and begins to clear the warren.

"The \_chandoo\_-shops shut up at six, so you'll have to see

opium-smoking before dark some day. No, you won't, though." The

detective makes for a half-opened door of a hut whence floats the

fragrance of the Black Smoke. Those of the inhabitants who are able

promptly clear out--they have no love for the Police--and there remain

only four men lying down and one standing up. This latter has a pet

mongoose coiled round his neck. He speaks English fluently. Yes, he has

no fear. It was a private smoking party and--"No business to-night--show

how you smoke opium." "Aha! You want to see. Very good, I show. Hiya!

you"--he kicks a man on the floor--"show how opium-smoke." The kickee

grunts lazily and turns on his elbow. The mongoose, always keeping to

the man's neck, erects every hair of its body like an angry cat, and

chatters in its owner's ear. The lamp for the opium-pipe is the only one

in the room, and lights a scene as wild as anything in the witches'

revel; the mongoose acting as the familiar spirit. A voice from the

ground says, in tones of infinite weariness: "You take \_afim\_, so"--a

long, long pause, and another kick from the man possessed of the

devil--the mongoose. "You take \_afim\_?" He takes a pellet of the black,

treacly stuff on the end of a knitting-needle. "And light \_afim\_." He

plunges the pellet into the night-light, where it swells and fumes

greasily. "And then you put it in your pipe." The smoking pellet is

jammed into the tiny bowl of the thick, bamboo-stemmed pipe, and all

speech ceases, except the unearthly chitter of the mongoose. The man on

the ground is sucking at his pipe, and when the smoking pellet has

ceased to smoke will be half-way to \_Nibban\_. "Now you go," says the man

with the mongoose. "I am going smoke." The hut floor closes upon a

red-lit view of huddled legs and bodies, and the man with the mongoose

sinking, sinking on to his knees, his head bowed forward, and the little

hairy devil chattering on the nape of his neck.

After this the fetid night air seems almost cool, for the hut is as hot

as a furnace. "Now for Colootollah. Come through the huts. There is no

decoration about \_this\_ vice."

The huts now gave place to houses very tall and spacious and very dark.

But for the narrowness of the streets we might have stumbled upon

Chowringhi in the dark. An hour and a half has passed, and up to this

time we have not crossed our trail once. "You might knock about the city

for a night and never cross the same line. Recollect Calcutta isn't one

of your poky up-country cities of a lakh and a half of people." "How

long does it take to know it then?" "About a lifetime, and even then

some of the streets puzzle you." "How much has the head of a ward to

know?" "Every house in his ward if he can, who owns it, what sort of

character the inhabitants are, who are their friends, who go out and in,

who loaf about the place at night, and so on and so on." "And he knows

all this by night as well as by day?" "Of course. Why shouldn't he?" "No

reason in the world. Only it's pitchy black just now, and I'd like to

see where this alley is going to end." "Round the corner beyond that

dead wall. There's a lamp there. Then you'll be able to see." A shadow

flits out of a gulley and disappears. "Who's that?" "Sergeant of Police

just to see where we're going in case of accidents." Another shadow

staggers into the darkness. "Who's \_that\_?" "Soldier from the Fort or a

sailor from the ships. I couldn't quite see." The Police open a shut

door in a high wall, and stumble unceremoniously among a gang of women

cooking their food. The floor is of beaten earth, the steps that lead

into the upper stories are unspeakably grimy, and the heat is the heat

of April. The women rise hastily, and the light of the bull's eye--for

the Police have now lighted a lantern in regular London fashion--shows

six bleared faces--one a half-native half-Chinese one, and the others

Bengali. "There are no men here!" they cry. "The house is empty." Then

they grin and jabber and chew \_pan\_ and spit, and hurry up the steps

into the darkness. A range of three big rooms has been knocked into one

here, and there is some sort of arrangement of mats. But an average

country-bred is more sumptuously accommodated in an Englishman's stable.

A horse would snort at the accommodation.

"Nice sort of place, isn't it?" say the Police, genially. "This is where

the sailors get robbed and drunk." "They must be blind drunk before they

come." "Na--na! Na sailor men ee--yah!" chorus the women, catching at

the one word they understand. "Arl gone!" The Police take no notice, but

tramp down the big room with the mat loose-boxes. A woman is shivering

in one of these. "What's the matter?" "Fever. Seek. Vary, \_vary\_ seek."

She huddles herself into a heap on the \_charpoy\_ and groans.

A tiny, pitch-black closet opens out of the long room, and into this the

Police plunge. "Hullo! What's here?" Down flashes the lantern, and a

white hand with black nails comes out of the gloom. Somebody is asleep

or drunk in the cot. The ring of lantern light travels slowly up and

down the body. "A sailor from the ships. He'll be robbed before the

morning most likely." The man is sleeping like a little child, both arms

thrown over his head, and he is not unhandsome. He is shoeless, and

there are huge holes in his stockings. He is a pure-blooded white, and

carries the flush of innocent sleep on his cheeks.

The light is turned off, and the Police depart; while the woman in the

loose-box shivers, and moans that she is "seek; vary, \_vary\_ seek."

CHAPTER VII

DEEPER AND DEEPER STILL.

"I built myself a lordly pleasure-house,

Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;

I said:--'O Soul, make merry and carouse.

Dear Soul--for all is well.'"

--\_The Palace of Art.\_

"And where next? I don't like Colootollah." The Police and their charge

are standing in the interminable waste of houses under the starlight.

"To the lowest sink of all, but you wouldn't know if you were told."

They lead till they come to the last circle of the Inferno--a long,

quiet, winding road. "There you are; you can see for yourself."

But there is nothing to be seen. On one side are houses--gaunt and dark,

naked and devoid of furniture; on the other, low, mean stalls, lighted,

and with shamelessly open doors, where women stand and mutter and

whisper one to another. There is a hush here, or at least the busy

silence of an officer of counting-house in working hours. One look down

the street is sufficient. Lead on, gentlemen of the Calcutta Police. We

do not love the lines of open doors, the flaring lamps within, the

glimpses of the tawdry toilet-tables adorned with little plaster dogs,

glass balls from Christmas-trees, and--for religion must not be despised

though women be fallen--pictures of the saints and statuettes of the

Virgin. The street is a long one, and other streets, full of the same

pitiful wares, branch off from it.

"Why are they so quiet? Why don't they make a row and sing and shout,

and so on?" "Why should they, poor devils?" say the Police, and fall to

telling tales of horror, of women decoyed and shot into this trap. Then

other tales that shatter one's belief in all things and folk of good

repute. "How can you Police have faith in humanity?"

"That's because you're seeing it all in a lump for the first time, and

it's not nice that way. Makes a man jump rather, doesn't it? But,

recollect, you've \_asked\_ for the worst places, and you can't complain."

"Who's complaining? Bring on your atrocities. Isn't that a European

woman at that door?" "Yes. Mrs. D----, widow of a soldier, mother of

seven children." "Nine, if you please, and good evening to you," shrills

Mrs. D----, leaning against the door-post, her arms folded on her bosom.

She is a rather pretty, slightly made Eurasian, and whatever shame she

may have owned she has long since cast behind her. A shapeless

Burmo-native trot, with high cheek-bones and mouth like a shark, calls

Mrs. D---- "Mem-Sahib." The word jars unspeakably. Her life is a matter

between herself and her Maker, but in that she--the widow of a soldier

of the Queen--has stooped to this common foulness in the face of the

city, she has offended against the White race. "You're from up-country,

and of course you don't understand. There are any amount of that lot in

the city, say the Police." Then the secret of the insolence of Calcutta

is made plain. Small wonder the natives fail to respect the Sahib,

seeing what they see and knowing what they know. In the good old days,

the Honourable the Directors deported him or her who misbehaved grossly,

and the white man preserved his face. He may have been a ruffian, but he

was a ruffian on a large scale. He did not sink in the presence of the

people. The natives are quite right to take the wall of the Sahib who

has been at great pains to prove that he is of the same flesh and blood.

All this time Mrs. D---- stands on the threshold of her room and looks

upon the men with unabashed eyes. Mrs. D---- is a lady with a story. She

is not averse to telling it. "What was--ahem--the case in which you

were--er--hmn--concerned, Mrs. D----?" "They said I'd poisoned my

husband by putting something into his drinking water." This is

interesting. "And--ah--\_did\_ you?" "'Twasn't proved," says Mrs. D----

with a laugh, a pleasant, lady-like laugh that does infinite credit to

her education and upbringing. Worthy Mrs. D----! It would pay a

novelist--a French one let us say--to pick you out of the stews and make

you talk.

The Police move forward, into a region of Mrs. D----'s. Everywhere are

the empty houses, and the babbling women in print gowns. The clocks in

the city are close upon midnight, but the Police show no signs of

stopping. They plunge hither and thither, like wreckers into the surf;

and each plunge brings up a sample of misery, filth, and woe.

A woman--Eurasian--rises to a sitting position on a cot and blinks

sleepily at the Police. Then she throws herself down with a grunt.

"What's the matter with you?" "I live in Markiss Lane and"--this with

intense gravity--"I'm \_so\_ drunk." She has a rather striking gipsy-like

face, but her language might be improved.

"Come along," say the Police, "we'll head back to Bentinck Street, and

put you on the road to the Great Eastern." They walk long and steadily,

and the talk falls on gambling hells. "You ought to see our men rush one

of 'em. When we've marked a hell down, we post men at the entrances and

carry it. Sometimes the Chinese bite, but as a rule they fight fair.

It's a pity we hadn't a hell to show you. Let's go in here--there may be

something forward." "Here" appears to be in the heart of a Chinese

quarter, for the pigtails--do they ever go to bed?--are scuttling about

the streets. "Never go into a Chinese place alone," say the Police, and

swing open a postern gate in a strong, green door. Two Chinamen appear.

"What are we going to see?" "Japanese gir--No, we aren't, by Jove! Catch

that Chinaman, \_quick\_." The pigtail is trying to double back across a

courtyard into an inner chamber; but a large hand on his shoulder spins

him round and puts him in rear of the line of advancing Englishmen, who

are, be it observed, making a fair amount of noise with their boots. A

second door is thrown open, and the visitors advance into a large,

square room blazing with gas. Here thirteen pigtails, deaf and blind to

the outer world, are bending over a table. The captured Chinaman dodges

uneasily in the rear of the procession. Five--ten--fifteen seconds pass,

the Englishmen standing in the full light less than three paces from the

absorbed gang who see nothing. Then the burly Superintendent brings his

hand down on his thigh with a crack like a pistol-shot and shouts: "How

do, John?" Follows a frantic rush of scared Celestials, almost tumbling

over each other in their anxiety to get clear. One pigtail scoops up a

pile of copper money, another a chinaware soup-bowl, and only a little

mound of accusing cowries remains on the white matting that covers the

table. In less than half a minute two facts are forcibly brought home to

the visitor. First, that a pigtail is largely composed of silk, and

rasps the palm of the hand as it slides through; and secondly, that the

forearm of a Chinaman is surprisingly muscular and well-developed.

"What's going to be done?" "Nothing. There are only three of us, and all

the ringleaders would get away. We've got 'em safe any time we want to

catch 'em, if this little visit doesn't make 'em shift their quarters.

Hi! John. No pidgin to-night. Show how you makee play. That fat

youngster there is our informer."

Half the pigtails have fled into the darkness, but the remainder assured

and trebly assured that the Police really mean "no pidgin," return to

the table and stand round while the croupier manipulates the cowries,

the little curved slip of bamboo, and the soup-bowl. They never gamble,

these innocents. They only come to look on, and smoke opium in the next

room. Yet as the game progresses their eyes light up, and one by one put

their money on odd or even--the number of the cowries that are covered

and left uncovered by the little soup-bowl. \_Mythan\_ is the name of the

amusement, and, whatever may be its demerits, it is clean. The Police

look on while their charge plays and loots a parchment-skinned

horror--one of Swift's Struldburgs, strayed from Laputa--of the enormous

sum of two annas. The return of this wealth, doubled, sets the loser

beating his forehead against the table from sheer gratitude.

"Most immoral game this. A man might drop five whole rupees, if he began

playing at sun-down and kept it up all night. Don't you ever play whist

occasionally?"

"Now, we didn't bring you round to make fun of this department. A man

can lose as much as ever he likes and he can fight as well, and if he

loses all his money he steals to get more. A Chinaman is insane about

gambling, and half his crime comes from it. It \_must\_ be kept down. Here

we are in Bentinck Street and you can be driven to the Great Eastern in

a few minutes. Joss houses? Oh, yes. If you want more horrors,

Superintendent Lamb will take you round with him to-morrow afternoon at

five. Good night."

The Police depart, and in a few minutes the silent respectability of Old

Council House Street, with the grim Free Kirk at the end of it, is

reached. All good Calcutta has gone to bed, the last tram has passed,

and the peace of the night is upon the world. Would it be wise and

rational to climb the spire of that kirk, and shout: "O true believers!

Decency is a fraud and a sham. There is nothing clean or pure or

wholesome under the stars, and we are all going to perdition together.

Amen!" On second thoughts it would not; for the spire is slippery, the

night is hot, and the Police have been specially careful to warn their

charge that he must not be carried away by the sight of horrors that

cannot be written or hinted at.

"Good morning," says the Policeman tramping the pavement in front of the

Great Eastern, and he nods his head pleasantly to show that he is the

representative of Law and Peace and that the city of Calcutta is safe

from itself for the present.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING LUCIA.

Time must be filled in somehow till five this afternoon, when

Superintendent Lamb will reveal more horrors. Why not, the trams aiding,

go to the Old Park Street Cemetery?

"You want go Park Street? No trams going Park Street. You get out

\_here\_." Calcutta tram conductors are not polite. The car shuffles

unsympathetically down the street, and the evicted is stranded in

Dhurrumtollah, which may be the Hammersmith Highway of Calcutta.

Providence arranged this mistake, and paved the way to a Great Discovery

now published for the first time. Dhurrumtollah is full of the People of

India, walking in family parties and groups and confidential couples.

And the people of India are neither Hindu nor Mussulman--Jew, Ethiop,

Gueber, or expatriated British. They are the Eurasians, and there are

hundreds and hundreds of them in Dhurrumtollah now. There is Papa with a

shining black hat fit for a counsellor of the Queen, and Mamma, whose

silken dress is tight upon her portly figure, and The Brood made up of

straw-hatted, olive-cheeked, sharp-eyed little boys, and leggy maidens

wearing white, open-work stockings calculated to show dust. There are

the young men who smoke bad cigars and carry themselves lordily--such

as have incomes. There are also the young women with the beautiful eyes

and the wonderful dresses which always fit so badly across the

shoulders. And they carry prayer-books or baskets, because they are

either going to mass or the market. Without doubt, these are the People

of India. They were born in it, bred in it, and will die in it. The

Englishman only comes to the country, and the natives of course were

there from the first, but these people have been made here, and no one

has done anything for them except talk and write about them. Yet they

belong, some of them, to old and honourable families, hold houses in

Sealdah, and are rich, a few of them. They all look prosperous and

contented, and they chatter eternally in that curious dialect that no

one has yet reduced to print. Beyond what little they please to reveal

now and again in the newspapers, we know nothing about their life which

touches so intimately the White on the one hand and the Black on the

other. It must be interesting--more interesting than the colourless

Anglo-Indian article; but who has treated of it? There was one novel

once in which the second heroine was an Eurasienne. She was a strictly

subordinate character, and came to a sad end. The poet of the race,

Henry Derozio,--he of whom Mr. Thomas Edwards wrote a history,--was

bitten with Keats and Scott and Shelley, and overlooked in his search

for material things that lay nearest to him. All this mass of humanity

in Dhurrumtollah is unexploited and almost unknown. Wanted, therefore, a

writer from among the Eurasians, who shall write so that men shall be

pleased to read a story of Eurasian life; then outsiders will be

interested in the People of India, and will admit that the race has

possibilities.

A futile attempt to get to Park Street from Dhurrumtollah ends in the

market--the Hogg Market men call it. Perhaps a knight of that name built

it. It is not one-half as pretty as the Crawford Market, in Bombay, but

... it appears to be the trysting place of Young Calcutta. The natural

inclination of youth is to lie abed late, and to let the seniors do all

the hard work. Why, therefore, should Pyramus, who has to be ruling

account forms at ten, and Thisbe, who \_cannot\_ be interested in the

price of second-quality beef, wander, in studiously correct raiment,

round and about the stalls before the sun is well clear of the earth?

Pyramus carries a walking stick with imitation silver straps upon it,

and there are cloth tops to his boots; but his collar has been two days

worn. Thisbe crowns her dark head with a blue velvet Tam-o'-Shanter; but

one of her boots lacks a button, and there is a tear in the left-hand

glove. Mamma, who despises gloves, is rapidly filling a shallow basket,

that the coolie-boy carries, with vegetables, potatoes, purple brinjals,

and--Oh, Pyramus! Do you ever kiss Thisbe when Mamma is not

by?--garlic--yea, \_lusson\_ of the bazaar! Mamma is generous in her views

on garlic. Pyramus comes round the corner of the stall looking for

nobody in particular--not he--and is elaborately polite to Mamma.

Somehow, he and Thisbe drift off together, and Mamma, very portly and

very voluble, is left to chaffer and sort and select alone. In the name

of the Sacred Unities do not, young people, retire to the meat-stalls to

exchange confidences! Come up to this end, where the roses are arriving

in great flat baskets, where the air is heavy with the fragrance of

flowers, and the young buds and greenery are littering all the floor.

They won't--they prefer talking by the dead, unromantic muttons, where

there are not so many buyers. There must have been a quarrel to make up.

Thisbe shakes the blue velvet Tam-o'-Shanter and says, "Oah yess!"

scornfully. Pyramus answers: "No-a, no-a. Do-ant say thatt." Mamma's

basket is full and she picks up Thisbe hastily. Pyramus departs. \_He\_

never came here to do any marketing. He came to meet Thisbe, who in ten

years will own a figure very much like Mamma's. May their ways be smooth

before them, and after honest service of the Government, may Pyramus

retire on 250 rupees per mensem, into a nice little house somewhere in

Monghyr or Chunar!

From love by natural sequence to death. Where \_is\_ the Park Street

Cemetery? A hundred hack-drivers leap from their boxes and invade the

market, and after a short struggle one of them uncarts his capture in a

burial-ground--a ghastly new place, close to a tramway. This is not what

is wanted. The living dead are here--the people whose names are not yet

altogether perished and whose tombstones are tended. "Where are the

\_old\_ dead?" "Nobody goes there," says the driver. "It is up that road."

He points up a long and utterly deserted thoroughfare, running between

high walls. This is the place, and the entrance to it, with its gardener

waiting with one brown, battered rose for the visitor, its grilled door

and its professional notices, bears a hideous likeness to the entrance

of Simla churchyard. But, once inside, the sightseer stands in the heart

of utter desolation--all the more forlorn for being swept up. Lower

Park Street cuts a great graveyard in two. The guide-books will tell you

when the place was opened and when it was closed. The eye is ready to

swear that it is as old as Herculaneum and Pompeii. The tombs are small

houses. It is as though we walked down the streets of a town, so tall

are they and so closely do they stand--a town shrivelled by fire, and

scarred by frost and siege. Men must have been afraid of their friends

rising up before the due time that they weighted them with such cruel

mounds of masonry. Strong man, weak woman, or somebody's "infant son

aged fifteen months," for each the squat obelisk, the defaced classic

temple, the cellaret of chunam, or the candlestick of brickwork--the

heavy slab, the rust-eaten railings, the whopper-jawed cherubs, and the

apoplectic angels. Men were rich in those days and could afford to put a

hundred cubic feet of masonry into the grave of even so humble a person

as "Jno. Clements, Captain of the Country Service, 1820." When the

"dearly beloved" had held rank answering to that of Commissioner, the

efforts are still more sumptuous and the verse.... Well, the following

speaks for itself:--

"Soft on thy tomb shall fond Remembrance shed

The warm yet unavailing tear,

And purple flowers that deck the honoured dead

Shall strew the loved and honoured bier."

Failure to comply with the contract does not, let us hope, entail

forfeiture of the earnest-money; or the honoured dead might be grieved.

The slab is out of his tomb, and leans foolishly against it; the

railings are rotted, and there are no more lasting ornaments than

blisters and stains, which are the work of the weather, and not the

result of the "warm yet unavailing tear."

Let us go about and moralise cheaply on the tombstones, trailing the

robe of pious reflection up and down the pathways of the grave. Here is

a big and stately tomb sacred to "Lucia," who died in 1776 A.D., aged

23. Here also be lichened verses which an irreverent thumb can bring to

light. Thus they wrote, when their hearts were heavy in them, one

hundred and sixteen years ago:--

"What needs the emblem, what the plaintive strain,

What all the arts that sculpture e'er expressed,

To tell the treasure that these walls contain?

Let those declare it most who knew her best.

"The tender pity she would oft display

Shall be with interest at her shrine returned,

Connubial love, connubial tears repay,

And Lucia loved shall still be Lucia mourned.

"Though closed the lips, though stopped the tuneful breath,

The silent, clay-cold monitress shall teach--

In all the alarming eloquence of death

With double pathos to the heart shall preach.

"Shall teach the virtuous maid, the faithful wife,

If young and fair, that young and fair was she,

Then close the useful lesson of her life,

And tell them what she is, they soon must be."

That goes well, even after all these years, does it not? and seems to

bring Lucia very near, in spite of what the later generation is pleased

to call the stiltedness of the old-time verse.

Who will declare the merits of Lucia--dead in her spring before there

was even a \_Hickey's Gazette\_ to chronicle the amusements of Calcutta,

and publish, with scurrilous asterisks, the \_liaisons\_ of heads of

departments? What pot-bellied East Indiaman brought the "virtuous maid"

up the river, and did Lucia "make her bargain" as the cant of those

times went, on the first, second, or third day after her arrival? Or did

she, with the others of the batch, give a spinsters' ball as a last

trial--following the custom of the country? No. She was a fair Kentish

maiden, sent out, at a cost of five hundred pounds, English money, under

the captain's charge, to wed the man of her choice, and \_he\_ knew Clive

well, had had dealings with Omichand, and talked to men who had lived

through the terrible night in the Black Hole. He was a rich man, Lucia's

battered tomb proves it, and he gave Lucia all that her heart could

wish: a green-painted boat to take the air in on the river of evenings.

Coffree slave-boys who could play on the French horn, and even a very

elegant, neat coach with a genteel rutlan roof ornamented with flowers

very highly finished, ten best polished plate glasses, ornamented with a

few elegant medallions enriched with mother-o'-pearl, that she might

take her drive on the course as befitted a factor's wife. All these

things he gave her. And when the convoys came up the river, and the guns

thundered, and the servants of the Honourable the East India Company

drank to the king's health, be sure that Lucia before all the other

ladies in the Fort had her choice of the new stuffs from England and was

cordially hated in consequence. Tilly Kettle painted her picture a

little before she died, and the hot-blooded young writers did duel with

small swords in the fort ditch for the honour of piloting her through a

minuet at the Calcutta theatre or the Punch House. But Warren Hastings

danced with her instead, and the writers were confounded--every man of

them. She was a toast far up the river. And she walked in the evening on

the bastions of Fort William, and said, "La! I protest!" It was there

that she exchanged congratulations with all her friends on the 20th of

October, when those who were alive gathered together to felicitate

themselves on having come through another hot season; and the men--even

the sober factor saw no wrong here--got most royally and Britishly drunk

on Madeira that had twice rounded the Cape. But Lucia fell sick, and the

doctor--he who went home after seven years with five lakhs and a half,

and a corner of this vast graveyard to his account--said that it was a

pukka or putrid fever, and the system required strengthening. So they

fed Lucia on hot curries, and mulled wine worked up with spirits and

fortified with spices, for nearly a week; at the end of which time she

closed her eyes on the weary river and the Fort for ever, and a gallant,

with a turn for \_belles-lettres\_, wept openly as men did then and had no

shame of it, and composed the verses above set, and thought himself a

neat hand at the pen--stap his vitals! But the factor was so grieved

that he could write nothing at all--could only spend his money--and he

counted his wealth by lakhs--on a sumptuous grave. A little later on he

took comfort, and when the next batch came out--

But this has nothing whatever to do with the story of Lucia, the

virtuous maid, the faithful wife. Her ghost went to a big Calcutta

Powder Ball that very night, and looked very beautiful. I met her.

AMONG THE RAILWAY FOLK

CHAPTER I

MAR., 1888

A RAILWAY SETTLEMENT.

Jamalpur is the headquarters of the East India Railway. This in itself

is not a startling statement. The wonder begins with the exploration of

Jamalpur, which is a station entirely made by, and devoted to, the use

of those untiring servants of the public, the railway folk. They have

towns of their own at Toondla and Assensole; a sun-dried sanitarium at

Bandikui; and Howrah, Ajmir, Allahabad, Lahore, and Pindi know their

colonies. But Jamalpur is unadulteratedly "Railway," and he who has

nothing to do with the E. I. Railway in some shape or another feels a

stranger and an interloper. Running always east and southerly, the train

carries him from the torments of the northwest into the wet, woolly

warmth of Bengal, where may be found the hothouse heat that has ruined

the temper of the good people of Calcutta. The land is fat and greasy

with good living, and the wealth of the bodies of innumerable dead

things; and here--just above Mokameh--may be seen fields stretching,

without stick, stone, or bush to break the view, from the railway line

to the horizon.

Up-country innocents must look at the map to learn that Jamalpur is near

the top left-hand corner of the big loop that the E. I. R. throws out

round Bhagalpur and part of the Bara-Banki districts. Northward of

Jamalpur, as near as may be, lies the Ganges and Tirhoot, and eastward

an offshoot of the volcanic Rajmehal range blocks the view.

A station which has neither Judge, Commissioner, Deputy, or 'Stunt,

which is devoid of law courts, \_ticca-gharies\_, District Superintendents

of Police, and many other evidences of an over-cultured civilisation, is

a curiosity. "We administer ourselves," says Jamalpur, proudly, "or we

did--till we had local self-government in--and now the racket-marker

administers us." This is a solemn fact. The station, which had its

beginnings thirty odd years ago, used, till comparatively recent times,

to control its own roads, sewage, conservancy, and the like. But, with

the introduction of local self-government, it was ordained that the

"inestimable boon" should be extended to a place made by, and maintained

for, Europeans, and a brand-new municipality was created and nominated

according to the many rules of the game. In the skirmish that ensued,

the Club racket-marker fought his way to the front, secured a place on a

board largely composed of Babus, and since that day Jamalpur's views on

government have not been fit for publication. To understand the

magnitude of the insult, one must study the city--for station, in the

strict sense of the word, it is not. Crotons, palms, mangoes,

\_mellingtonias\_, teak, and bamboos adorn it, and the \_poinsettia\_ and

\_bougainvillea\_, the railway creeper and the \_bignonia venusta\_, make it

gay with many colours. It is laid out with military precision to each

house its just share of garden, its red brick path, its growth of

trees, and its neat little wicket gate. Its general aspect, in spite of

the Dutch formality, is that of an English village, such a thing as

enterprising stage-managers put on the theatres at home. The hills have

thrown a protecting arm round nearly three sides of it, and on the

fourth it is bounded by what are locally known as the "sheds"; in other

words, the station, offices, and workshops of the company. The E. I. R.

only exists for outsiders. Its servants speak of it reverently, angrily,

despitefully, or enthusiastically as "The Company"; and they never omit

the big, big C. Men must have treated the Honourable the East India

Company in something the same fashion ages ago. "The Company" in

Jamalpur is Lord Dufferin, all the Members of Council, the Body-Guard,

Sir Frederick Roberts, Mr. Westland, whose name is at the bottom of the

currency notes, the Oriental Life Assurance Company, and the Bengal

Government all rolled into one. At first, when a stranger enters this

life, he is inclined to scoff and ask, in his ignorance, "\_What\_ is this

Company that you talk so much about?" Later on, he ceases to scoff; for

the Company is a "big" thing--almost big enough to satisfy an American.

Ere beginning to describe its doings, let it be written, and repeated

several times hereafter, that the E. I. R. passenger carriages, and

especially the second-class, are just now horrid--being filthy and

unwashen, dirty to look at, and dirty to live in. Having cast this small

stone, we will examine Jamalpur. When it was laid out, in or before the

Mutiny year, its designers allowed room for growth, and made the houses

of one general design--some of brick, some of stone, some three, four,

and six roomed, some single men's barracks and some two-storied--all for

the use of the employÃ©s. King's Road, Prince's Road, Queen's Road, and

Victoria Road--Jamalpur is loyal--cut the breadth of the station; and

Albert Road, Church Street, and Steam Road the length of it. Neither on

these roads or on any of the cool-shaded smaller ones is anything

unclean or unsightly to be found. There is a dreary village in the

neighbourhood which is said to make the most of any cholera that may be

going, but Jamalpur itself is specklessly and spotlessly neat. From St.

Mary's Church to the railway station, and from the buildings where they

print daily about half a lakh of tickets, to the ringing, roaring,

rattling workshops, everything has the air of having been cleaned up at

ten that very morning and put under a glass case. There is a holy calm

about the roads--totally unlike anything in an English manufacturing

town. Wheeled conveyances are few, because every man's bungalow is close

to his work, and when the day has begun and the offices of the "Loco."

and "Traffic" have soaked up their thousands of natives and hundreds of

Europeans, you shall pass under the dappled shadows of the trees,

hearing nothing louder than the croon of some bearer playing with a

child in the verandah or the faint tinkle of a piano. This is pleasant,

and produces an impression of Watteau-like refinement tempered with

Arcadian simplicity. The dry, anguished howl of the "buzzer," the big

steam-whistle, breaks the hush, and all Jamalpur is alive with the

tramping of tiffin-seeking feet. The Company gives one hour for meals

between eleven and twelve. On the stroke of noon there is another rush

back to the works or the offices, and Jamalpur sleeps through the

afternoon till four or half-past, and then rouses for tennis at the

institute.

In the hot weather it splashes in the swimming bath, or reads, for it

has a library of several thousand books. One of the most nourishing

lodges in the Bengal jurisdiction--"St. George in the East"--lives at

Jamalpur, and meets twice a month. Its members point out with

justifiable pride that all the fittings were made by their own hands;

and the lodge in its accoutrements and the energy of the craftsmen can

compare with any in India. But the institute is the central gathering

place, and its half-dozen tennis-courts and neatly-laid-out grounds seem

to be always full. Here, if a stranger could judge, the greater part of

the flirtation of Jamalpur is carried out, and here the dashing

apprentice--the apprentices are the liveliest of all--learns that there

are problems harder than any he studies at the night school, and that

the heart of a maiden is more inscrutable than the mechanism of a

locomotive. On Tuesdays and Fridays, the volunteers parade. A and B

Companies, 150 strong in all, of the E. I. R. Volunteers, are stationed

here with the band. Their uniform, grey with red facings, is not lovely,

but they know how to shoot and drill. They have to. The "Company" makes

it a condition of service that a man must be a volunteer; and volunteer

in something more than name he must be, or some one will ask the reason

why. Seeing that there are no regulars between Howrah and Dinapore, the

"Company" does well in exacting this toll. Some of the old soldiers are

wearied of drill, some of the youngsters don't like it, but--the way

they entrain and detrain is worth seeing. They are as mobile a corps as

can be desired, and perhaps ten or twelve years hence the Government may

possibly be led to take a real interest in them and spend a few thousand

rupees in providing them with real soldiers' kits--not uniform and rifle

merely. Their ranks include all sorts and conditions of men--heads of

the "Loco." and "Traffic," the "Company" is no respecter of rank--clerks

in the "audit," boys from mercantile firms at home, fighting with the

intricacies of time, fare, and freight tables; guards who have grown

grey in the service of the Company; mail and passenger drivers with

nerves of cast-iron, who can shoot through a long afternoon without

losing temper or flurrying; light-blue East Indians; Tyne-side men, slow

of speech and uncommonly strong in the arm; lathy apprentices who have

not yet "filled out"; fitters, turners, foremen, full, assistant, and

sub-assistant station-masters, and a host of others. In the hands of the

younger men the regulation Martini-Henri naturally goes off the line

occasionally on hunting expeditions.

There is a twelve-hundred yards' range running down one side of the

station, and the condition of the grass by the firing butts tells its

own tale. Scattered in the ranks of the volunteers are a fair number of

old soldiers, for the Company has a weakness for recruiting from the

Army for its guards who may, in time, become station-masters. A good man

from the Army, with his papers all correct and certificates from his

commanding officer, can, after depositing twenty pounds to pay his home

passage, in the event of his services being dispensed with, enter the

Company's service on something less than one hundred rupees a month and

rise in time to four hundred as a station-master. A railway

bungalow--and they are as substantially built as the engines--will cost

him more than one-ninth of the pay of his grade, and the Provident Fund

provides for his latter end.

Think for a moment of the number of men that a line running from Howrah

to Delhi must use, and you will realise what an enormous amount of

patronage the Company holds in its hands. Naturally a father who has

worked for the line expects the line to do something for the son; and

the line is not backward in meeting his wishes where possible. The sons

of old servants may be taken on at fifteen years of age, or thereabouts,

as apprentices in the "shops," receiving twenty rupees in the first and

fifty in the last year, of their indentures. Then they come on the books

as full "men" on perhaps Rs. 65 a month, and the road is open to them in

many ways. They may become foremen of departments on Rs. 500 a month, or

drivers earning with overtime Rs. 370; or if they have been brought into

the audit or the traffic, they may control innumerable Babus and draw

several hundreds of rupees monthly; or, at eighteen or nineteen, they

may be ticket-collectors, working up to the grade of guard, etc. Every

rank of the huge, human hive has a desire to see its sons placed

properly, and the native workmen, about three thousand, in the

locomotive department only, are, said one man, "making a family affair

of it altogether. You see all those men turning brass and looking after

the machinery? They've all got relatives, and a lot of 'em own land out

Monghyr-way close to us. They bring on their sons as soon as they are

old enough to do anything, and the Company rather encourages it. You see

the father is in a way responsible for his son, and he'll teach him all

he knows, and in that way the Company has a hold on them all. You've no

notion how sharp a native is when he's working on his own hook. All the

district round here, right up to Monghyr, is more or less dependent on

the railway."

The Babus in the traffic department, in the stores, issue department, in

all the departments where men sit through the long, long Indian day

among ledgers, and check and pencil and deal in figures and items and

rupees, may be counted by hundreds. Imagine the struggle among them to

locate their sons in comfortable cane-bottomed chairs, in front of a big

pewter inkstand and stacks of paper! The Babus make beautiful

accountants, and if we could only see it, a merciful Providence has made

the Babu for figures and detail. Without him, the dividends of any

company would be eaten up by the expenses of English or city-bred

clerks. The Babu is a great man, and, to respect him, you must see five

score or so of him in a room a hundred yards long, bending over ledgers,

ledgers, and yet more ledgers--silent as the Sphinx and busy as a bee.

He is the lubricant of the great machinery of the Company whose ways and

works cannot be dealt with in a single scrawl.

CHAPTER II

THE SHOPS.

The railway folk, like the army and civilian castes, have their own

language and life, which an outsider cannot hope to understand. For

instance, when Jamalpur refers to itself as being "on the Long Siding,"

a lengthy explanation is necessary before the visitor grasps the fact

that the whole of the two hundred and thirty odd miles of the loop from

Luckeeserai to Kanu-Junction \_via\_ Bhagalpur is thus contemptuously

treated. Jamalpur insists that it is out of the world, and makes this an

excuse for being proud of itself and all its institutions. But in one

thing it is badly, disgracefully provided. At a moderate estimate there

must be about two hundred Europeans with their families in this place.

They can, and do, get their small supplies from Calcutta, but they are

dependent on the tender mercies of the bazaar for their meat, which

seems to be hawked from door to door. There is a Raja who owns or has an

interest in the land on which the station stands, and he is averse to

cow-killing. For these reasons, Jamalpur is not too well supplied with

good meat, and what it wants is a decent meat-market with cleanly

controlled slaughtering arrangements. The "Company," who gives grants to

the schools and builds the institute and throws the shadow of its

protection all over the place, might help this scheme forward.

The heart of Jamalpur is the "shops," and here a visitor will see more

things in an hour than he can understand in a year. Steam Street very

appropriately leads to the forty or fifty acres that the "shops" cover,

and to the busy silence of the loco. superintendent's office, where, a

man must put down his name and his business on a slip of paper before he

can penetrate into the Temple of Vulcan. About three thousand five

hundred men are in the "shops," and, ten minutes after the day's work

has begun, the assistant superintendent knows exactly how many are "in."

The heads of departments--silent, heavy-handed men, captains of five

hundred or more--have their names fairly printed on a board which is

exactly like a pool-marker. They "star a life" when they come in, and

their few names alone represent salaries to the extent of six thousand a

month. They are men worth hearing deferentially. They hail from

Manchester and the Clyde, and the great ironworks of the North: pleasant

as cold water in a thirsty land is it to hear again the full

Northumbrian burr or the long-drawn Yorkshire "aye." Under their great

gravity of demeanour--a man who is in charge of a few lakhs' worth of

plant cannot afford to be riotously mirthful--lurks melody and humour.

They can sing like north-countrymen, and in their hours of ease go back

to the speech of the Iron countries they have left behind, when "Ab o'

th' yate" and all "Ben Briarly's" shrewd wit shakes the warm air of

Bengal with deep-chested laughter. Hear "Ruglan' Toon," with a chorus as

true as the fall of trip-hammers, and fancy that you are back again in

the smoky, rattling, ringing North!

But this is the "unofficial" side. Go forward through the gates under

the mango trees, and set foot at once in sheds which have as little to

do with mangoes as a locomotive with Lakshmi. The "buzzer" howls, for it

is nearly tiffin time. There is a rush from every quarter of the shops,

a cloud of flying natives, and a procession of more sedately pacing

Englishmen, and in three short minutes you are left absolutely alone

among arrested wheels and belts, pulleys, cranks, and cranes--in a

silence only broken by the soft sigh of a far-away steam-valve or the

cooing of pigeons. You are, by favour freely granted, at liberty to

wander anywhere you please through the deserted works. Walk into a huge,

brick-built, tin-roofed stable, capable of holding twenty-four

locomotives under treatment, and see what must be done to the Iron Horse

once in every three years if he is to do his work well. On reflection,

Iron Horse is wrong. An engine is a she--as distinctly feminine as a

ship or a mine. Here stands the \_Echo\_, her wheels off, resting on

blocks, her underside machinery taken out, and her side scrawled with

mysterious hieroglyphics in chalk. An enormous green-painted iron

harness-rack bears her piston and eccentric rods, and a neatly painted

board shows that such and such Englishmen are the fitter, assistant, and

apprentice engaged in editing that \_Echo\_. An engine seen from the

platform and an engine viewed from underneath are two very different

things. The one is as unimpressive as a cart; the other as imposing as a

man-of-war in the yard.

In this manner is an engine treated for navicular, laminitis,

back-sinew, or whatever it is that engines most suffer from. No. 607, we

will say, goes wrong at Dinapore, Assensole, Buxar, or wherever it may

be, after three years' work. The place she came from is stencilled on

the boiler, and the foreman examines her. Then he fills in a hospital

sheet, which bears one hundred and eighty printed heads under which an

engine can come into the shops. No. 607 needs repair in only one hundred

and eighteen particulars, ranging from mud-hole-flanges and blower-cocks

to lead-plugs, and platform brackets which have shaken loose. This

certificate the foreman signs, and it is framed near the engine for the

benefit of the three Europeans and the eight or nine natives who have to

mend No. 607. To the ignorant the superhuman wisdom of the examiner

seems only equalled by the audacity of the two men and the boy who are

to undertake what is frivolously called the "job." No. 607 is in a

sorely mangled condition, but 403 is much worse. She is reduced to a

shell--is a very elle-woman of an engine, bearing only her funnel, the

iron frame and the saddle that supports the boiler.

Four-and-twenty engines in every stage of decomposition stand in one

huge shop. A travelling crane runs overhead, and the men have hauled up

one end of a bright vermilion loco. The effect is the silence of a

scornful stare--just such a look as a colonel's portly wife gives

through her \_pince-nez\_ at the audacious subaltern. Engines are the

"livest" things that man ever made. They glare through their

spectacle-plates, they tilt their noses contemptuously, and when their

insides are gone they adorn themselves with red lead, and leer like

decayed beauties; and in the Jamalpur works there is no escape from

them. The shops can hold fifty without pressure, and on occasion as many

again. Everywhere there are engines, and everywhere brass domes lie

about on the ground like huge helmets in a pantomime. The silence is the

weirdest touch of all. Some sprightly soul--an apprentice be sure--has

daubed in red lead on the end of an iron tool-box a caricature of some

friend who is evidently a riveter. The picture has all the interest of

an Egyptian cartouche, for it shows that men have been here, and that

the engines do not have it all their own way.

And so, out in the open, away from the three great sheds, between and

under more engines, till we strike a wilderness of lines all converging

to one turn-table. Here be elephant-stalls ranged round a half-circle,

and in each stall stands one engine, and each engine stares at the

turn-table. A stolid and disconcerting company is this ring-of-eyes

monsters; 324, 432, and 8 are shining like toys. They are ready for

their turn of duty, and are as spruce as hansoms. Lacquered chocolate,

picked out with black, red, and white, is their dress and delicate lemon

graces the ceilings of the cabs. The driver should be a gentleman in

evening dress with white kid gloves, and there should be gold-headed

champagne bottles in the spick and span tenders. Huckleberry Finn says

of a timber raft, "It amounted to something being captain of that raft."

Thrice enviable is the man who, drawing Rs. 220 a month, is allowed to

make Rs. 150 overtime out of locos Nos. 324, 432, or 8. Fifty yards

beyond this gorgeous trinity are ten to twelve engines who have put in

to Jamalpur to bait. They are alive, their fires are lighted, and they

are swearing and purring and growling one at another as they stand

alone. Here is evidently one of the newest type--No. 25, a giant who has

just brought the mail in and waits to be cleaned up preparatory to

going out afresh.

The tiffin hour has ended. The buzzer blows, and with a roar, a rattle,

and a clang the shops take up their toil. The hubbub that followed on

the Prince's kiss to the sleeping beauty was not so loud or sudden.

Experience, with a foot-rule in his pocket, authority in his port, and a

merry twinkle in his eye, comes up and catches Ignorance walking

gingerly round No. 25. "That's one of the best we have," says

Experience, "a four-wheeled coupled bogie they call her. She's by Dobbs.

She's done her hundred and fifty miles to-day; and she'll run in to

Rampore Haut this afternoon; then she'll rest a day and be cleaned up.

Roughly, she does her three hundred miles in the four-and-twenty hours.

She's a beauty. She's out from home, but we can build our own

engines--all except the wheels. We're building ten locos. now, and we've

got a dozen boilers ready if you care to look at them. How long does a

loco. last? That's just as may be. She will do as much as her driver

lets her. Some men play the mischief with a loco. and some handle 'em

properly. Our drivers prefer Hawthorne's old four-wheeled coupled

engines because they give the least bother. There is one in that shed,

and it's a good 'un to travel. But eighty thousand miles generally sees

the gloss off an engine, and she goes into the shops to be overhauled

and refitted and replaned, and a lot of things that you wouldn't

understand if I told you about them. No. 1, the first loco. on the line,

is running still, but very little of the original engine must be left by

this time. That one there, came out in the Mutiny year. She's by

Slaughter and Grunning, and she's built for speed in front of a light

load. French-looking sort of thing, isn't she? That's because her

cylinders are on a tilt. We used her for the Mail once, but the Mail has

grown heavier and heavier, and now we use six-wheeled coupled

eighteen-inch, inside cylinder, 45-ton locos. to shift thousand-ton

trains. \_No!\_ All locos. aren't alike. It isn't merely pulling a lever.

The Company likes its drivers to know their locos., and a man will keep

his Hawthorne for two or three years. The more mileage he gets out of

her before she has to be overhauled the better man he is. It pays to let

a man have his fancy engine. A man must take an interest in his loco.,

and that means she must belong to him. Some locos. won't do anything,

even if you coax and humour them. I don't think there are any unlucky

ones now, but some years ago No. 31 wasn't popular. The drivers went

sick or took leave when they were told off for her. She killed her

driver on the Jubbulpore line, she left the rails at Kajra, she did

something or other at Rampur Haut, and Lord knows what she didn't do or

try to do in other places! All the drivers fought shy of her, and in the

end she disappeared. They said she was condemned, but I shouldn't wonder

if the Company changed her number quietly, and changed the luck at the

same time. You see, the Government Inspector comes and looks at our

stock now and again, and when an engine's condemned he puts his

dhobi-mark on her, and she's broken up. Well, No. 31 was condemned, but

there was a whisper that they only shifted her number, and ran her out

again. When the drivers didn't know, there were no accidents. I don't

think we've got an unlucky one running now. Some are different from

others, but there are no man-eaters. Yes, a driver of the mail \_is\_

somebody. He can make Rs. 370 a month if he's a covenanted man. We get a

lot of our drivers in the country, and we don't import from England as

much as we did. 'Stands to reason that, now there's more competition

both among lines and in the labour market, the Company can't afford to

be as generous as it used to be. It doesn't cheat a man though. It's

this way with the drivers. A native driver gets about Rs. 20 a month,

and in his way he's supposed to be good enough for branch work and

shunting and such. Well, an English driver'll get from Rs. 80 to Rs.

220, and overtime. The English driver knows what the native gets, and in

time they tell the driver that the native'll improve. The driver has

that to think of. You see? That's competition!"

Experience returns to the engine-sheds, now full of clamour, and

enlarges on the beauties of sick locomotives. The fitters and the

assistants and the apprentices are hammering and punching and gauging,

and otherwise technically disporting themselves round their enormous

patients, and their language, as caught in snatches, is beautifully

unintelligible.

But one flying sentence goes straight to the heart. It is the cry of

Humanity over the task of Life, done into unrefined English. An

apprentice, grimed to his eyebrows, his cloth cap well on the back of

his curly head and his hands deep in his pockets, is sitting on the edge

of a tool-box ruefully regarding the very much disorganised engine whose

slave is he. A handsome boy, this apprentice, and well made. He whistles

softly between his teeth, and his brow puckers. Then he addresses the

engine, half in expostulation and half in despair, "Oh, you condemned

old female dog!" He puts the sentence more crisply--much more

crisply--and Ignorance chuckles sympathetically.

Ignorance also is puzzled over these engines.

CHAPTER III

VULCAN'S FORGE.

In the wilderness of the railway shops--and machinery that planes and

shaves, and bevels and stamps, and punches and hoists and nips--the

first idea that occurs to an outsider, when he has seen the men who

people the place, is that it must be the birthplace of inventions--a

pasture-ground of fat patents. If a writing-man, who plays with shadows

and dresses dolls that others may laugh at their antics, draws help and

comfort and new methods of working old ideas from the stored shelves of

a library, how, in the name of Commonsense, his god, can a doing-man,

whose mind is set upon things that snatch a few moments from flying Time

or put power into weak hands, refrain from going forward and adding new

inventions to the hundreds among which he daily moves?

Appealed to on this subject, Experience, who had served the E. I. R.

loyally for many years, held his peace. "We don't go in much for

patents; but," he added, with a praiseworthy attempt to turn the

conversation, "we can build you any mortal thing you like. We've got the

\_Bradford Leslie\_ steamer for the Sahibgunge ferry. Come and see the

brass-work for her bows. It's in the casting-shed."

It would have been cruel to have pressed Experience further, and

Ignorance, to foredate matters a little, went about to discover why

Experience shied off this question, and why the men of Jamalpur had not

each and all invented and patented something. He won his information in

the end, but did not come from Jamalpur. \_That\_ must be clearly

understood. It was found anywhere you please between Howrah and Hoti

Mardan; and here it is that all the world may admire a prudent and

far-sighted Board of Directors. Once upon a time, as every one in the

profession knows, two men invented the D. and O. sleeper--cast iron, of

five pieces, very serviceable. The men were in the Company's employ, and

their masters said: "Your brains are ours. Hand us over those sleepers."

Being of pay and position, D. and O. made some sort of resistance and

got a royalty or a bonus. At any rate, the Company had to pay for its

sleepers. But thereafter, and the condition exists to this day, they

caused it to be written in each servant's covenant, that if by chance he

invented aught, his invention was to belong to the Company. Providence

has mercifully arranged that no man or syndicate of men can buy the

"holy spirit of man" outright without suffering in some way or another

just as much as the purchase. America fully, and Germany in part,

recognises this law. The E. I. Railway's breach of it is thoroughly

English. They say, or it is said of them that they say, "We are afraid

of our men, who belong to us, wasting their time on trying to invent."

Is it wholly impossible, then, for men of mechanical experience and

large sympathies to check the mere patent-hunter and bring forward the

man with an idea? Is there no supervision in the "shops," or have the

men who play tennis and billiards at the institute not a minute which

they can rightly call their very own? Would it ruin the richest Company

in India to lend their model-shop and their lathes to half a dozen, or,

for the matter of that, half a hundred, abortive experiments? A

Massachusetts organ factory, a Racine buggy shop, an Oregon lumber-yard,

would laugh at the notion. An American toy-maker might swindle an

employÃ© after the invention, but he would in his own interests help the

man to "see what comes of the thing." Surely a wealthy, a powerful and,

as all Jamalpur bears witness, a considerate Company might cut that

clause out of the covenant and await the issue. There would be quite

enough jealousy between man and man, grade and grade, to keep down all

but the keenest souls; and, with due respect to the steam-hammer and the

rolling-mill, we have not yet made machinery perfect. The "shops" are

not likely to spawn unmanageable Stephensons or grasping Brunels; but in

the minor turns of mechanical thought that find concrete expressions in

links, axle-boxes, joint packings, valves, and spring-stirrups something

might--something would--be done were the practical prohibition removed.

Will a North countryman give you anything but warm hospitality for

nothing? Or if you claim from him overtime service as a right, will he

work zealously? "Onything but t' brass," is his motto, and his ideas are

his "brass."

Gentlemen in authority, if this should meet your august eyes, spare it a

minute's thought, and, clearing away the floridity, get to the heart of

the mistake and see if it cannot be rationally put right. Above all,

remember that Jamalpur supplied no information. It was as mute as an

oyster. There is no one within your jurisdiction to--ahem--"drop upon."

Let us, after this excursion into the offices, return to the shops and

only ask Experience such questions as he can without disloyalty answer.

"We used once," says he, leading to the foundry, "to sell our old rails

and import new ones. Even when we used 'em for roof beams and so on, we

had more than we knew what to do with. Now we have got rolling-mills,

and we use the rails to make tie-bars for the D. and O. sleepers and all

sorts of things. We turn out five hundred D. and O. sleepers a day.

Altogether, we use about seventy-five tons of our own iron a month here.

Iron in Calcutta costs about five-eight a hundredweight; ours costs

between three-four and three-eight, and on that item alone we save three

thousand a month. Don't ask me how many miles of rails we own. There are

fifteen hundred miles of line, and you can make your own calculation.

All those things like babies' graves, down in that shed, are the moulds

for the D. and O. sleepers. We test them by dropping three hundredweight

and three hundred quarters of iron on top of them from a height of seven

feet, or eleven sometimes. They don't often smash. We have a notion here

that our iron is as good as the Home stuff."

A sleek, white, and brindled pariah thrusts himself into the

conversation. His house appears to be on the warm ashes of the

bolt-maker. This is a horrible machine, which chews red-hot iron bars

and spits them out perfect bolts. Its manners are disgusting, and it

gobbles over its food.

"Hi, Jack!" says Experience, stroking the interloper, "you've been

trying to break your leg again. That's the dog of the works. At least he

makes believe that the works belong to him. He'll follow any one of us

about the shops as far as the gate, but never a step further. You can

see he's in first-class condition. The boys give him his ticket, and,

one of these days, he'll try to get on to the Company's books as a

regular worker. He's too clever to live." Jack heads the procession as

far as the walls of the rolling-shed and then returns to his machinery

room. He waddles with fatness and despises strangers.

"How would you like to be hot-potted there?" says Experience, who has

read and who is enthusiastic over \_She\_, as he points to the great

furnaces whence the slag is being dragged out by hooks. "Here is the old

material going into the furnace in that big iron bucket. Look at the

scraps of iron. There's an old D. and O. sleeper, there's a lot of clips

from a cylinder, there's a lot of snipped-up rails, there's a

driving-wheel block, there's an old hook, and a sprinkling of

boiler-plates and rivets."

The bucket is tipped into the furnace with a thunderous roar and the

slag below pours forth more quickly. "An engine," says Experience,

reflectively, "can run over herself so to say. After she's broken up she

is made into sleepers for the line. You'll see how she's broken up

later." A few paces further on, semi-nude demons are capering over

strips of glowing hot iron which are put into a mill as rails and emerge

as thin, shapely tie-bars. The natives wear rough sandals and some

pretence of aprons, but the greater part of them is "all face." "As I

said before," says Experience, "a native's cuteness when he's working

on ticket is something startling. Beyond occasionally hanging on to a

red-hot bar too long and so letting their pincers be drawn through the

mills, these men take precious good care not to go wrong. Our machinery

is fenced and guard-railed as much as possible, and these men don't get

caught up by the belting. In the first place, they're careful--the

father warns the son and so on--and in the second, there's nothing about

'em for the belting to catch on unless the man shoves his hand in. Oh, a

native's no fool! He knows that it doesn't do to be foolish when he's

dealing with a crane or a driving-wheel. You're looking at all those

chopped rails? We make our iron as they blend baccy. We mix up all sorts

to get the required quality. Those rails have just been chopped by this

tobacco-cutter thing." Experience bends down and sets a vicious-looking,

parrot-headed beam to work. There is a quiver--a snap--and a dull smash

and a heavy rail is nipped in two like a stick of barley-sugar.

Elsewhere, a bull-nosed hydraulic cutter is rail-cutting as if it

enjoyed the fun. In another shed stand the steam-hammers; the unemployed

ones murmuring and muttering to themselves, as is the uncanny custom of

all steam-souled machinery. Experience, with his hand on a long lever,

makes one of the monsters perform: and though Ignorance knows that a man

designed and men do continually build steam-hammers, the effect is as

though Experience were maddening a chained beast. The massive block

slides down the guides, only to pause hungrily an inch above the anvil,

or restlessly throb through a foot and a half of space, each motion

being controlled by an almost imperceptible handling of the levers.

"When these things are newly overhauled, you can regulate your blow to

within an eighth of an inch," says Experience. "We had a foreman here

once who could work 'em beautifully. He had the touch. One day a

visitor, no end of a swell in a tall, white hat, came round the works,

and our foreman borrowed the hat and brought the hammer down just enough

to press the nap and no more. 'How wonderful!' said the visitor, putting

his hand carelessly upon this lever rod here." Experience suits the

action to the word and the hammer thunders on the anvil. "Well, you can

guess for yourself. Next minute there wasn't enough left of that tall,

white hat to make a postage-stamp of. Steam-hammers aren't things to

play with. Now we'll go over to the stores ..."

Whatever apparent disorder there might have been in the works, the store

department is as clean as a new pin, and stupefying in its naval order.

Copper plates, bar, angle, and rod iron, duplicate cranks and slide

bars, the piston rods of the \_Bradford Leslie\_ steamer, engine grease,

files, and hammer-heads--every conceivable article, from leather laces

of beltings to head-lamps, necessary for the due and proper working of a

long line, is stocked, stacked, piled, and put away in appropriate

compartments. In the midst of it all, neck deep in ledgers and indent

forms, stands the many-handed Babu, the steam of the engine whose power

extends from Howrah to Ghaziabad.

The Company does everything, and knows everything. The gallant

apprentice may be a wild youth with an earnest desire to go occasionally

"upon the bend." But three times a week, between 7 and 8 P.M., he must

attend the night-school and sit at the feet of M. Bonnaud, who teaches

him mechanics and statics so thoroughly that even the awful Government

Inspector is pleased. And when there is no night-school the Company will

by no means wash its hands of its men out of working-hours. No man can

be violently restrained from going to the bad if he insists upon it, but

in the service of the Company a man has every warning; his escapades are

known, and a judiciously arranged transfer sometimes keeps a good fellow

clear of the down-grade. No one can flatter himself that in the

multitude he is overlooked, or believe that between 4 P.M. and 9 A.M. he

is at liberty to misdemean himself. Sooner or later, but generally

sooner, his goings-on are known, and he is reminded that "Britons never

shall be slaves"--to things that destroy good work as well as souls.

Maybe the Company acts only in its own interest, but the result is good.

Best and prettiest of the many good and pretty things in Jamalpur is the

institute of a Saturday when the Volunteer Band is playing and the

tennis courts are full and the babydom of Jamalpur--fat, sturdy

children--frolic round the band-stand. The people dance--but big as the

institute is, it is getting too small for their dances--they act, they

play billiards, they study their newspapers, they play cards and

everything else, and they flirt in a sumptuous building, and in the hot

weather the gallant apprentice ducks his friend in the big

swimming-bath. Decidedly the railway folk make their lives pleasant.

Let us go down southward to the big Giridih collieries and see the coal

that feeds the furnace that smelts the iron that makes the sleeper that

bears the loco. that pulls the carriage that holds the freight that

comes from the country that is made richer by the Great Company Badahur,

the East Indian Railway.

THE GIRIDIH COAL-FIELDS

CHAPTER I

ON THE SURFACE.

Southward, always southward and easterly, runs the Calcutta Mail from

Luckeeserai, till she reaches Madapur in the Sonthal Parganas. From

Madapur a train, largely made up of coal-trucks, heads westward into the

Hazaribagh district and toward Giridih. A week would not have exhausted

"Jamalpur and its environs," as the guide-books say. But since time

drives and man must e'en be driven, the weird, echoing bund in the hills

above Jamalpur, where the owls hoot at night and hyenas come down to

laugh over the grave of "Quilem Roberts, who died from the effects of an

encounter with a tiger near this place, A.D. 1864," goes undescribed.

Nor is it possible to deal with Monghyr, the headquarters of the

district, where one sees for the first time the age of Old Bengal in the

sleepy, creepy station, built in a time-eaten fort, which runs out into

the Ganges, and is full of quaint houses, with fat-legged balustrades on

the roofs. Pensioners certainly, and probably a score of ghosts, live in

Monghyr. All the country seems haunted. Is there not at Pir Bahar a

lonely house on a bluff, the grave of a young lady, who, thirty years

ago, rode her horse down the cliff and perished? Has not Monghyr a

haunted house in which tradition says sceptics have seen much more than

they could account for? And is it not notorious throughout the

countryside that the seven miles of road between Jamalpur and Monghyr

are nightly paraded by tramping battalions of spectres, phantoms of an

old-time army massacred, who knows how long ago? The common voice

attests all these things, and an eerie cemetery packed with blackened,

lichened, candle-extinguisher tomb-stones persuades the listener to

believe all that he hears. Bengal is second--or third is it?--in order

of seniority among the Provinces, and like an old nurse, she tells many

witch-tales.

But ghosts have nothing to do with collieries, and that ever-present

"Company," the E. I. R., has more or less made Giridih--principally

more. "Before the E. I. R. came," say the people, "we had one meal a

day. Now we have two." Stomachs do not tell fibs, whatever mouths may

say. That "Company," in the course of business, throws about five lakhs

a year into the Hazaribagh district in the form of wages alone, and

Giridih Bazaar has to supply the wants of twelve thousand men, women,

and children. But we have now the authority of a number of high-souled

and intelligent native prints that the Sahib of all grades spends his

time in "sucking the blood out of the country," and "flying to England

to spend his ill-gotten gains."

Giridih is perfectly mad--quite insane! Geologically, "the country is in

the metamorphic higher grounds that rise out of the alluvial flats of

Lower Bengal between the Osri and the Barakar rivers." Translated, this

sentence means that you can twist your ankle on pieces of pure white,

pinky, and yellowish granite, slip over weather-worn sandstone,

grievously cut your boots over flakes of trap, and throw hornblende

pebbles at the dogs. Never was such a place for stone-throwing as

Giridih. The general aspect of the country is falsely park-like, because

it swells and sinks in a score of grass-covered undulations, and is

adorned with plantation-like jungle. There are low hills on every side,

and twelve miles away bearing south the blue bulk of the holy hill of

Parasnath, greatest of the Jain Tirthankars, overlooks the world. In

Bengal they consider four thousand five hundred feet good enough for a

Dagshai or Kasauli, and once upon a time they tried to put troops on

Parasnath. There was a scarcity of water, and Thomas of those days found

the silence and seclusion prey upon his spirits. Since twenty years,

therefore, Parasnath has been abandoned by Her Majesty's Army.

As to Giridih itself, the last few miles of train bring up the reek of

the "Black Country." Memory depends on smell. A noseless man is devoid

of sentiment, just as a noseless woman, in this country, must be devoid

of honour. That first breath of the coal should be the breath of the

murky, clouded tract between Yeadon and Dale--or Barnsley, rough and

hospitable Barnsley--or Dewsbury and Batley and the Derby Canal on a

Sunday afternoon when the wheels are still and the young men and maidens

walk stolidly in pairs. Unfortunately, it is nothing more than

Giridih--seven thousand miles away from Home and blessed with a warm and

genial sunshine, soon to turn into something very much worse. The

insanity of the place is visible at the station door. A G. B. T. cart

once married a bathing-machine, and they called the child \_tum-tum\_. You

who in flannel and Cawnpore harness drive bamboo-carts about up-country

roads, remember that a Giridih \_tum-tum\_ is painfully pushed by four

men, and must be entered crawling on all-fours, head first. So strange

are the ways of Bengal!

They drive mad horses in Giridih--animals that become hysterical as soon

as the dusk falls and the countryside blazes with the fires of the great

coke ovens. If you expostulate tearfully, they produce another horse, a

raw, red fiend whose ear has to be screwed round and round, and round

and round, before she will by any manner of means consent to start. The

roads carry neat little eighteen-inch trenches at their sides, admirably

adapted to hold the flying wheel. Skirling about this savage land in the

dark, the white population beguile the time by rapturously recounting

past accidents, insisting throughout on the super-equine "steadiness" of

their cattle. Deep and broad and wide is their jovial hospitality; but

somebody--the Tirhoot planters for choice--ought to start a mission to

teach the men of Giridih what to drive. They know \_how\_, or they would

be severally and separately and many times dead, but they do not, they

do not indeed, know that animals who stand on one hind leg and beckon

with all the rest, or try to pigstick in harness, are not trap-horses

worthy of endearing names, but things to be pole-axed. Their feelings

are hurt when you say this. "Sit tight," say the men of Giridih; "we're

insured! We can't be hurt."

And now with grey hairs, dry mouth, and chattering teeth to the

collieries. The E. I. R. estate, bought or leased in perpetuity from the

Serampore Raja, may be about four miles long and between one and two

miles across. It is in two pieces, the Serampore field being separated

from the Karharbari (or Kurhurballi or Kabarbari) field by the property

of the Bengal Coal Company. The Raneegunge Coal Association lies to the

east of all other workings. So we have three companies at work on about

eleven square miles of land.

There is no such thing as getting a full view of the whole place. A

short walk over a grassy down gives on to an outcrop of very dirty

sandstone, which in the excessive innocence of his heart the visitor

naturally takes to be the coal lying neatly on the surface. Up to this

sandstone the path seems to be made of crushed sugar, so white and shiny

is the quartz. Over the brow of the down comes in sight the old familiar

pit-head wheel, spinning for the dear life, and the eye loses itself in

a maze of pumping sheds, red-tiled, mud-walled miners' huts, dotted all

over the landscape, and railway lines that run on every kind of

gradient. There are lines that dip into valleys and disappear round the

shoulders of slopes, and lines that career on the tops of rises and

disappear over the brow of the slopes. Along these lines whistle and

pant metre-gauge engines, some with trucks at their tail, and others

rattling back to the pit-bank with the absurd air of a boy late for

school that an unemployed engine always assumes. There are six engines

in all, and as it is easiest to walk along the lines one sees a good

deal of them. They bear not altogether unfamiliar names. Here, for

instance, passes the "Cockburn" whistling down a grade with thirty tons

of coal at her heels; while the "Whitly" and the "Olpherts" are waiting

for their complement of trucks. Now a Mr. T. F. Cockburn was

superintendent of these mines nearly thirty years ago, in the days

before the chord-lines from Kanu to Luckeeserai were built, and all the

coal was carted to the latter place; and surely Mr. Olpherts was an

engineer who helped to think out a new sleeper. What may these things

mean?

"Apotheosis of the Manager," is the reply. "Christen the engines after

the managers. You'll find Cockburn, Dunn, Whitly, Abbott, Olpherts, and

Saise, knocking about the place. Sounds funny, doesn't it? Doesn't sound

so funny, when one of these idiots does his best to derail Saise,

though, by putting a line down anyhow. Look at that line! Laid out in

knots--by Jove!" To the unprofessional eye the rails seem all correct;

but there must be something wrong, because "one of those idiots" is

asked why in the name of all he considers sacred he does not ram the

ballast properly.

"What would happen if you threw an engine off the line?" "Can't say that

I know exactly. You see, our business is to keep them \_on\_, and we do

that. Here's rather a curiosity. You see that pointsman! They say he's

an old mutineer, and when he relaxes he boasts of the Sahibs he has

killed. He's glad enough to eat the Company's salt now." Such a withered

old face was the face of the pointsman at No. 11 point! The information

suggested a host of questions, and the answers were these: "You won't be

able to understand till you've been down into a mine. We work our men in

two ways: some by direct payment--under our own hand, and some by

contractors. The contractor undertakes to deliver us the coal, supplying

his own men, tools, and props. He's responsible for the safety of his

men, and of course the Company knows and sees his work. Just fancy,

among these five thousand people, what sort of effect the news of an

accident would produce! It would go all through the Sonthal Parganas. We

have any amount of Sonthals besides Mahometans and Hindus of every

possible caste, down to those Musahers who eat pig. They don't require

much administering in the civilian sense of the word. On Sundays, as a

rule, if any man has had his daughter eloped with, or anything of that

kind, he generally comes up to the manager's bungalow to get the matter

put straight. If a man is disabled through accident he knows that as

long as he's in the hospital he gets full wages, and the Company pays

for the food of any of his women-folk who come to look after him. \_One\_,

of course; not the whole clan. That makes our service popular with the

people. Don't you believe that a native is a fool. You can train him to

everything except responsibility. There's a rule in the workings that if

there is any dangerous work--we haven't choke-damp; I will show you when

we get down--no gang must work without an Englishman to look after them.

A native wouldn't be wise enough to understand what the danger was, or

where it came in. Even if he did, he'd shirk the responsibility. We

can't afford to risk a single life. All our output is just as much as

the Company want--about a thousand tons per working day. Three hundred

thousand in the year. We could turn out more? Yes--a little. Well, yes,

twice as much. I won't go on, because you wouldn't believe me. There's

the coal under us, and we work it at any depth from following up an

outcrop down to six hundred feet. That is our deepest shaft. We have no

necessity to go deeper. At home the mines are sometimes fifteen hundred

feet down. Well, the thickness of this coal here varies from anything

you please to anything you please. There's enough of it to last your

time and one or two hundred years longer. Perhaps even longer than that.

Look at that stuff. That's big coal from the pit."

It was aristocratic-looking coal, just like the picked lumps that are

stacked in baskets of coal agencies at home with the printed legend atop

"only 23\_s\_ a ton." But there was no picking in this case. The great

piled banks were all "equal to sample," and beyond them lay piles of

small, broken, "smithy" coal. "The Company doesn't sell to the public.

This small, broken coal is an exception. That is sold, but the big stuff

is for the engines and the shops. It doesn't cost much to get out, as

you say; but our men can earn as much as twelve rupees a month. Very

often when they've earned enough to go on with they retire from the

concern till they've spent their money and then come on again. It's

piece-work and they are improvident. If some of them only lived like

other natives they would have enough to buy land and cows with. When

there's a press of work they make a good deal by overtime, but they

don't seem to keep it. You should see Giridih Bazaar on a Sunday if you

want to know where the money goes. About ten thousand rupees change

hands once a week there. If you want to get at the number of people who

are indirectly dependent or profit by the E. I. R. you'll have to

conduct a census of your own. After Sunday is over the men generally lie

off on Monday and take it easy on Tuesday. Then they work hard for the

next four days and make it up. Of course there's nothing in the wide

world to prevent a man from resigning and going away to wherever he came

from--behind those hills if he's a Sonthal. He loses his employment,

that's all. But they have their own point of honour. A man hates to be

told by his friends that he has been guilty of shirking. And now we'll

go to breakfast. You shall be 'pitted' to-morrow to any depth you

like."

CHAPTER II

IN THE DEPTHS.

"Pitted to any extent you please." The only difficulty was for Joseph to

choose his pit. Giridih was full of them. There was an arch in the side

of a little hill, a blackened brick arch leading into thick night. A

stationary engine was hauling a procession of coal-laden trucks--"tubs"

is the technical word--out of its depths. The tubs were neither pretty

nor clean. "We are going down in those when they are emptied. Put on

your helmet and \_keep\_ it on, and keep your head down."

There is nothing mirth-provoking in going down a coal-mine--even though

it be only a shallow incline running to one hundred and forty feet

vertical below the earth. "Get into the tub and lie down. Hang it, no!

This is not a railway carriage: you can't see the country out of the

windows. Lie \_down\_ in the dust and don't lift your head. Let her go!"

The tubs strain on the wire rope and slide down fourteen hundred feet of

incline, at first through a chastened gloom, and then through darkness.

An absurd sentence from a trial report rings in the head: "About this

time prisoner expressed a desire for the consolations of religion." A

hand with a reeking flare-lamp hangs over the edge of the tub, and there

is a glimpse of a blackened hat near it, for those accustomed to the

pits have a merry trick of going down sitting or crouching on the

coupling of the rear tub. The noise is deafening, and the roof is very

close indeed. The tubs bump, and the occupant crouches lovingly in the

coal dust. What would happen if the train went off the line? The desire

for the "consolations of religion" grows keener and keener as the air

grows closer and closer. The tubs stop in darkness spangled by the light

of the flare-lamps which many black devils carry. Underneath and on both

sides is the greasy blackness of the coal, and, above, a roof of grey

sandstone, smooth as the flow of a river at evening. "Now, remember that

if you don't keep your hat on, you'll get your head broken, because you

will forget to stoop. If you hear any tubs coming up behind you step off

to one side. There's a tramway under your feet: be careful not to trip

over it."

The miner has a gait as peculiarly his own as Tommy's measured pace or

the bluejacket's roll. Big men who slouch in the light of day become

almost things of beauty underground. Their foot is on their native

heather; and the slouch is a very necessary act of homage to the great

earth, which if a man observe not, he shall without doubt have his

hat--bless the man who invented pith hats!--grievously cut.

The road turns and winds and the roof becomes lower, but those accursed

tubs still rattle by on the tramways. The roof throws back their noises,

and when all the place is full of a grumbling and a growling, how under

earth is one to know whence danger will turn up next? The air brings to

the unacclimatised a singing in the ears, a hotness of the eyeballs,

and a jumping of the heart. "That's because the pressure here is

different from the pressure up above. It'll wear off in a minute. \_We\_

don't notice it. Wait till you get down a four-hundred-foot pit. \_Then\_

your ears will begin to sing, if you like."

Most people know the One Night of each hot weather--that still, clouded

night just before the Rains break, when there seems to be no more

breathable air under the bowl of the pitiless skies, and all the weight

of the silent, dark house lies on the chest of the sleep-hunter. This is

the feeling in a coal-mine--only more so--much more so, for the darkness

is the "gross darkness of the inner sepulchre." It is hard to see which

is the black coal and which the passage driven through it. From far

away, down the side galleries, comes the regular beat of the pick--thick

and muffled as the beat of the labouring heart. "Six men to a gang, and

they aren't allowed to work alone. They make six-foot drives through the

coal--two and sometimes three men working together. The rest clear away

the stuff and load it into the tubs. We have no props in this gallery

because we have a roof as good as a ceiling. The coal lies under the

sandstone here. It's beautiful sandstone." It \_was\_ beautiful

sandstone--as hard as a billiard table and devoid of any nasty little

bumps and jags.

There was a roaring down one road--the roaring of infernal fires. This

is not a pleasant thing to hear in the dark. It is too suggestive.

"That's our ventilating shaft. Can't you feel the air getting brisker?

Come and look."

Imagine a great iron-bound crate of burning coal, hanging over a gulf

of darkness faintly showing the brickwork of the base of a chimney.

"We're at the bottom of the shaft. That fire makes a draught that sucks

up the foul air from the bottom of the pit. There's another down-draw

shaft in another part of the mine where the clean air comes in. We

aren't going to set the mines on fire. There's an earth and brick floor

at the bottom of the pit; the crate hangs over. It isn't so deep as you

think." Then a devil--a naked devil--came in with a pitchfork and fed

the spouting flames. This was perfectly in keeping with the landscape.

More trucks, more muffled noises, more darkness made visible, and more

devils--male and female--coming out of darkness and vanishing. Then a

picture to be remembered. A great Hall of Eblis, twenty feet from

inky-black floor to grey roof, upheld by huge pillars of shining coal,

and filled with flitting and passing devils. On a shattered pillar near

the roof stood a naked man, his flesh olive-coloured in the light of the

lamps, hewing down a mass of coal that still clove to the roof. Behind

him was the wall of darkness, and when the lamps shifted he disappeared

like a ghost. The devils were shouting directions, and the man howled in

reply, resting on his pick and wiping the sweat from his brow. When he

smote the coal crushed and slid and rumbled from the darkness into the

darkness, and the devils cried \_Shabash!\_ The man stood erect like a

bronze statue, he twisted and bent himself like a Japanese grotesque,

and anon threw himself on his side after the manner of the dying

gladiator. Then spoke the still small voice of fact: "A first-class

workman if he would only stick to it. But as soon as he makes a little

money he lies off and spends it. That's the last of a pillar that we've

knocked out. See here. These pillars of coal are square, about thirty

feet each way. As you can see, we make the pillar first by cutting out

all the coal between. Then we drive two square tunnels, about seven feet

wide, through and across the pillar, propping it with balks. There's one

fresh cut."

Two tunnels crossing at right angles had been driven through a pillar

which in its under-cut condition seemed like the rough draft of a statue

for an elephant. "When the pillar stands only on four legs we chip away

one leg at a time from a square to an hour-glass shape, and then either

the whole of the pillar crashes down from the roof or else a quarter or

a half. If the coal lies against the sandstones it carries away clear,

but in some places it brings down stone and rubbish with it. The

chipped-away legs of the pillars are called stooks."

"Who has to make the last cut that breaks a leg through?"

"Oh! Englishmen of sorts. We can't trust natives for the job unless it's

very easy. The natives take kindly to the pillar-work though. They are

paid just as much for their coal as though they had hewed it out of the

solid. Of course we take very good care to see that the roof doesn't

come in on us. You would never understand how and why we prop our roofs

with those piles of sleepers. Anyway, you can see that we cannot take

out a whole line of pillars. We work 'em \_en echelon\_, and those big

beams you see running from floor to roof are our indicators. They show

when the roof is going to give. Oh! dear no, there's no dramatic effect

about it. No splash, you know. Our roofs give plenty of warning by

cracking and then collapse slowly. The parts of the work that we have

cleared out and allowed to fall in are called goafs. You're on the edge

of a goaf now. All that darkness there marks the limit of the mine. We

have worked that out piece-meal, and the props are gone and the place is

down. The roof of any pillar-working is tested every morning by

tapping--pretty hard tapping."

"Hi yi! yi!" shout all the devils in chorus, and the Hall of Eblis is

full of rolling sound. The olive man has brought down an avalanche of

coal. "It is a sight to see the whole of one of the pillars come away.

They make an awful noise. It would startle you out of your wits. But

there's not an atom of risk."

("Not an atom of risk." Oh, genial and courteous host, when you turned

up next day blacker than any sweep that ever swept, with a neat,

half-inch gash on your forehead--won by cutting a "stook" and getting

caught by a bounding coal-knob--how long and earnestly did you endeavour

to show that "stook-cutting" was an employment as harmless and

unexciting as wool-samplering!)

"Our ways are rather primitive, but they're cheap, and safe as houses.

Doms and Bauris, Kols and Beldars, don't understand refinements in

mining. They'd startle an English pit where there was fire-damp. Do you

know it's a solemn fact that if you drop a Davy lamp or snatch it

quickly you can blow a whole English pit inside out with all the miners?

Good for us that we don't know what fire-damp is here. We can use

flare-lamps."

After the first feeling of awe and wonder is worn out, a mine becomes

monotonous. There is only the humming, palpitating darkness, the rumble

of the tubs, and the endless procession of galleries to arrest the

attention. And one pit to the uninitiated is as like to another as two

peas. Tell a miner this and he laughs--slowly and softly. To him the

pits have each distinct personalities, and each must be dealt with

differently.

CHAPTER III

THE PERILS OF THE PITS.

An engineer, who has built a bridge, can strike you nearly dead with

professional facts; the captain of a seventy-horse-power Ganges

river-steamer can, in one hour, tell legends of the Sandheads and the

James and Mary shoal sufficient to fill half a \_Pioneer\_, but a couple

of days spent on, above, and in a coal-mine yields more mixed

information than two engineers and three captains. It is hopeless to

pretend to understand it all.

When your host says, "Ah, such an one is a thundering good

fault-reader!" you smile hazily, and by way of keeping up the

conversation, adventure on the statement that fault-reading and

palmistry are very popular amusements. Then men explain.

Every one knows that coal-strata, in common with women, horses, and

official superiors, have "faults" caused by some colic of the earth in

the days when things were settling into their places. A coal-seam is

suddenly sliced off as a pencil is cut through with one slanting blow of

the penknife, and one-half is either pushed up or pushed down any number

of feet. The miners work the seam till they come to this break-off, and

then call for an expert to "read the fault." It is sometimes very hard

to discover whether the sliced-off seam has gone up or down.

Theoretically, the end of the broken piece should show the direction.

Practically its indications are not always clear. Then a good

"fault-reader," who must more than know geology, is a useful man, and is

much prized; for the Giridih fields are full of faults and "dykes."

Tongues of what was once molten lava thrust themselves sheer into the

coal, and the disgusted miner finds that for about twenty feet on each

side of the tongue all coal has been burnt away.

The head of the mine is supposed to foresee these things and more. He

can tell you, without looking at the map, what is the geological

formation of any thousand square miles of India; he knows as much about

brickwork and the building of houses, arches, and shafts as an average

P. W. D. man; he has not only to know the intestines of a pumping or

winding engine, but must be able to take them to pieces with his own

hands, indicate on the spot such parts as need repair, and make drawings

of anything that requires renewal; he knows how to lay out and build

railways with a grade of one in twenty-seven; he has to carry, in his

head all the signals and points between and over which his locomotive

engines work; he must be an electrician capable of controlling the

apparatus that fires the dynamite charges in the pits, and must

thoroughly understand boring operations with thousand-foot drills. He

must know by name, at least, one thousand of the men on the works, and

must fluently speak the vernaculars of the low castes. If he has

Sonthali, which is more elaborate than Greek, so much the better for

him. He must know how to handle men of all grades, and, while holding

himself aloof, must possess sufficient grip of the men's private lives

to be able to see at once the merits of a charge of attempted abduction

preferred by a clucking, croaking Kol against a fluent English-speaking

Brahmin. For he is literally the Light of Justice, and to him the

injured husband and the wrathful father look for redress. He must be on

the spot and take all responsibility when any specially risky job is

under way in the pit, and he can claim no single hour of the day or the

night for his own. From eight in the morning till one in the afternoon

he is coated with coal-dust and oil. From one till eight in the evening

he has office work. After eight o'clock he is free to attend to anything

that he may be wanted for.

This is a soberly drawn picture of a life that Sahibs on the mines

actually enjoy. They are spared all private socio-official worry, for

the Company, in its mixture of State and private interest, is as

perfectly cold-blooded and devoid of bias as any great Department of the

Empire. If certain things be done, well and good. If certain things be

not done the defaulter goes, and his place is filled by another. The

conditions of service are graven on stone. There may be generosity;

there undoubtedly is justice, but above all, there is freedom within

broad limits. No irrepressible shareholder cripples the executive arm

with suggestions and restrictions, and no private piques turn men's

blood to gall within them. They work like horses and are happy.

When he can snatch a free hour, the grimy, sweating, cardigan-jacketed,

ammunition-booted, pick-bearing ruffian turns into a well-kept English

gentleman, who plays a good game of billiards, and has a batch of new

books from England every week. The change is sudden, but in Giridih

nothing is startling. It is right and natural that a man should be

alternately Valentine and Orson, specially Orson. It is right and

natural to drive--always behind a mad horse--away and away towards the

lonely hills till the flaming coke ovens become glow-worms on the dark

horizon, and in the wilderness to find a lovely English maiden teaching

squat, filthy Sonthal girls how to become Christians. Nothing is strange

in Giridih, and the stories of the pits, the raffle of conversation that

a man picks up as he passes, are quite in keeping with the place. Thanks

to the law, which enacts that an Englishman must look after the native

miners, and if any one be killed must explain satisfactorily that the

accident was not due to preventable causes, the death-roll is kept

astoundingly low. In one "bad" half-year, six men out of the five

thousand were killed, in another four, and in another none at all. As

has been said before, a big accident would scare off the workers, for,

in spite of the age of the mines--nearly thirty years--the hereditary

pitman has not yet been evolved. But to small accidents the men are

orientally apathetic. Read of a death among the five thousand:--

A gang has been ordered to cut clay for the luting of the coke furnaces.

The clay is piled in a huge bank in the open sunlight. A coolie hacks

and hacks till he has hewn out a small cave with twenty foot of clay

above him. Why should he trouble to climb up the bank and bring down the

eave of the cave? It is easier to cut in. The Sirdar of the gang is

watching round the shoulder of the bank. The coolie cuts lazily as he

stands. Sunday is very near, and he will get gloriously drunk in Giridih

Bazaar with his week's earnings. He digs his own grave stroke by stroke,

for he has not sense enough to see that undercut clay is dangerous. He

is a Sonthal from the hills. There is a smash and a dull thud, and his

grave has shut down upon him in an avalanche of heavy-caked clay.

The Sirdar calls to the Babu of the Ovens, and with the promptitude of

his race the Babu loses his head. He runs puffily, without giving

orders, anywhere, everywhere. Finally he runs to the Sahib's house. The

Sahib is at the other end of the collieries. He runs back. The Sahib has

gone home to wash. Then his indiscretion strikes him. He should have

sent runners--fleet-footed boys from the coal-screening gangs. He sends

them and they fly. One catches the Sahib just changed after his bath.

"There is a man dead at such a place"--he gasps, omitting to say whether

it is a surface or a pit accident. On goes the grimy pit-kit, and in

three minutes the Sahib's dogcart is flying to the place indicated.

They have dug out the Sonthal. His head is smashed in, spine and

breastbone are broken, and the gang-Sirdar, bowing double, throws the

blame of the accident on the poor, shapeless, battered dead. "I had

warned him, but he would not listen! \_Twice\_ I warned him! These men are

witnesses."

The Babu is shaking like a jelly. "Oh, sar, I have never seen a man

killed before! Look at that eye, sar! I should have sent runners. I ran

everywhere! I ran to your house. You were not in. I was running for

hours. It was not my fault! It was the fault of the gang-Sirdar." He

wrings his hands and gurgles. The best of accountants, but the poorest

of coroners is he. No need to ask how the accident happened. No need to

listen to the Sirdar and his "witnesses." The Sonthal had been a fool,

but it was the Sirdar's business to protect him against his own folly.

"Has he any people here?"

"Yes, his \_rukni\_,--his kept-woman,--and his sister's brother-in-law.

His home is far-off."

The sister's brother-in-law breaks through the crowd howling for

vengeance on the Sirdar. He will send for the police, he will have the

price of his brother's blood full tale. The windmill arms and the angry

eyes fall, for the Sahib is making the report of the death.

"Will the Government give me \_pensin\_? I am his wife," a woman clamours,

stamping her pewter-ankleted feet. "He was killed in your service. Where

is his \_pensin\_? I am his wife."

"You lie! You're his \_rukni\_. Keep quiet! Go! The pension comes to

\_us\_."

The sister's brother-in-law is not a refined man, but the \_rukni\_ is his

match. They are silenced. The Sahib takes the report, and the body is

borne away. Before to-morrow's sun rises the gang-Sirdar may find

himself a simple "surface-coolie," earning nine \_pice\_ a day; and in a

week some Sonthal woman behind the hills may discover that she is

entitled to draw monthly great wealth from the coffers of the Sirkar.

But this will not happen if the sister's brother-in-law can prevent it.

He goes off swearing at the \_rukni\_.

In the meantime, what have the rest of the dead man's gang been doing?

They have, if you please, abating not one stroke, dug out all the clay,

and would have it verified. They have seen their comrade die. He is

dead. \_Bus!\_[17] Will the Sirdar take the tale of clay? And yet, were

twenty men to be crushed by their own carelessness in the pit, these

same impassive workers would scatter like panic-stricken horses.

[17] Enough.

Turning from this sketch, let us set in order a few stories of the pits.

In some of the mines the coal is blasted out by the dynamite which is

fired by electricity from a battery on the surface. Two men place the

charges, and then signal to be drawn up in the cage which hangs in the

pit-eye. Once two natives were intrusted with the job. They performed

their parts beautifully till the end, when the vaster idiot of the two

scrambled into the cage, gave signal, and was hauled up before his

friend could follow.

Thirty or forty yards up the shaft all possible danger for those in the

cage was over, and the charge was accordingly exploded. Then it occurred

to the man in the cage that his friend stood a very good chance of

being, by this time, riven to pieces and choked.

But the friend was wise in his generation. He had missed the cage, but

found a coal-tub--one of the little iron trucks--and turning this upside

down, crawled into it. When the charge went off, his shelter was

battered in so much, that men had to hack him out, for the tub had made,

as it were, a tinned, sardine of its occupant. He was absolutely unhurt,

but for his feelings. On reaching the pit-bank his first words were, "I

do not desire to go down to the pit with \_that\_ man any more." His wish

had been already gratified, for "that man" had fled. Later on, the story

goes, when "that man" found that the guilt of murder was not at his

door, he returned, and was made a mere surface-coolie, and his brothers

jeered at him as they passed to their better-paid occupation.

Occasionally there are mild cyclones in the pits. An old working,

perhaps a mile away, will collapse: a whole gallery sinking bodily. Then

the displaced air rushes through the inhabited mine, and, to quote their

own expression, blows the pitmen about "like dry leaves." Few things are

more amusing than the spectacle of a burly Tyneside foreman who, failing

to dodge round a corner in time, is "put down" by the wind,

sitting-fashion, on a knobby lump of coal.

But most impressive of all is a tale they tell of a fire in a pit many

years ago. The coal caught light. They had to send earth and bricks down

the shaft and build great dams across the galleries to choke the fire.

Imagine the scene, a few hundred feet underground, with the air growing

hotter and hotter each moment, and the carbonic acid gas trickling

through the dams. After a time the rough dams gaped, and the gas poured

in afresh, and the Englishmen went down and leeped the cracks between

roof and dam-sill with anything they could get. Coolies fainted, and had

to be taken away, but no one died, and behind the first dams they built

great masonry ones, and bested that fire; though for a long time

afterwards, whenever they pumped water into it, the steam would puff out

from crevices in the ground above.

It is a queer life that they lead, these men of the coal-fields, and a

"big" life to boot. To describe one-half of their labours would need a

week at the least, and would be incomplete then. "If you want to see

anything," they say, "you should go over to the Baragunda copper-mines;

you should look at the Barakar ironworks; you should see our boring

operations five miles away; you should see how we sink pits; you should,

above all, see Giridih Bazaar on a Sunday. Why, you haven't seen

anything. There's no end of a Sonthal Mission hereabouts. All the little

dev--dears have gone on a picnic. Wait till they come back, and see 'em

learning to read."

Alas! one cannot wait. At the most one can but thrust an impertinent pen

skin-deep into matters only properly understood by specialists.

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