

Mitton Geraldine Edith

# Round the Wonderful World



**Geraldine Mitton**  
**Round the Wonderful World**

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=23163779](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23163779)*

*Round the Wonderful World:*

# Содержание

CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	26
CHAPTER III	42
CHAPTER IV	59
CHAPTER V	73
CHAPTER VI	84
CHAPTER VII	95
CHAPTER VIII	105
CHAPTER IX	119
CHAPTER X	130
CHAPTER XI	150
CHAPTER XII	156
CHAPTER XIII	162
CHAPTER XIV	178
CHAPTER XV	190
CHAPTER XVI	203
CHAPTER XVII	214
CHAPTER XVIII	229
CHAPTER XIX	245
CHAPTER XX	252
CHAPTER XXI	260
CHAPTER XXII	274
CHAPTER XXIII	280

CHAPTER XXIV	287
CHAPTER XXV	301
CHAPTER XXVI	314
CHAPTER XXVII	330
CHAPTER XXVIII	343
CHAPTER XXIX	356
CHAPTER XXX	369
CHAPTER XXXI	383
CHAPTER XXXII	395
CHAPTER XXXIII	401

**Mitton G. E.**  
**Round the Wonderful World**

**TO**

**JIM**

# CHAPTER I

## WHICH WAY?

When you have noticed a fly crawling on a ball or an orange has it ever occurred to you how a man would look crawling about on the earth if seen from a great height? Our world is, as everyone knows, like an orange in shape, only it is very much larger in comparison with us than an orange is in regard to a fly. In fact, to make a reasonable comparison, we should have to picture the fly crawling about on a ball or globe fifty miles in height; to get all round it he would have to make a journey of something like one hundred and fifty miles. It would take a determined fly to accomplish that! Yet we little human beings often start off on a journey round the world quite cheerfully, and it is more difficult for us than for the imaginary fly, because the globe is not a smooth surface of dry land, but is made up of jungles and deserts and forests and oceans. There are some places where people can do nothing in the heat of the day, and others where their flesh freezes like cold white marble in a moment if they don't take precautions.

To set out on foot around such a world would be folly, and man has invented all sorts of ingenious machines to carry him, – trains and steamers, for instance, – and with their help he can do the journey in a reasonable time. It costs money, of course, but

it is a glorious enterprise.

Here, in our own homes, we see pretty much the same things every day – green fields and trees, cows and sheep and horses, if we live in the country; and houses and streets and vehicles, if we live in the town. Everyone we meet speaks the same language, even if we were to go up to a stranger to ask a question we are tolerably sure that he would understand us and answer politely. We have cold days and warm ones, but the sun is never too hot for us to go out in the middle of the day, and the cold never so intense as to freeze our noses and make them fall off. The houses are all built in much the same way; people dress alike and look alike. Someone catches me up there, "Indeed they don't; some are pretty and some are ugly and everyone is different!"

Yes, you think that now, but wait until you have travelled a bit, and seen some of the races which really *are* different from ours, then you'll think that not only are British people alike, but that even all Europeans are more or less so.

You are not likely to travel? Well, I'm not so sure of that, for I'm going to offer to take you, and, what is more, you need not bother your head about expenses, and we will have all the time we want. I am going to carry you away with me in this book to see the marvels of other lands; lands where the burning sun strikes down on our own countrymen wearing white helmets on their heads and suits of snowy white as they walk about amid brown-skinned natives whose bare bodies gleam like satin, lands where lines of palm trees wave their long fronds over the pearly surf washing at

their roots. We will visit also other lands where you look out over a glowing pink and mauve desert to seeming infinity, and see reflected in bitter shallow water at your feet the flames of such a sunset glory as you never yet have imagined. Or you can ride out across the same desert lying white as snow beneath a moon far larger and more glistening than any you ever see here. You shall watch volcanoes shooting out columns of fire which roll down toward the villages nestling in their vineyards below, and you shall gaze at mountains which raise their stately heads far up into the silent region of eternal snow. You shall see the steel-blue waves rising in great heaps with the swell of an unquiet sea. You shall talk to the mischievous little Burmese women and watch them kneeling before their pagodas of pure gold, and shall visit the little Japs making merry in their paper houses; you shall find the last representatives of the grand races of North American Indians in their wigwams. And these are only a very few of the wonders of the world.

Where shall we begin? That requires some consideration. As the world is not a solid block of level ground we shall have to choose our track as best we can along the routes that are most convenient, and we can't certainly go right round in one straight line as if we followed a piece of string tied round the middle of the earth. Of course we shall have to start from England, and we shall be wisest to turn eastward first, coming back again from the west. The eastern part is the Old World, and the western the New World, of which the existence was not known until centuries



later. It is natural, therefore, to begin with the older part first. If we do this we must start in the autumn so as to arrive at some of the hottest countries in what is their winter, for the summer is unbearable to Europeans. So much is easily settled.

Have you ever realised that Great Britain is an island? I hear someone say "Silly!" under their breath; it does seem an absurd question, for surely every baby knows that! Well, of course even the smallest children have been told so, directly they begin to learn anything, but to *realise* it is a different matter. An island is surrounded by water, and none of us have ever sailed round our own country and made the experiment of seeing for ourselves that it is so. You have been to the sea certainly, and seen the edge of our island home, but have you ever thought of that long line which runs away and away from your seaside place? Have you followed the smooth sandy bays and the outlines of the towering cliffs; have you passed the mouths of mighty rivers and so gone steadily on northward to the bleak coasts of Scotland where the waves beat on granite cliffs; have you rounded stormy Cape Wrath, and sailed in and out by all the deep-cut inlets on the west of Scotland, and thus come back to the very place from whence you started? If you can even imagine this it gives you some idea of what being an island means. We are on every side surrounded by water, and nowhere can we get away to any other country without crossing the sea.

The very nearest country to us is France, and at the narrowest point of the Channel there are only twenty-one miles of sea to

get over. One way of starting on our great enterprise is to cross this little strip of water and take the train across France, right to the other side, there to meet a ship which will carry us onward. Or we can start in the same way across the Channel but go much farther on by train, all along Italy as well as France, and then we can catch the same ship a considerable way farther on in the Mediterranean.

Or there is another way, the quickest of all, and the newest; by this means – after crossing the Channel – we can go the whole distance across Europe, and Asia too, by train, and come out on the other side of the world, near China, in about ten days! To do this we should have to get to Russia first by any European line we pleased, and on arriving at the town of Moscow change into the train which does this mighty journey. It starts once a week, and is called The International. It is quite a small train, though the engine is large. There are only half a dozen coaches, and one of these is for luggage and another is a restaurant. First-class people are put two together into a compartment. It certainly sounds as if that would allow plenty of room, but then if anyone has to live and sleep and move for ten days in a train, he can hardly be expected to sit cramped up all the time, he must have some space to stir about in. At night one of the seats forms one bed and another is let down crossways above it. There is, alas, no bath, but there is a small lavatory for every two compartments where we can wash after a fashion. There are even books provided in the restaurant car, some in Russian, some in French, some in

German, and some in English.

The journey itself is not very interesting, and we should be glad enough to get to the end of it I fancy. No, I am not going to allow you to take me that way, not even if you begged hard! It is very useful for business men, whose one idea is to save time, but for us who want to see all we can of this glorious world it would be folly.

On the contrary, the route I should like to take is the very longest of all, and that is by sea the whole way, on one of the great liners running east. The real choice lies between this and the railway journey across France to the seaport of Marseilles, or Toulon, according to which of the great British lines of steamships we choose – the Peninsula and Oriental, known as the P. & O., or the Orient. I am willing you should decide between these routes. Think well. In order that you may understand better what the choice means I will tell you what you will see if we take the railway journey.

We shall have to start one morning from Charing Cross Station in London. All around us people are carrying bundles of rugs and magazines. Some, like ourselves, are going far east and they are parting from those who love them and will not see them again for a long time. That fair young man standing by the carriage door looks little more than a big schoolboy, but he is going out to India to help to govern there. He is a clever fellow and has passed a very stiff examination to gain this position, and he eagerly looks forward to all the new scenes in the life awaiting him. His

charming mother and sister are seeing him off; they are so much alike they might be mistaken for sisters; they are trying to talk and joke lightly, but you can see how hungrily the mother's eyes are fastened on her son, as if she could never see him enough. Rightly too, for when she meets him again, he will not be the boy he is now. His face will be browned by the tropical sun, and he will have become a man; he will have an air of command which comes naturally to a man who lives, often by himself, in charge of a district, and has to rule and judge and decide for the dark-skinned people.

Close beside us there are several men smoking big cigars, and one of them says loudly, "All right, old chap, I'll bring one back for you next week; I shall cross again on Monday." He runs over to Paris on business every week and thinks no more of it than of going to his office in the morning. A trip to France is very easy when you have the means to do it comfortably.

Then we take our seats, and the train steams out of the station, leaving the crowd on the platform to scatter. After a long run, with no stops, we reach Dover and go on board a steamer which seems quite large enough to anyone who is not used to steamers. Our heavy luggage has been sent on board the big ship which will meet us at Marseilles, so we have only our handbags to carry. The crossing is quite short, and it is best to stay on deck if you don't want to be ill. The very first thing to notice, as we gradually draw away from the land, is the whiteness of the towering chalk cliffs which stand out prominently near Dover. Often you must

have read of the "white cliffs of Old Albion," and if you live in the north or away from the sea, you must have wondered what they were; now this explains it all. When the Romans came over from the Continent they crossed the sea the shortest way, and in approaching this unknown island were struck with astonishment at the high gleaming white cliffs, unlike anything they had seen before; they were so much amazed that ever after the "white cliffs" were the chief feature of Britain in their eyes.

There is a break in the cliffs, where Dover now stands, and here the Romans later on made a port, and a port it has remained to this day.

If we are lucky in getting a fine day for the crossing we can sit on deck-chairs, looking at the dazzling milky-blue sea and sky until someone cries out, "There's France!"

You will not be able to make out anything at all at first, because land does not look in the least what you expect when you see it first from the sea. You would naturally search for a long dark line low down on the horizon, but it isn't like that at all. There is a hazy bluish cloud, very indistinct, and seemingly transparent, but as we draw nearer it grows clearer, and then houses and ships can be discerned, and after a good deal of manœuvring and shouting and throwing of ropes and churning up the water with the screw, two bridges are pushed across to the dock, and numbers of eager little porters, dressed in bright blue linen suits with very baggy trousers, surround us and implore us to allow them to carry our baggage.

"Me Engleesh speaking, sir."

"Good me, good man me."

"Baggage carrying me."

They are here, there, and everywhere, so good-natured, so lively, so different from the stolid English porters. Their eyes are very bright and they will take money of any kind, French or English, it matters not to them.

We have had to get our money changed on the boat, and that is the first thing that makes us feel we are really out of England. In exchange for an English gold pound we get twenty-five – not twenty – French shillings; these shillings are called francs and are not unlike our shillings at a first glance, but they are thinner and lighter. Some have the head of Napoleon, the last French Emperor, on them – these are old; the latest new ones are rather interesting, for they have a little olive branch on one side and a graceful figure of a woman sowing seed on the other, so one can interpret the meaning as peace and plenty. If you change a franc into copper you get ten – not twelve – pennies for it, and French pennies look very much like those of England. There are also half-franc pieces like little sixpences, and two-franc pieces like smaller florins, and gold pounds called Louis or Napoleons, and half-sovereigns too, but all the money seems light and rather unreal when one is accustomed to our more solid coins.

We walk up the gangway into a large barn-like place, where we meet some smart-looking men in uniform with pointed moustaches turned up to their eyes and a fierce expression. They

stand behind a shelf, on which all the baggage from the boat is put, and we approach this with our bags in our hands.

The official demands in French if we have anything to declare, meaning, are we bringing across anything which it is forbidden to sell in France, such as brandy, matches, or cigarettes, for if so we must declare it and pay something to the Government for allowing us to bring it. We answer that we have nothing. "Rien, Monsieur," very politely, hoping to soften his heart, and as we both have honest faces he believes us and scrawls a chalk-mark on our bags and lets us pass. We are lucky, for now we can go straight on to the train and get good places before the crowd follows. Some unfortunate people, however, are caught. One woman who is wearing a hat with enormous feathers and very high-heeled shoes, has two huge trunks.

She tries to slip a five-franc piece into the hand of one of the custom-house officers. It is a silly thing to do, for it at once makes him think she is concealing something; very loudly and virtuously he refuses the money, hoping that everyone notices how upright he is, and then he insists on the contents of her trunks being turned out on to the counter. Piles of beautiful underclothing are spread out before all those men; silk and satin frocks come next; numberless dressing-table ornaments in silver and gold, and little bottles by the dozen; boots and shoes and books follow, while Madame begins to weep and then changes to screaming and raving. She is a Frenchwoman who has been staying in England, but she did not escape any more than an English-woman. How

she will ever manage to get all her finery stuffed back into those boxes without ruining it I don't know, and we haven't time to wait to see.

The platform is very low and the train looks in consequence much larger than an English one, as we have to climb up into it almost from the ground. It is a corridor train, and the first classes are lined with a kind of drab cloth, which does not seem so suitable for railway work as our dark blue colour. The guard sets us off with a little "birr-r-r" like a toy cock crowing. When we move out of the station at last we find ourselves going at a snail's pace along a street, and at once we catch our breath with interest – it is all so strange! Never will you forget that first glimpse of a foreign land! The very air is different, with a sharp pleasant smell of wood-smoke in it. Some people say that every foreign country has its own smell and that they would know where they were with their eyes shut! This must be an exaggeration, still there is something in it!

As the train goes slowly forward a clanging bell rings on the engine to warn the people to get off the lines, which are not fenced in in any way. On every side you see neat little women wearing no hats, with their hair done up in top-knots; they are out marketing, and most of them carry immense baskets or string-bags stuffed with cabbages and carrots and other vegetables. The children are nearly all dark, with brown skins and bright black eyes, and they look thin but full of life. The boys wear a long pinafore or overall of cheap black stuff, and even the biggest go



about in short socks, showing their bare legs, which looks rather babyish to us. The sun is shining brilliantly, and on most of the pavements there are chairs set out around small tables where men in perfectly amazingly baggy corduroy trousers and blue blouses sit and drink variously coloured drinks. A little boy who was too near the line is caught away by his agitated mother, who pours out over him a babble of words, and the child, laughing roguishly, answers her as volubly. Not one sentence, not one word, can we understand, though we are quite near and can hear it all. When you remember the painfully slow way you have learnt *avoir* and *être* at school it is maddening to think that this child, much younger than you, can rattle away in French without any trouble, and it is still more annoying that when you *did* think you knew a little French you cannot make out one single word! French spoken is so very different from French learnt out of a book! However, for your comfort you must remember that that little bright-eyed boy, whose name is probably Pierre or Jacques, would think you very clever indeed to be able to talk in English.

The houses have a strange look; it is chiefly because every single one of them, even the poorest, has sun-shutters outside the windows, set back against the wall; they are of wood, mostly painted green and pierced with slits. In countries where the sun is hot and strong at midday the rooms must be kept cool by such shutters.

When we are once clear of the town the train soon gets up great speed, and we race through green fields with hedgerows

and trees as in our own land, and yet even here there is something different. It may be because of the long lines of poplars, like "Noah's Ark" trees, which appear very frequently, or it may be the country houses we see here and there, which are more "Noah's Ark" still, being built very stiffly and painted in bright reds and yellows and greens that look like streaks. At the level crossings you see women standing holding a red flag furled, for women seem to do as much of the work on the railways as men; and waiting at the gates there is often a team of three or four horses, each decorated with an immense sheep-skin collar, that looks as if it must be most hot and uncomfortable. Occasionally we catch sight of what looks like a rookery in the trees seen against the sky; however, the dark bunches are not nests at all, but lumps of mistletoe growing freely. Rather a fairytale sort of country where mistletoe can be got so easily!

We can stay all night in Paris if we like, and travel the next day to Marseilles, and stay a night there too. That is doing the journey easily. Many people go right through, running round Paris in a special train and being carried speeding through France all night. There are sleeping cars made up like little cabins with beds in them and every luxury. But it is tiring to travel on continuously in a French train, as the carriages are made very hot by steam, and French people object to having the windows open at all, so the atmosphere gets almost unbearable, according to our ideas.

We shan't have time to see much of Paris if we just stay the night there, but as we drive through in a taxi-cab we can see how

full of life it is, though at this time of the year people do not sit out at the little tables on the pavements late in the evening as they do in the summer. There are taxi-cabs everywhere, and they all pass each other on the right side, you notice, the opposite side from that which we use; you will find this in all other foreign countries but Sweden, and in some Provinces of Austria. Though Great Britain stands almost alone, in this case she is certainly in the right, for the driver ought to be on the side near the vehicle he is passing, and also the whip coming in the middle of the street is less liable to flick anyone than if it was on the pavement side.

The hotels in Paris are many and magnificent; when we arrive at one all gilt and glitter, we ask for small rooms, as it is only for one night, and are taken up to two tiny apartments simply crammed with furniture. It is enough to make anyone laugh, for there is hardly room to turn round. Both are alike. In each the bed is covered with a magnificent yellow satin brocade coverlet; there is a large arm-chair, which quite prevents the door of the huge wardrobe from opening. The washing-stand, which has taps of hot and cold water, is crammed into a corner so that one can hardly get at it. There is a writing-table with ink and blotting-pad and everything else for writing, but no dressing-table and nowhere at all to put one's brushes. Above the mantelpiece is a big mirror, too high for you to look into, though I can peer round that immense gilt clock to do my shaving. The rest of the mantelpiece is taken up with heavy marble ornaments – utterly useless – and gilt candlesticks. There is a telephone on the wall,

and down this we can give our orders into the hall. Luckily I know enough French to ask for what we want, though if you stand giggling at me every word will go out of my head when the man below inquires my wishes.

It is by means of this telephone I order breakfast for us both to be sent up next morning. All we can get is coffee, or tea, with rolls and butter and two poached or boiled eggs. You'll have to make this do. It is the custom here. In France people start with only coffee and rolls and then go off and do a good morning's work, and come back again to eat a large meal which is a sort of breakfast and lunch rolled into one, at about twelve o'clock. It all depends on what one is accustomed to, and certainly we look very hungrily at the small dish of eggs that appears!

Meantime I am getting a little anxious about my boots. I put them out last night to be cleaned, but this is such a large place, with so many people coming and going, that I began to wonder if they have been taken to the wrong room; timidly I ask the waiter, who brings the breakfast, if he can find them. With a knowing smile he stoops down and opens a tiny cupboard in the wall near the door, and there, slipped in from outside, are the boots! "Voilà!" he says triumphantly, as if he had just brought off a successful conjuring trick. Certainly what with the taps and telephone and trap-doors for boots this hotel is very much up to date.

North of Paris we have seen orchards of apple and cherry trees, but farther south, as we rush along, we get into a land of

vineyards, where rows of little vines are being cultivated on every foot of ground on the hillsides. By nightfall we reach Marseilles, and if we were going on to Toulon it would have taken two hours more.

Marseilles is the largest seaport in France, and is second only to Paris in size and importance.

Do you know those preserved fruits which generally appear about Christmas-time in oval cardboard or long wooden boxes? Have you ever wondered if they are real fruit, and where they come from? They *are* real fruit, boiled and dipped in syrup, though they taste very different from the same fruit freshly gathered. A great deal of the preserving is done in France, especially along the south coast, and when we get to Marseilles we are in the very heart of the business.

After passing the night in an hotel we have time to wander about a bit before going down to the docks to find our ship.

The sun is shining brightly as we turn out after another breakfast, which only seems to have given an edge to our keen British appetites. There is a nasty cold wind blowing round corners and buffeting people. The pavements are very lively; we see women and girls hurrying about doing household shopping, and boys in heavy cloth capes and military caps, so that they look like cadets, this is the uniform worn by better-class schoolboys in France. The French policemen, called gendarmes, are also in uniform of so military a kind that unless we knew we should certainly mistake them for soldiers.

There are stalls set out on the pavements, heaped up with embroidery and odds and ends, including soap, which is manufactured here very largely. Bright-eyed girls try to entice us to buy as we pass. One street is just like a flower garden, lined with stalls piled up with violets and roses and anemones and other blossoms. Trams follow one another along the rails in an endless procession. We walk on briskly and turn down a side street; here at last is what I have been looking for, and well worth finding it is too! It is a shop with great plate-glass windows; on one side is every kind of preserved fruit, and on the other a variety of chocolates, tarts, and expensive sweets. Look at that dainty box filled with dark green figs, artistically set off by sugared violets pressed into all the niches! These are rather different from the flat, dry brown figs which is all that English children recognise under that name. Another box glows with tiny oranges, mandarins they call them here, and piled up over them are richly coloured cherries shining with sugar crystals. In the centre is an enormous fruit like a dark orange-coloured melon, surrounded by heaps of others, while the plain brown chestnuts, that don't attract much notice, are really the best of all, for they are the *marrons glacés* for which Marseilles is famed, and once you have tasted these, freshly made, all other sweets will seem insipid to you.

Inside the shop there are many carefully dressed ladies, daintily holding little plates, and going about from one counter to another, picking up little cakes filled with cream and soaked

in syrup. They eat scores of them, and they do it every day and any hour of the day, in the morning or afternoon or whenever they happen to pass. No wonder they look pasty-faced! We are only here for once, so we need have no compunction about our digestions, especially as there is an empty place left after that tantalising bacon-less breakfast. We are soon provided with a plate each and a little implement which looks as if it had started life as a butter-knife and suddenly changed its mind to become a fork.

The shop-girls take no notice of what we eat; we can pick and choose freely, and at the end they trust us to say how many cakes we have had. We can get here also cups of thick rich chocolate, and, if we wanted it, some tea, though it is only of late years that French people have taken to drinking tea at all freely, for coffee is their national beverage.

Well, come along, tear yourself away, we must get a cab and go down to our ship which is at the docks.

In the cab we pass what is called the Old Port with picturesque rows of weather-beaten sailing boats; only the sailing boats are allowed to come in here. Rising up against the sky at the far end of the port is a curious bridge quite unlike any other you have seen, for the bridge part is at a great height and there is nothing below by which people or vehicles can cross over. How is anyone going to take the trouble to climb up there? How, above all, are carts or carriages going to manage it?

You can easily make a rough model to see the principle of

this bridge for yourself. Get a couple of the tallest candlesticks in the house, and put a stick across them, run a curtain ring on to the stick, and to the ring attach numerous threads fastened at the lower end to a flat bit of card or board like a raft. Then, by pushing the ring along the stick, you can make the raft follow across below. The stick represents the high bridge, and the raft in reality rests on the surface of the water, and when the machinery above, represented by the ring, is set in motion, it rumbles across and draws with it the floating raft, which is large enough to take a great number of men and vehicles. Every ten minutes or so this floating bridge passes over from one side to another, and people pay a sou, which is the French halfpenny, to travel with it. Thus, you see, when a tall ship comes in she has only to avoid the raft, and she can sail in beneath the high bridge without any trouble. We could, if we wished, go up in a lift to the high bridge; but the railings up there are far apart, and there is a high wind blowing, you are not very big, and if you slipped between I should have to give up my voyage round the world; so I think we won't, if you don't mind!

Besides, we have to catch our ship waiting at the docks, and she will be off very soon.

Now that you have heard what we should probably do and see if we went across France, will you take this journey or will you start from England and go right round in the ship?

You answer that though you would like to see the little blue-bloused porters, and that it would amuse you to think that the



little French boys and girls could speak no English, and though you would certainly *love* the *marrons glacés*, you think, after all, having heard about it, we might just as well go the other way round, though, of course – the *marrons glacés*—

Sensible boy! Forget about them! We'll go round. In the very next chapter we'll be up and off in earnest.

## CHAPTER II

# REALLY OFF!

It is exciting to start on any journey, even if it is only one we have done before, but to go off round the world that is a real adventure!

There are many lines of steamers we could choose to go by, but we will select for this first part of the journey the Orient Line. The choice really lies between that and the P. & O., as we have already decided, and for many reasons it is best to begin with the Orient and join the other later. The main reason being that I want you to see a little of as many European countries as possible, and the Orient ships stop at Naples, in Italy, while those of the other line do not.

The ships in the Orient fleet all begin with an O; there are the *Otranto*, *Otway*, and many more, but the boat which suits us and happens to sail on the date we want to start – in the beginning of November – is the *Orontes*. She is not the largest ship in the fleet, having about half a dozen before her on the list, but she is a good ship and very steady.

Our jumping-off place is London, whence a special train runs from the station of St. Pancras down to the docks at Tilbury, where the *Orontes* is waiting for us. The long platform beside the train is covered with people when we arrive there, so that we have

some difficulty in finding seats. If all these people were coming with us we should have a full ship indeed, but the one half of them is only seeing the other half off!

The line passes through dreary flat country, and at last we catch sight of open water and funnels and feel as if we must be right down at the Thames' mouth, but we are very far from that yet.

The heavy luggage has all been sent on ahead, and passengers are told only to bring with them what can be carried in the hand; judging from the piles of boxes that are tumbled out of the train many of them must have tolerably large hands!

We pass through a great shed, and coming out on the other side find our ship there, right up against the dock side. It towers above us, blocking out the sky as a street of six-storey houses would do. In fact, it is rather like looking up at a street side, and when we see the sloping ladder leading to the deck, like those used for hen-roosts but on a giant scale, we feel our adventure is well begun. Hang on to the hand-rail, for the wind is blowing hard, and if you went down into the black dirty water between the ship and the dock there would be very little chance of getting you out again; even as we climb up something flicks past us and is carried away, and we see it floating far below; it is an enormous white handkerchief which the man up there on deck has been waving to his wife in farewell. It is gone, and it is to be hoped he has another handy, he'll need it to-day. At the top of the ladder a man in uniform looks at our ticket and calls out

the number of our cabin. He is so smart and has such a dignified manner we might well mistake him for the captain, but he is an officer, called the purser, who looks after the passengers. A bright-faced steward, unmistakably English, takes possession of us and pilots us down some well-carpeted stairs, through a large room where small tables are laid for lunch, and into a very long narrow passage shining with white enamel paint. There are little doors with numbers on them on one side, and about half-way along the steward stops and ushers us into our cabin. It is a tiny room. If you lay down from side to side you could touch each wall with head and heels, and if I lay down from end to end I could do the same, and I am rather bigger than you! There are two shelves, one above the other, made up as beds, a piece of furniture with drawers and a looking-glass in it, a fixed basin such as those you see in bathrooms, and a few pegs to hang things on, and that is all. Our cabin trunks, which we sent on ahead, are here before us, and through the open round port-hole we catch a glimpse of grey water. We are lucky indeed to get a cabin to ourselves, for in many, not a bit larger than this, there would be a third bunk or bed, and a stranger would be forced in on us. When we have settled our things you will be surprised to find how comfortable it all is, for everything is so conveniently arranged. It is just as well to put out what we shall want at once while the ship is steady, for once she begins to roll —

When we have done this we go back to the saloon, encountering many people rushing wildly to and fro with bags

and bundles, still unable to find their cabins, having come on at the last minute. In the great saloon, those who are going ashore are hastily swallowing cups of hot tea, and just as we arrive a bell rings to warn them to get off the ship if they don't want to be carried away with her.

They flock down the gangway while we stand high above, and many good-byes are shouted, and some are tearful and some are quite casual and cheerful. Then the gangway is moved, but just before it goes down with a run there is a shout, and two policemen hurry along the quay hauling two shamefaced-looking men who are hustled up into the ship again. They are stokers who fire the furnaces for the engines far down below in the bowels of the ship. They had signed on for this voyage and at the last minute tried to slink away, but have been caught and forced back to their work.

Now the strip of water widens and very slowly we move from the quay, being dragged ignominiously backward across the great basin in which we lie by a diminutive steamer called a tug. We are not out in the river yet and our own engines have not begun to work. You can understand that it would be very difficult to load a ship if she stood always in the river, where there are rising and falling tides, so, to make this easier, great docks have been built along the river, and in them the flow of the tides is regulated, so that the water remains always at pretty much the same level.

The tug that pulls us across the dock on our way out looks absurdly small, like a little Spitz dog pulling a great deerhound; but it does its work well, and presently we glide into a narrow

cut between high walls; this is the lock, the entrance to the dock, and the water is held up by great gates at each end as required, just as it is on river locks for boats. Once we are inside the great gates behind us are shut, and presently those at the farther end open and we see two other little tugs waiting there to take us in charge. We are going out at the top of the tide, and if we missed it should have to wait for another twelve hours, or there would not be sufficient water in the river to float the ship comfortably. We are still stern first, so if we want to see the fun we must climb up to the top deck at that end. The wind is blowing a perfect gale and almost drives us off our feet; it catches the side of the ship and makes it far harder work for the gallant grimy tugs, which are pulling and straining at the taut ropes till they look like bars of iron lying between us and them. They churn the water to a fury, and pour forth volumes of black smoke; inch by inch we feel the ship moving out; her stern is dragged up-stream, so that when she is finally swung clear, her bows are pointing seaward and she is ready to go. It is an exciting moment when the ropes are cast off, and there is a great deal of running about and shouting, and then our own engines begin gently but powerfully to do their work. The screws beneath the stern revolve and we have started on our long, long voyage!

There are no waves in the river; only those who are very nervous will think about being ill yet awhile, and this is a good chance to examine the great ship which is to be our home for some time.

There is plenty of room to walk about on the decks or to play games when we reach a more summer-like climate. There are many rooms where we can shelter in the wet and cold weather, a great lounge with writing-tables, and a smoking-room – and there is no house on earth kept so spotlessly clean as a ship!

When we go down to dinner we sit on chairs that swing round like office chairs, only they are fixed into the floor, and as they only swing one way, there are some funny scenes till people get used to them. We have hardly taken our seats when a very magnificent man with a white waistcoat and gold shoulder straps and much gold lace on his uniform comes and sits down too, and smiles and bows to everyone. This is the captain, and we must be more distinguished than we guessed, for we have been put at his table, where the honoured passengers usually find seats. Though this captain has such a kindly smile, a captain can be very terrifying indeed; he is king in his ship, and has absolute authority; his word is law, as, of course, it must be, for the safety of the whole ship's company depends on him, and there is the fine tradition, which British captains always live up to, that in case of any accident happening to the ship the captain must be the last man to quit her. Innumerable captains indeed have preferred to go down into the unfathomable depths with their ships sooner than leave them when they have been wrecked.

For several days there are very few people to be seen about, and the rows of empty chairs at the table and on deck are rather depressing, but as the weather brightens a little people creep out

of their cabins; white-faced ladies come to lie, rolled in rugs, on the sheltered side of the deck, and the chairs are filled. Yet it is still a little dismal, though we tramp sturdily up and down and would not admit it for the world. The strong wind blows endlessly and the great grey waves are always rolling on monotonously one after another, one after another, in huge hillocks. So we plough down the English Channel and across the Bay of Biscay, which is no rougher than anywhere else, though people ask with bated breath, "When shall we be in the Bay?" "Are we through the Bay yet?" as if there was no other bay in all the world.

Then comes a day when all at once everyone on board seems to wake up and become alive again. The sun shines in patches along the decks and the sea is blue and sparkling. We are passing close beside a steep and rocky coast, and so near do we go that we can see the white waves dashing against it and even spouting up in sheets of spray through blow-holes in the cliffs. What we see is the coast of Spain, so we have set eyes for the first time on another country than our own. There are many other steamers in this stretch of water, some small and some as large as ours, some coming and some going. It is all much more lively than it was. Soon we have pointed out to us the place where the battle of Trafalgar was fought, when Britain won a victory that assured her the dominion of the seas up to the present time – a battle in which our greatest sailor, Lord Nelson, was killed in the moment of victory!

It is the next morning after this that, when we wake up, we find



that the tossing and rocking motion has ceased; it is curiously quiet, the iron plates that bind the ship together no longer creak and groan as if they were in agony. We are bewildered. Then in a moment the meaning of all this flashes upon us. We have reached Gibraltar!

Coming up on deck we find the scene glorious. The sun is shining out of a cloudless sky on to a sea so blue that it gives one a sort of pleasant pain to look at its loveliness. The air is brilliant, as if we were living at the heart of a crystal. The ship is stealing along so silently and gently she hardly seems to move, and then she comes to anchor in a bay that seems to be surrounded on all sides with hills. Some of these hills, lying rather far away, gleam white in the sunshine; they are part of the great continent of Africa, and so, though it is only in the distance, we have set eyes on our first new continent. Towering up before us, with mighty bulk, is an immense rock, rising bald and rather awful into the pure sky. Near the summit its sides are completely bare, seamed by great gashes, and broken by masses of rock that look as if they might crash down at any moment. Apes live up there, wild mischievous creatures, who descend to steal from the orchards below, but are so shy that they are hardly ever seen of men. They are of a kind called Barbary apes, only found elsewhere in Africa; and it is thought that perhaps, many ages ago, Europe was joined to Africa at this point, and that when a great convulsion occurred which broke the two asunder and let the water flow through the Straits of Gibraltar some of the apes may have been left on this

side, where their descendants still are, sundered for ever from their kinsfolk by the strip of sea.

About the base of the rock is a little town running up the hill and brightened by many trees – this is Gibraltar itself, one of the most famous places in the world. For this alone it is well worth while to come round by sea.

Anyone can see at a glance why it is so important. That little strait, about a dozen miles across, is the only natural entrance by water into the Mediterranean Sea, which lies all along the south of Europe. At the other end men have had to cut a way out by means of a canal. If ever European nations were at war, the nation which held Gibraltar would be able to prevent the ships of other countries from getting into or coming out of the Mediterranean. It could smash them with big guns if they tried, or blow them up. So that even if the country on each side were flat this would still be an important place; but nature has made here a precipitous rock, which is a natural fortress, and by great good luck this belongs, not to the country of Spain, of which it is the southern part, but to Great Britain. To find out how this is so you must go to history. Gibraltar has been held by Britain for many years now, and though the King of Spain is very friendly with Britain, and has married an English princess, I think he must sometimes feel a little sore over Gibraltar.

Lying in a basin on one side of us are some of our own powerful and ugly ironclads, like bulldogs guarding the fort, and on the other side are ships of all nations, come on peaceful

trading errands or for pleasure cruises, including a dainty little white French yacht that looks like a butterfly which has just alighted.

We go ashore in a launch and are met on the quay by a medley of strange folk and a great clamour of voices! The men and women are nearly all dark skinned and black eyed, and yet they are all speaking English after a fashion. A woman offers us a curiously twisted openwork basket of oranges, with the deep-coloured fruit gleaming through the meshes, a man implores us to take some of the absurdly neat little nosegays he has made up, picture postcards are thrust under our noses, and cabmen wildly beseech us to patronise their open vehicles. It is a brilliant scene, full of life and colour and warmth, and the people all seem good-humoured and jolly.

Sitting huddled up against a wall, with some odd-looking bundles beside them, are a group of very poor people; they are emigrants about to leave their own country for South America. Out there in the bay is the emigrant ship, and dipping toward her over the open water are several boats loaded down to the gunwale going out; others have reached her side and the people swarm up like flies. This group on the quay are awaiting their turn. A small boy and girl are rolling about in the sun like little lizards and laughing gaily. The little girl is called Maria and is about ten years old; she has a tiny scarlet shawl pinned across her chest, and her bright black hair shines in the sunlight; in her wee brown ears are little gilt ear-rings, and she is hugging tightly to her bosom

a large and very gaudy doll. It is not exactly the kind of doll an English child would care about, because its face is the face of an idiot and it is made of some sort of poor composition stuff; its clothes are tawdry material of tinsel and stiff muslin, and are pinned on by pins with coloured glass heads glittering in the sun. Maria thinks it lovely and shrieks if her young brother Sebastian lays a finger on it. She is on the point of leaving her own country, perhaps for ever, to travel for thousands of miles to a land where everything is different from what she is used to; but she is as unconscious of this as if she were a little kitten, and as long as she can roll in the sunshine and hug her doll, the first she has ever possessed, the thought of the morrow does not trouble her soul.

Her home lies far away in the interior of Spain, and her parents have travelled to Gibraltar in carts and then in a marvellous thing called a train which made the children shriek with delight when it moved off without horses. Maria and Sebastian were brought up in a hovel with a mud floor, and only one room, shared with the donkey and the goat. They were never taught to obey, or to have their meals at regular hours, or to go to bed at night at a particular time; they ran in when they pleased, clamoured for something to eat or drink, or else fell down on a bundle of rags in the corner and were sound asleep in a moment. They often slept in the heat of the day and were up almost all night listening to a neighbour playing the guitar, or singing and rollicking with other children. Their usual drink was sour red wine made from grapes grown on the neighbouring hillsides after all the best juice

had been already pressed out of them. This the peasants bought in immense bottles, swollen out below like little tubs, and cased in wicker-work with handles which made them easy to carry. In every hovel there was a bottle like this. To match it there was an enormous loaf of dark-coloured bread, made flat and round as a cart-wheel or a small table; bits of this were chopped off as required, and when Sebastian and Maria cried out they were hungry they had a lump of bread and sip of wine given to them, and then they became quite happy again. Sometimes they had olives with their bread, or chestnuts, or a salad made from herbs growing by the roadsides, and they had oranges very often and goat's milk cheese. On high days and festival days they had sometimes very thin hot cabbage soup out of a great black pot that boiled over a few sticks; they dipped their bread into it or supped it up out of large flat wooden spoons, wrinkling their little noses meantime because it was so hot. A grand treat was a purple or crimson pomegranate given by a kindly neighbour.

When Maria was about seven the whole family moved into a town where the narrow streets were always dark between the tall thin houses. It was much more exciting here than in the country; there was always something to see, and in the evenings the whole place was like a bazaar with people coming and going, and shows and entertainments open half the night. On festival days the streets were gay with lanterns, and festoons of coloured paper and flags were waved until the children thought it like heaven.

Then came a talk of crossing the sea. Some members of the family and very many friends had already made a journey to a far-away country called Argentina, and others were thinking of going. It seemed that in that land, which was as sunny and warm as their own, there was more money to be made than in Spain, and as party by party made up their minds and set off in one of the great emigrant ships Maria's father grew more gloomy and unsettled, until at last, by one means or another, he had scraped together enough money to pay for their passages, and then they all started on the great adventure, even a greater one than our going round the world.

It is only a couple of days after leaving Gibraltar that we reach Toulon in good time in the morning. We anchor well outside the splendid bay, as Toulon is one of the most important French ports, and no prying eyes are wanted there. In the little steam-launch we run past the huge battleships *La Verité*, *La République*, and others lying solidly in a row manned by French sailors with little red top-knots on their flat caps. Then we see the beautiful range of high hills surrounding the bay, and are landed on the quay. The market is one of the most interesting things here, and we are lucky to be in time for it. Up a long narrow street are lines of open-air stalls covered with masses of fruit and vegetables. The natty little Frenchwomen who sell them almost all wear blue aprons and black dresses, and have little three-cornered shawls over their shoulders.

Look at that bunch of celery there, it is monstrous – the size of

a child! Everything seems on a huge scale; there are artichokes on great stalks, melons gleaming deep orange-red and too large for any but a man to lift; scattered all about are bunches of little scarlet tomatoes not much bigger than grapes. But the oddest thing to us are the bunches of fungi, tawny-coloured, piled up in heaps, and evidently very popular! There are squares of matting covered with chestnuts, and whelks, like great snails, sticking out their horns and crawling over each other in a lively way. A strange medley! The flowers are lovely; you can buy a big bunch of violets for a sou, and sou is the peasant word for a halfpenny. Gladiolus, anemones, roses, and mignonette fill the air with fragrance. It is a beautiful place this market.

After lunch we stroll down to the quay again and wander idly about looking at the people until the launch comes to take us back to the steamer. There is a huge fat man seated on a low stool cleaning the boots of another man equally stout. Wedged into the corner beside them, so that they cannot stir, are two small white boys with thin pathetic little faces. As we watch we see the boot-cleaning man, who has a cruel, mean expression, pull hold of the little tunic of the nearer one, and point to a smear upon it, then deliberately he raises his large hand and smacks the child hard across the cheek. The little chap makes no effort to escape, – he evidently knows it is hopeless, – he only crooks a thin little arm over his cheek as he shrinks back. Deliberately the great man holds down the thin little arm and strikes him again with savage force. It is sickening! If we interfere the child will

probably only get it worse afterwards. There are a few brutes like this who make their own children's lives a misery, though mostly French people are very kind. The children look so ill and pale, too, they probably don't get half enough to eat.

"May I get them some sweets?"

Happy thought! We passed a shop a minute ago. Here, wait a second, say to the father in your best French this sentence —

"Ils sont à vous, ces garçons, Monsieur? Très beaux garçons!"

You see you have put him in a good humour, he is pleased, though the poor little chaps are very far from being "beaux." They seem almost too stupefied to understand the sweets, but they know the way to put them in their mouths.

While we are waiting on the tender before it starts we see a different set of little boys; one, a delicate, pretty-looking little fellow, about your age, but not nearly so tall or strong, raises his cap and begins in English, "Good-day, Monsieur." His little companions sit around in awe at his knowledge and audacity. His name is Pierre, he tells us, and that badly dressed sturdy little boy with a sullen face is Louis. Pierre tries to make conversation in our own language to entertain us. "Are you to Australie going?" he asks. We tell him we are going first to Egypt. "Monter au chameau!" he cries excitedly, going off into a gabble of French and beseeching us to take him with us as "boy." We tell him that he is too small and that it costs much money. "Have you money — English?" he asks. He is very much interested when we show him half a crown and explain that it is equal to three francs of



his own money. Then he catches sight of some English stamps. "Timbres!" he cries, and then, with a great effort, "I college," meaning "I collect." We give him a halfpenny stamp, which he carefully puts away in a battered purse already containing two French pennies. Louis, who has been giving convulsive hitches to his little trousers, which threaten to part company altogether with the upper garment, bursts in eagerly, asking us to give him a penny, adding solemnly: "Ma mère est morte," as if the fact of his mother being dead entitled him to demand it. We explain that it is not polite to ask for money. "Cigarette," he then says promptly. We tell him that in England the law forbids boys under sixteen to smoke, whereat they all shriek with laughter. So we add that Englishmen want to grow up tall strong men, and if they smoke as boys they won't, whereupon they grow grave again and nod their little heads wisely.

The waves are quite wild out in the bay and we have considerable difficulty in jumping on to the slippery step at the foot of the long gangway up the ship's side. Hanging on with a firm grip we struggle upward, and when we reach the top we see the little French boys waving their good-byes to us from the tender, Pierre bowing gracefully, cap in hand, Louis with his disreputable air of being a little ragamuffin and rejoicing in it.

## CHAPTER III

# FIERY MOUNTAINS

Do you learn Physical Geography? I did when I was in the schoolroom, but it is quite likely to have been given up now, or perhaps it is called by some other name. It sounds dull, but is not really, at least there was one part of it that interested me immensely, so much so that that particular page was thumbed and dirty with being turned over so many times. This was the page on which volcanoes were described. I never thought I should see a volcano, but the idea of these tempestuous mountains, seething with red-hot fire inside, and ready to vomit forth flames and lava at any time appealed to the imagination. This lava, it seemed, was a kind of thick treacly stuff, resembling pitch, which ran down the mountain-sides boiling hot and carried red ruin in its track. It seems nothing less than idiotic for people to live on the slopes of a volcano where such an awful fate might overtake them at any time, yet they not only *did* so but still *do*.

One of the reasons why we came by the Orient line is to see Naples, which stands almost under the shadow of one of the best-known volcanoes in the world – Vesuvius.

We arrive at Naples early in the morning and are the very first to be up and out on deck. The bay has been called one of the most lovely to be seen anywhere, but to-day at least it is disappointing,

for there is no sun and only a dull grey drizzle, which carries our thoughts back to England at once.

The houses of the town rise in tiers up the hillside, very tall and straight, and seem to be filled with innumerable windows.

However, it is not the view of Naples itself which is called so beautiful but rather that of the bay *from* Naples, especially on a blue and golden day, and that we have no chance of seeing. On one side of the bay rises the mighty mountain whose furious deeds have made him known and respected all over the world. There is a heavy cloud hanging around his crest so that we cannot see the crater; the cloud looks as if it were composed of smoke as much as anything else, for even yet Vesuvius is terribly alive.

We get a hasty breakfast, for though we are going to be here till late afternoon, there is much to see, and we have no time to spare. Then we get into a little launch and steam past all the great ships lying at anchor. On the quay we find ourselves in a great crowd of grey uniformed soldiers, many of them mere lads, carrying their kit, and drawn up in lines waiting their turn to march on board the towering troopship anchored alongside, while some of them wind up the gangway like a great grey snake. Those already in the ship are letting down ropes to draw up bottles of wine or baskets of fruit from the women who sell such things. Within a short time Italy has become mistress of Tripoli, a country in Africa, and now she is finding she will have to garrison it in order to hold it; and though it costs her a great deal of money she is sending out many of her young soldiers to guard the new possession.

We get some money changed on the quay, receiving in exchange a number of lire; the lira is very like a franc and corresponds with it and the English shilling, though a little less in value.

This done we walk along the front to the station. Many of the streets are high and broad with splendid houses lining them. In them are men busily at work washing away the mud with long hose pipes mounted on little wheels, so that they look like giant lizards or funny snakes on legs running across the streets by themselves, and as much alive as the well-known advertisement of the carpet-sweeper and Mary Ann!

Other streets are very narrow and filled with people buying and selling. There are swarms of children rolling about in the filth of the roadway; they are dressed in rags and their bodies show through the large holes. They are often playing with old bones or pebbles. Their faces are sometimes quite beautiful, rich golden-brown in colour, and their great velvety brown eyes look so sweetly innocent you would be easily taken in by them; but they are terrible little rogues and would beg from you or steal if they got the chance. Here and there are shops where macaroni is sold; it is ready boiling in great pans; this and cakes made of a kind of flour called polenta are the chief food of the Italians. The macaroni is made out of flour mixed with water to a stiff paste and squeezed through holes in a box till it comes out in long strings. It used to be made in all the dust and dirt of the villages, and is still often to be seen hanging over posts there to

dry, but there are now large manufactories where it is made quite cleanly by machinery; we shall see some as we pass on our way to Pompeii, where we are going. There is one pleasant thing to notice, namely, wherever you look you see flowers growing; the larger and better-class houses have balconies filled with broad-leaved plants and creepers, and the very poorest people living high up towards the sky have window-boxes filled with flowers.

At the station we find a little train, like a tram, with red velvet cushions, and while we sit and wait for it to take us to Pompeii, the city buried by Vesuvius, the rain falls softly and steadily. Presently the stationmaster and his assistant step out gingerly along the uncovered platform, holding umbrellas over their uniforms, and give the word of command, and very slowly we start, and jolt along, stopping frequently. We pass through market gardens first and then through endless vineyards, in many of which the clinging vines are not propped up on sticks, but merely looped from one poplar tree to another, for the trees are growing in straight rows and form a natural support. This ground is particularly good for vines, for the lava which has been dug into the soil is peculiarly fruitful.

There are little white box-like houses amid the vines, and they are hung all over with bunches of brilliant scarlet fruit, which, when we get near enough to see, we find to be tiny tomatoes. Other houses have pumpkins also and melons and chillies, all hanging out to get dried, so that they look quite decorative with their strange adornments. Suddenly our attention is called to a

broad strip of black earth, in shape like a river, flowing down the hillside, but made up of huge blocks as if it had been turned up by a giant ploughshare. This is a lava bed made by the last great explosion of Vesuvius in 1906, when the lava ran down in molten streams, tearing its way through the vineyards and sweeping across the railway lines; at that time two hundred people were killed. An enterprising firm has run a little railway to the very top of Vesuvius, and anyone who cares to do so can go by it and peep into the awful crater at the summit, and a cinematograph operator has recently been down one thousand feet into the crater to take films for exhibition. When Vesuvius is in a bad humour and has growled and grumbled for some days, people are not allowed to go up to the top lest he vomit forth his fury even while they are there and overwhelm them.

While we are on the way to Pompeii I will tell you something of the fascinating story.

Many years ago, long before the people on our islands were civilised, when Britons ran about dressed in skins and floated in wicker-boats covered by skins, there were intelligent and refined people living all round the base of Vesuvius; they knew, of course, that the mountain was a volcano, but there had never been any very terrible explosion that they could remember, and, anyway, the slopes of the mountain where the towns stood extended so far from the crater that no one thought it possible for any great disaster to happen. The two principal towns were called Herculaneum and Pompeii. The people there dressed in

lovely silks and satins; they had beautifully built houses filled with statues and pictures: the women wore costly jewellery; they had plenty of amusements, for they danced and sang and visited each other, and had stalls at the amphitheatre, and supported candidates at political elections, and gossiped and drove in chariots, and lived and loved. They thought, as we all do in our turn, that they knew everything and that no one could reach so high a pinnacle of civilisation as they had reached. This was only about fifty years after Christ's death on the cross, and the Christians were still a comparatively small and despised band.

Well, one day there was a certain amount of uneasiness felt, for a curious black cloud had formed over Vesuvius, and it was not quite like anything that had ever been seen before; people also spoke of strange rumblings in the bowels of the earth, and there was an oppressiveness in the air which alarmed the timid. Then came terrifying noises, cracklings and explosions, and a fine dust filled the air and began settling down everywhere; no sooner was it brushed off than there it was again; it penetrated even close shut houses, and filled the hinges so that the doors would not open easily. The rich people began to make arrangements to get away, but before they could carry them out awful confusion fell upon them; day was turned to night, the clouds of dust fell thickly and chokingly, stifling men as they ran; volumes of lava poured forth, sweeping like fiery serpents down the mountain-side; they rushed over Herculaneum, which was not far from Pompeii, so that while the one city was boiled the other was smothered. Curses and

prayers alike were no avail. Men were caught and choked, houses were silted up, and the whole district was buried.

Years passed and the tradition of the destroyed cities remained; it was known that they were thereabouts, but so completely had the mountain done its work that no one knew exactly where, and it was only comparatively recently that money was subscribed and the work of unearthing them began. By the railway we have passed through Herculaneum, and here we are at Pompeii. Now you shall see what this city of two thousand years ago was like.

The station is close to it, and as we step out of the train we go almost immediately into the gates of the once buried but now uncovered city, which is one of the wonders of the world, attracting people across leagues of sea and land.

We find ourselves in a long narrow street lined by roofless houses. The stones which form the pavement are uneven and much worn, the foot-walks on each side are raised very high, because in wet weather these streets were mere torrents and the water rushed down them. Here and there are stepping-stones, to enable people to cross from one side to the other. It would have been impossible in most places for two chariots or carts to pass one another, and we wonder how they managed. As a fact, the Pompeians did not use wheeled vehicles much, but chairs or palanquins, and the men went on horseback. There are many open counters beside the street, showing that these buildings were used as shops, and in one or two are large marble



basins hollowed out where the wine which was sold was kept cool. Along the side of one house is a gaudily painted serpent, signifying that an apothecary, or, as we should say, a chemist, lived here.

We can go into one of the better-class dwelling-houses and we find that it was built around a courtyard or central hall, and we can peep into the sleeping-rooms, which, in spite of all the luxury of the inhabitants, were mere little dark cupboards with no light or air. Well, so they were in our castles until quite recently! There was a garden behind the hall in all the better-class houses, and this had almost always a tank for gold-fish; we can see it still; but all the little personal things that have been unearthed – the jewellery and household utensils and even the statues – have been taken to the museum at Naples for safe keeping, which is a pity, as the streets and living-rooms seem bare and cold and we need a good deal of imagination to picture them as they must have been.

Here at last is something that makes us start and brings back the awful scene of death and dismay. In a deep recess by a doorway are six skeletons, lying in various attitudes, left exactly as they were found. These people had been caught; they were hurrying, evidently to get out of the outer door, and finding it had been silted up by dust and that they could not open it, had turned back, too late, and been smothered! There they lie now, nearly two thousand years after, just as then.

There were about two thousand skeletons thus found and taken away – only these few were left to give visitors some idea of the

tragedy that happened. The sticky dust and ashes which poured down upon the doomed city reached a depth of twenty-six feet, and they encased everything in a kind of crust. Dogs and cats were caught in this way, and even little lizards, such as those that live in the cracks of the walls in Italy to this day; and though their bodies had decayed away long before they could be dug out, yet the exact impression remained, and in many cases, by pouring soft plaster into the holes, men have reproduced to the life the poor little wriggling body that was caught in such a terrible prison! You can imagine what great value it has been to historians to find the things used by people so long ago. In most cases customs change gradually; the implements and utensils which one generation use are broken and lost and replaced by new fashions, but here, in one lump, stamped down hard for ever, are the things caught in a second of time and held in an iron grip while the years rolled by.

Passing on we find a small temple to the Egyptian god Isis, and this was the very first object to be discovered. Some men quarrying for stone struck upon it and thus the long-lost site of the town was found. Then we see the public baths with all the arrangements for heating the water; the Pompeians, like the Romans, were very fond of bathing. But it is the little things of everyday life that impress us most, and we are brought up suddenly by seeing on a wall a poster of the day advocating the return of one particular candidate to what was the Pompeian Parliament. This carries us right back into the midst of them!

So does also that drinking-fountain by the street side, where the marble has been worn hollow by the hands of those who leaned on it as they stretched forward to drink at the spout!

We can walk through the market-place where the people bought and sold, and look down into the great amphitheatre where the shows which they all loved were held; but as our ship leaves at four o'clock we shall have to tear ourselves away and hurry back along the little line again, running round the base of the sullen brooding mountain which may at any time hurl down his thunder-bolts on the vineyards which still creep up his sides. Past Herculaneum, now partly unburied, and so to gay Naples, where the sun is breaking out.

On the quay we see barrows covered with a curious flesh-coloured fruit about the size and shape of a large pear, and this is quite new to us. We discover these are called Indian figs; but why Indian? They are grown here and are a popular native fruit. They are covered by a thick skin, easily peeled off, and are full of juice and very large pips; they have a sweetish rather sickly taste, but one can imagine they must be a great boon to the poor Italians who can get a good refreshing drink for almost nothing.

Once aboard we discover that something has gone wrong – a propeller has dropped a blade and the ship will not start for some hours. We might have stayed longer in Pompeii after all!

There are compensations for everything and soon we find that this delay is going to be a good one for us, for it will enable us to see two other volcanoes which otherwise we should have missed

in the darkness.

We ask the night-steward to wake us in time for the first, and it seems as if our heads had hardly touched the pillows when we hear his voice at the door, "Stromboli in sight, sir!" It is cold and we are very sleepy; grumbling, we make our way to the front of the deck below the bridge, and suddenly, in the blackness ahead, there shoots up a short straight column of fire like that from the chimney of a blast furnace. It disappears as quickly and quietly as it came, and odd bits of flame, like red-hot cinders, roll this way and that, then all is black again. As the sky quickly lightens we see outlined against it a cone or pyramid, and from the summit there shoots out another column of flame, to disappear almost instantly.

"Stromboli sky-rocketing," says the voice of one of the officers on the bridge above.

All the time we are gliding nearer and nearer to the wonderful mountain, when, with an amazing swiftness, up flashes the sun, sweeping rays of colour over the sky, changing it from pale primrose to fiery orange, and there, black against it, is a little island so neatly made that it appears an exact triangle with a bite out of one side near the top. Stromboli is one of a group of little islands. What had appeared as flame in the darkness shows at the next eruption to be a puff of smoke from which burning lumps fall on the rocky sides and down the precipices. This happens about every quarter of an hour. The sea meantime changes to vivid blue. We are quite close now and can see tiny white houses

nestling on the edge of the island amid clusters of green. What happens to the people if the boiling lava rolls down through their vineyards and into their houses? There is no one to answer that question. Perhaps it never gets so far, perhaps Stromboli has not yet shown himself to be a fierce volcano, but limits his eruptions to angry splutterings which beat on the scarred precipices of the steep sides above the dwellings of the people, – anyway, I don't think I should care to live there, just in case —

We awake suddenly from our intent gazing to find ourselves the laughing-stock of a crowd of decently dressed men and women who have come up in the daylight, properly clad, and there are we in dressing-gowns, not over-long, and slippers on our feet! But no one minds these little mishaps on board ship, and with dignity we pass through to our cabin, smiling and feeling very superior to have seen so much more than the lie-abeds!

As it happens, it is Sunday morning and a very different day from yesterday, with bright sun and a clear sky. As a rule there is service on board ship on Sundays, but to-day we are just going to pass through the Straits of Messina, and the captain must be on the bridge the whole time, and there is no clergyman to take the duty for him, so we can't have it. But we could hardly pass a Sunday better than in admiring the marvellous beauty which God has given to us in this world for our delight.

It is about four hours after passing Stromboli that we enter the straits which separate Sicily, the three-cornered island, from Italy, which seems to be kicking it away with the toe of its

foot. Land begins to close in on us, and in the dazzling sunshine it appears radiant, while the sea is a mirror of blue. On both sides we see houses and villages built on the sloping shores, but the interest heightens when we come close abreast the great town of Messina which, on the 20th of December 1908, suddenly became world-famous owing to the awful misfortune which befell it. All educated people knew Messina by name previously, but it was not until the Italian wires flashed the story of the earthquake which had wrought destruction so swiftly and dramatically that it will always be ranked as among the most appalling that ever happened, that everyone with one consent turned their attention to Messina, and the eyes of the whole world were focused on it. The suddenness of the calamity was the most terrible feature of it. It was early in the morning when the earth shook and heaved and raised itself, and in about four minutes, what had been a happy prosperous town was reduced to a smoking ruin, a shambles of dead bodies, and a hell on earth for the miserable beings who lived in it! Almost all the houses fell together; whole streets of them collapsed like a pack of cards, and the shock was so tremendous that in many cases even the bricks and stone of which they were made were ground to powder. Tens of thousands of people were buried before they could get into the streets, and their own houses, where they had been happy and miserable, had been born or married or suffered, were turned into their tombs. Those who were killed outright were not the most unfortunate, for others were caught by a limb

beneath falling stones, or crushed and held yet living, and their direful shrieks of agony added to the horrors, for there was none to help them, all were in the grip of the same misfortune. To add to the disaster flames broke out from the ruined houses, and the city was lit by the lurid light of fire rising to heaven. No one will ever know how many hapless creatures were burnt to death! There was no possibility of working the telegraph wires, and the people left alive simply had to wait for help till help came. And meantime volumes of water, disturbed by the change of sea-level, rolled in upon the land!

Directly the news startled the whole civilised world, ships of all nations, which happened to be anywhere near, hastened to the rescue. Camps were hastily run up and the survivors taken to them, food was supplied to all who needed it, the wounded and maimed were attended to, and wherever possible those who were still living in the ruins were dug out and set free. But, as you may imagine, this was a work of great danger, because dragging out a beam or stone often sent a shattering avalanche down on the top of the rescuers.

The number of those destroyed can never be known certainly, but it is estimated at somewhere about 200,000, for Messina is a large town. Charitable people sent subscriptions from all quarters; money flowed in; those children who had lost their parents, and even in some cases their names and identity, being too small to give any account of themselves, were placed in kind homes and provided for, and those who were completely crippled

assured of support; others were given the means to start life once more. It is difficult to imagine that all this happened only a few short years ago now; even though we are quite close to Messina, and have the use of a very fine pair of field-glasses, it is difficult to make out any of the mischief. It appears as if the houses had been rebuilt, warehouses and chimneys stand as usual, and the great viaduct spans the valley; but those who know say that this is only a good face seen from the sea, and that ruins still lie in quantities behind. In the memories of those who passed through the earthquake there must be a shuddering horror never to be forgotten, a black mark passing athwart their lives and cutting them into two parts – that before and that after the catastrophe.

Farther on more little villages appear, some looking just like a spilt box of child's bricks tumbled any way down a mountain spur. Then we catch sight of the great majesty of Etna, the third volcano we have seen in two days, and we stand lost in admiration of his pure beauty.

The smoothness of the eternal snow glows like a silver shield on the breast of the giant peak. Far below are vineyards, olive groves, orchards, and orange and lemon groves, for Sicily is celebrated for these fruits. Above them are beech-woods, so deep and dark that they are seldom penetrated even by the peasants; beautiful as the beech is, it is a poisonous tree and nothing can live beneath its shade.

It is all so smiling and peaceful on this serene Sunday morning that we can hardly believe that in Etna too there lies the raging



demon of mighty force. Even as we watch a faint puff of pure white smoke, so thin that it might be mistaken for a wisp of cloud, floats away from the peak into the infinite blue, and we know by his breath that the demon is not dead but only sleeping.

"Lucky indeed to get Etna clear of clouds," says one of the passengers near us. "I've been through the Straits a score of times and I've hardly ever seen it as you are seeing it for the first time to-day."

Volcanoes and earthquakes are closely connected. There lies within this world of ours an imprisoned power of vital heat, which now and again bursts through at weak places in the crust. Geologists tell us that these weak places may be traced in long lines on the earth's surface, and along one of them lie the volcanoes we have seen. But the laws which govern the earthquake and the volcano are hardly yet understood, even to-day.

After calling at another little Italian port for the mails, we do not stop anywhere for the next few days, but steam along steadily, making up for lost time. We have seen something of the southern part of our own continent of Europe. We have landed in Spain at Gibraltar, we set foot on French soil in Toulon, where the steamer called to take on passengers from across France, we have visited Italy at Naples, and these are the principal countries which line the huge land-locked sea. In old times the whole civilised world centred around the Mediterranean, and Rome, which is now the capital of Italy, dominated it all, making one mighty empire. The

dominion of Rome reached far northward to our own islands, and she was so secure and supreme in her power that it never entered the heads of the Romans then living that some day the whole empire would be split up and distributed. Their dominion reached even to Egypt, where we are now going, and to the Holy Land, which we shall visit afterwards; their fleets covered the sea, their armies strode hot-footed across the land, making broad ways that passed over hill and valley without pause or rest, yet now the empire of Rome is but a name.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE STRANGEST

### COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

Looking down from the deck of the *Orontes* it seems as if we were peering into the folds of a black gauze curtain, between which demons from the pit rush yelling to and fro. These men are black from head to foot, with the exception of the gleaming white teeth which show between their open lips. They are black to begin with by nature, and are further covered, scanty clothing and all, with a thick coating of coal-dust, which sticks to their oily skins and dirty rags. They are digging frantically into the heaped-up coal of a great barge lying alongside, gathering it into baskets and rushing up planks to deposit it in the coal bunkers of the steamer, and all the while they shout in a strange chant at the tops of their voices. When white men are doing severe work they are silent, as they need all their strength for the task in hand, but when their dark-skinned brothers work they find it necessary to shout as loudly as they can, and the harder the work the more noise they make. At a little distance their confused yelling is like the cheering of a great crowd at a popular football match.

All the port-holes have been closed to keep out the dust, the ship's carpets are rolled away, the place looks as if prepared for a spring cleaning. It is time for us to go, for we have arrived at Port

Said, the principal landing-place for Egypt, and we have to say good-bye to the *Orontes* here, though we shall not forget her as the first of the many ships which carry us on our great adventure.

It is easy enough to get a boat, competition is keen, and the laughing bright-eyed boys who row us across seem in the best of humour; they make a brilliant picture, for they are dressed in scarlet and blue for choice, with bits of orange wherever they can stick them on.

Port Said, where we have landed, is a large town with a big business, yet it is built on a site which a comparatively short time ago was nothing but a marshy salt lake. Men of all nations walk in its streets, and ships of all nations pass through its port. It is a strange mingling of East and West. Here the two meet, and those who come from the West for the first time cry with delight, "This is the East!" while those who have been exiled for many years from their western homes and are at last returning, exclaim, drawing a long breath, "Now I feel I really am in sight of home."

We are actually in Africa, that mysterious land which still contains the greater part of the unexplored territory of the world, and which for long was described as "The Unknown Continent," though it can hardly be called that now. Of all the countries which make up Africa, Egypt is the strangest, indeed, she is the strangest country in all the world – a weird and mysterious land whose ways are not as the ways of any other country on earth.

Imagine a land much longer than it is broad, in the shape of an ordinary hearth-rug, and then lay down lengthwise along this

a mighty river which divides it into two parts. Have you seen the Eiffel Tower? If not, you have at all events seen pictures of it, well, imagine an Eiffel Tower lying prostrate along the hearth-rug and you will have a pretty fair idea of Egypt and its river. The legs of the Eiffel Tower are very near the bottom and stick out sharply; from the point where they meet the long body stretches upwards straight as an arrow.

The Nile is like that. Not so far above where it runs into the Mediterranean Sea it is split up into many channels like the legs of the tower. It is at the foot of one of these legs we have just landed, and presently we are going to pass on up to the junction of the many channels at Cairo, which is the capital town of Egypt. Of course the Nile is not perfectly straight and rigid like the man-made tower; it winds and turns, as all rivers do, but, taking it as a whole, the comparison is a good one.

We have to wait for our baggage to be brought across from the ship so that we can see it through the custom-house, and here it comes at last; it is carried by a boy about your age who is simply lost to sight beneath it. They begin young! He stands grinning, well pleased with himself. He certainly deserves a good tip, for he is no shirker. We have just got some Egyptian money from Cook's, so can give it him in his own coinage, though he would not in the least mind taking English money.

Egyptian money is not very difficult to understand: the principal coin is a piastre, which is equal to twopence-halfpenny; and half a piastre, which looks like a silver sixpence, but isn't

silver at all, serves the purposes of a penny, though it is really equal to a penny-farthing. There are no coppers here. The most useful coin – corresponding to our shilling, the French franc, and the Italian lira – is rather like an overgrown shilling to look at and equal to five piastres or a halfpenny more than a shilling.

Now we have only to buy some cigarettes for me and some Turkish Delight for – well, for us both! Then we can go on to our train. Cigarettes and Turkish Delight are the two things no one ever fails to buy at Port Said, for here you get them good and cheap.

It will take us four hours to reach Cairo by rail, and we shan't see anything of the country, as it is dark. And what a country it is!

You will never get used to it, for it is run on lines of its own. The part of it lying between the legs of the imaginary Eiffel Tower, in other words, between the mouths of the Nile, is called the Delta, from the Greek letter  $\Delta$ , which shape it is. Except in this delta rain never falls, that is to say, not to speak of. Up in Assouan, one of the larger towns, which we shall visit, they say, for instance, "Rain? Let me see – oh yes, we did have a shower, two years ago it was, on such and such a day at four in the afternoon. Pretty smart shower too; the roofs of the mud houses got squashy and slipped down on the inhabitants. Quite funny, wasn't it?"

It seems funny to us that anyone could remember the hour of one particular shower two years ago! With us if there is no rain for a few weeks the farmers begin to cry out that their crops are

ruined. What a glorious land Egypt must be to live in when there is no chance of any excursion being spoiled by the weather!

"But how in the world does anything manage to grow?"

I thought you would ask that. Egypt has a system of its own. Once every year this gigantic river, which cleaves the land into two parts, rises and overflows all its banks; it submerges the low-lying flat land near it and carries all over it a rich fertilising mud. The land is thoroughly soaked, and when the Nile slowly retires, sinking back into its channel, the crops are planted in the spongy earth.

For many ages no one knew why this happened, and indeed no one troubled to ask; the ancient Egyptians thought the Nile was a god, and that this wonderful overflow was a miracle of beneficence performed for their benefit. Then Europeans began to penetrate into the heart of Africa and the mystery was solved. The Nile rises far up in the vast continent where there are mighty lakes lying in among the hills. The three largest of these lakes are called Victoria, Albert, and Edward, after our sovereigns, for the men who discovered them were British and naturally carried the names of their rulers to plant as banners wherever they penetrated. These lakes are not in Egypt, but far beyond, in a region where at one season of the year there is a terrific downfall of rain; this swells them up and makes them burst forth from every outlet in a tremendous flood. The Nile carries off most of this water, and some other rivers, which flow into it up there, bring down masses of water too, and all this rushes onward,

spreading far over the thirsty land of Egypt and turns the desert into a garden, making it "blossom as the rose." Wherever the water reaches the land bears fruit, but beyond it is sandy and sterile desert.

The length of this amazing river from Lake Victoria to the sea is now reckoned to be between three thousand and four thousand miles, or almost half the length of the earth's diameter, and for over a thousand miles it receives no tributaries at all. In almost all rivers we are accustomed to we see streams and other tributaries running in and swelling the volume of water as the main river passes down to the sea, but for all these miles the Nile flows unsupported and unreplenished beneath the blazing sun. No wonder the Egyptians worshipped anything so splendid!

The total length of England and Scotland together, from John o' Groats to Land's End, is eight hundred miles, which gives us a measuring rod to estimate the length of this splendid highway, which is frequently half a mile broad.

Though the yearly inundation made cultivation possible, men soon learned that it was not enough; besides this they must water the crops between times, and so means were devised for storing up the water; but these were mostly very simple and primitive until Great Britain went to Egypt to help the Khedive out of his difficulties and to teach him how to govern for the good of his people. Then immense works were started for holding up the water which would otherwise have run away to the sea at flood-time and been wasted.



We arrive at Cairo very late at night, and when we get to our bedroom we find both beds looking rather like large meat-safes, for they are enclosed in white net curtains. These fall from a top or ceiling resembling that on old four-posters.

You stare at them in a puzzled way a minute or so, and then declare, "What a stuffy arrangement! I'm not going to sleep shut in like that!"

"Please yourself, but you run the risk of having red lumps on your nose in the morning if a mosquito takes a fancy to you!"

"Oh, they're mosquito-curtains! I've heard of them. What are you going to do?"

"Run no risks!"

At last, protesting, you agree to do likewise, and climb inside your meat-safe. You'll soon get used to it, and though it is too cold here for any mosquito to be very lively, it is safer. In some countries the curtains are useful for keeping off worse things than mosquitoes – tarantulas, for instance!

We are only staying one day in Cairo so are out early the next morning, and find that the town looks on the whole very like a French town. Indeed, were it not for the red fez or tarboush which so many men wear, even when they dress otherwise in European costume, and for the turbans and flowing robes of the native dress, we might be in Paris or Marseilles.

We go to the top of a very wide main street to await the tram which is to take us to the Pyramids.

"Poste-carte, sir-r-r-r," says insinuatingly a ragged ruffian,

thrusting vividly coloured picture postcards into our faces as we stand. We turn away, shaking our heads. He quickly runs round to face us again, "Poste-carte, sir-r-r," in a tone as if the conversation had only just begun and he had great hopes of a sale.

"No, thank you; go away," I say as sternly and emphatically as I can, for he is not too clean.

"Poste-carte, Cismus cards, nice," he continues with unabated zeal as if we had not spoken at all. Resolutely we turn our backs on him and are confronted by a very gorgeous individual in a long loose gown and turban, with innumerable strings of beads of the cheapest and commonest "Made-in-Germany" kind, hung in festoons round his neck. "Beades, sir-r-r," he begins persuasively, and the other chimes in a duet, "Poste-carte." "Beades," continues the new tormentor, swinging his wares in our faces. Evidently "no" is a word not understood by these gentry. They go on at it hard for about five minutes, our stony silence in no way diminishing their enthusiasm, and then from the corner of my eye I see a tall man, with an exceptionally handsome face, clothed in a beautiful long coat of blue cloth cut away to show a great orange sash underneath.

"You want guide?" he says, hastening to the fray and sending the other men flying with "Imshi, imshi!" "Me good guide, beest guide in Cairo, show you Pyramids, all-a sights, verry cheap, sirr, me show you, only ten shillings, citadel and –"

"I don't want a guide, thank you."

The gentleman's knowledge of English is limited apparently,

for he doesn't understand that. In exactly the same tone in which he has just spoken he begins again, "Me good guide, showing you all sights, cheap, verry cheap, Pyramids, telling you all things, bazaar, only eight shilling – "

By the time he has worked himself through all the grades down to two shillings, his eye falls on two other newly arrived tourists, evidently Americans, and he rushes upon the fresh prey. Luckily our car comes in sight just then, for a second dragoman, as these guides are called, has just caught sight of us and is racing across the street as fast as his legs will carry him.

As the tram starts we hear his desperate "Me verry good guide, best – bazaar – " He is quite willing to risk his life in jumping on to the moving tram at the smallest sign from us, so we simply hold our breath and resolve not to wink an eyelid until the danger is past.

So those are the Pyramids!

We have arrived after a very cold and rather monotonous run of about an hour.

Was there ever a time when one had not heard of the Pyramids and pictured their vast triangles rising out of the desert? But for my part, I had always imagined them set far off in solitude so that one came upon them gradually, seeing them first as mere hillocks in the immensity of the sand. Instead of that they spring upon us suddenly, rearing up on a height as the tram speeds toward them along a tree-shaded road across a vast artificial lake.

The lake is picturesque, studded with little islands and

promontories covered with houses and palm trees, so also are the groups of donkeys and camels with their attendant men waiting at the terminus for tourists, but these things disperse the mystery to which we had looked forward. The large and comfortable hotel at the foot of the white winding road which leads up to the Pyramids is doubtless useful, but —

As we approach on foot we experience surprise to see that the blocks of which the largest Pyramid is composed are so small they look almost like bricks. Pictures show them as gigantic blocks up which stout ladies are being "boosted" — sorry, but there is no other word — by heated dragomans. As we draw near we see that the blocks *are* fairly big. Nearer still — what is that crawling about on the edge of the great cone? Hullo, it's a man, and there is another and another. They do look small. Why, there is one who has reached the top; he is not to be compared with a fly so much as a midge — who would have thought it? We are close under now and I find that the block by which I am standing is the height of my shoulder, and I am fairly tall. This must be an exceptional one, but — it isn't! They are all the same! Watching the men clambering up above, — men who we now see are English soldiers dressed in khaki, — we can understand why they seem to find the ascent so difficult — each block is shoulder high and requires much strenuous exertion to surmount. They cannot stride from one to the other as on a flight of stairs. One man is exhausted and gives up half-way, and a cheerful Cockney voice comes down from above telling him to "put his beck into

it!" He'll need it. Standing thus and looking up we get some idea of the enormous size of the Pyramid, which makes its blocks look small by contrast. It is bigger, far bigger than one expected. This is the largest of all, built anything between 5000 and 6000 years ago, as the tomb of King Cheops. He built it for himself by cruel forced labour crushed out of starving men; he intended that his body should lie like the kernel of a nut in this mighty shell.

As we pass beyond it we see another, farther off in the desert sand, and yet another. We are accustomed to speak of the Pyramids as if these few at Gizeh were all, but there are others scattered about Egypt, though they are less known and visited.

Then, quite unexpectedly, we come upon the Sphinx. It is in a hollow in the sand like the nest children scoop out for shelter on the seashore, only vastly greater. As we struggle round the yielding rim, with the powdery sand silting over our boot-tops, we feel something of the wonder of it thrilling through us. Let us sit down here facing it by these broken stones, where we can be a little sheltered from the chilly wind and gritty sand. We are looking at the oldest thing in Egypt. You will see farther south many splendid examples of amazing age but nothing to equal the Sphinx. When Abraham came down into Egypt the Sphinx was old beyond the memory of man! When King Cheops built his Pyramid the Sphinx sat with his back turned to it wearing the same inscrutable smile that it has to-day. It has watched kings succeed and die, it has watched empires spread and collapse, it has watched civilisations ripen and wither away. All the known

history of mankind has unrolled before it, not the short history of a few trifling centuries which we call ours, but the history of the world.

The crouching figure is lion-like in attitude, but how human of face in spite of its broken nose. It was carven of the solid rock and fashioned with its face to the sunrise and its back to the desert. No one knows the thought in the mind of the puny artist who brought it into being and then shrivelled beside it like a blade of grass. Was it intended to be a god? It has been silted up by sand and unburied again; it has been worshipped and hated. It has been revered and shot at, so that its face is chipped and its nose broken away, and still it smiles with fierce serenity.

Sit silently.

"Poste-carte – "

"Imshi, imshi."

That Arabic word, picked up at hazard from the dragoman, has acted like a talisman – the pest has actually gone!

There creeps up beside you, very slowly and determinedly, an old, old man. "Fortune told," he says almost in a whisper, groping for your hard boyish hand. So be it! He at least does not send the spirit of the place flying away. Nonsense it may be, but these fellows do know something —

Give him that five piastre piece that looks like a large shilling and listen to his quaint expressive English.

"Clever head, head very much good, gooder than many men, but an enemy inside there. You see a long, long road, and you

go that road, then coming hills and that road grow tiresome and you stop and say, 'Not worth it, I don't care,' an enemy here – slay him!

"Much work lies to your hands to do when they grow large. In many lands I see them plucking down cities and raising ships from the depths of the sea. Strange things be waiting for those hands in all the world. Many tongues you speaking, and many things you gain. But the hand not opening easily. What it gains it grips, hard and tight; it is a close hand, and that which comes thereout drops slowly between the fingers to friends also as to foes. Riches and work and honour hold the hands, and only death will tear them away. With them all is a bitterness and a glory greater than the shine of what men count joy. But in that day when you eat with kings the desire of life shall pass from you!"

Hullo, old boy! He gave you a good shilling's worth, anyhow! Though it was rather a nasty hit that at your Scottish national character! You don't believe it surely? Look at the Sphinx and laugh. What does it matter if we two midges, among all the midges that have crawled about his paws, don't exactly enjoy ourselves the whole of our brief day?

What is that? How you start! No, it's not a lion roaring, though it's a pretty good imitation; it's only a camel cursing and snarling with all his might while his owner piles a few bushels' weight on his back. He doesn't really mind it, but it is the immemorial custom of camels to protest with hideousness and confused noise, and if he didn't do it his trade union would be down upon him.

"Poste-carte – "  
Come, let us go!



# CHAPTER V

## THE HIGHWAY OF EGYPT

Of course you have been in a cinematograph theatre, and there, seated comfortably, have watched the various scenes pass before you. The great charm of these scenes is that the people really did do the things which we here see them doing, even down to the smallest gestures. But often the pleasure is spoilt by knowing that the actors were only making these gestures for the purpose of being photographed; also the scenes are sometimes disconnected and scrappy, and seldom indeed is it that they are represented in colour, and then, though the colour is clever enough, it is not like that of nature.

To-day we are watching a cinematograph which has none of these drawbacks. We are seated in a leather-lined railway carriage running from Cairo southward up the country to a place called Luxor, and passing before us every minute are vivid pictures of the life of Egypt. The railway runs along the middle of Egypt, just as the Nile does, but we do not often see the river from the line, for at this time of the year it flows low down between its banks. It is on the other side of the railway that the main interest lies. Here there is a canal as straight as the line and close beside it, and on the far side of it is a sort of raised tow-path – the great highway of Egypt. We see it against a fringe of bushy palm trees

at one minute, and the next against a field of tall, green-growing stuff, which looks exactly like those rushes found on the banks of our own rivers. This, however, is maize, or, as you probably know it better, Indian corn, which forms the staple food of the people. The brown feathery heads wave in the wind, but the corn itself is tucked away in the thickness of the stalk. You must have seen a "cob" of Indian corn some time, with all the flat yellow grains nestling in a honeycomb of little cells. To-day in Egypt you will see everyone eating them; even the solemn baby seated astride its mother's shoulder picks out the grains and nibbles them like a little monkey. The straw part of the plant is used for many things: it feeds the numerous domestic animals of the Egyptians to begin with – the donkeys, camels, buffaloes, bullocks, goats – and it forms thatch for the huts and makes bedding.

Notice that man over there in the field; his cotton gown is of the purest blue, which shows up richly against the vivid green of the maize stalks. There is another seated far back on the rump of a small donkey who is tripping along on its stiff little legs. It wears no harness of any kind beyond a cord round its neck, which enables anyone to catch hold of it. The man has no saddle and he holds his long legs straight forward to prevent his feet from touching the ground, and from time to time he guides or goads the donkey with a little sharp-pointed stick. Close behind him, walking fast to keep up, is a tall woman in black with a black shawl covering her mouth, her dress is a mass of grey dust as far as the waist, and drags up the dust in clouds as she moves. On

her head is a large bundle and on her hip a large baby. She is the wife of the lordly individual riding so comfortably ahead, and she takes this state of affairs as a matter of course. The scene arouses anger in the breast of a nice American with a grey moustache and keen grey eyes, who shares our compartment.

"So long as they treat their womenfolk like that they'll never rise to anything better," he says emphatically. "The higher the civilisation of a nation is the higher the position of its women. A nation of men who ride and let the women carry the burdens is bound to be rotten and flabby."

Next there passes across our window-frame a flock of goats, but they are not much like those we know – they are dark brown and black, with thick rough coats and cheeky tufted tails; numbers of kids dance up and down the steep sides of the tow-path after the manner of kids all the world over. A small boy, dressed in what appears to be a striped flannel night-shirt, with a tiny skull-cap on his head, is driving them. He pulls his single garment up to his waist as he dances and pirouettes as if the joy of living were almost too much for him. He is enveloped in a cloud of dust raised by the goats, but he snatches handfuls of the dust from the ground and flings it in the air around as if he could never get enough of it!

"The Lady of Shalott," in Tennyson's poem, who watched in her mirror all who went down to Camelot, cannot ever have seen anything half so interesting as this.

Presently we meet a long string of fine-looking camels, one

of them pure white; they are fastened by a connecting rope and so covered with loads of bristling twigs that each looks like a walking bush, out of which the great padded feet are planted with deliberate steps and the haughty heads swaying at the ends of the long necks stick out. It is the scrub of the cotton bush that they are carrying; you will see fields of it presently, some of it bursting into fluffy pods, for cotton growing is one of the most extensive and profitable of Egyptian industries. The twigs and branches are used as fuel by the people, who have a happy knack of letting nothing be wasted.

"I never!" exclaims the American. "If that isn't like them!" We are overtaking a second string of camels, precisely similar to the first, and similarly laden, stepping gingerly and protestingly in the opposite direction from the first, having just passed them. "Why couldn't they arrange things better?" demands the American. "If one lot is going this way and the other that, an exchange would have saved time and labour."

In America labour is costly and all sorts of inventions for saving time have been invented; in this eastern land time is of no value at all, and a man working all day in the fields is content to earn a shilling. Perhaps the contrast with their own country is the reason of the fascination Egypt has for Americans!

What are those strange-looking beasts mincing along like gigantic peacocks? As we draw nearer we see that they are camels too, each bearing a load of sword-bladed leaves, which hang down over their hindquarters exactly like the folded fan-tail of a

peacock. Upon my word I never noticed it before, but a camel walks just like a peacock, with the same hesitating "Don't-care-a-hang-for-you" stride. The bundles so arranged hide the animals' hind legs and bring out the resemblance.

But what is it they are carrying? Not maize stalks this time, nor bushy cotton twigs, for these stalks are a dull crimson at the upper end. It is sugar-cane, which grows in quantities here, and forms a more profitable crop than maize. You will see it sold at the stations; the people buy it, and, breaking off a joint, eat it with pleasure.

We cannot tear ourselves away from this fascinating window even for a moment; far in the distance across the green fields and waving palm trees we see glimpses of the desert, looking pinkish-yellow, and rising up in it, changing with every mile we travel, are many pyramids, not only those famous ones at Gizeh we visited yesterday, but others stretching farther and farther away. You will notice that the favourite colour for the dress of the peasants, or fellaheen, as they are called, is a glorious blue, but that all the women are in black – most unsuitable of hues, as they live and move and have their being amid drab-coloured dust; khaki would be much better.

As our breakfast, though better than that in France, was nothing so very wonderful, we begin to feel hungry, and are ready to go along early to the luncheon-car; we had a good dinner in that one on the train coming up from Port Said to Cairo, and anticipate something of the same kind. As we get up the

American remarks casually, "Best pull in your belts and have a smoke – there isn't any."

No luncheon-car! No means of getting any kind of refreshment on the train! And we, having started at eight, are in for a journey of fourteen hours! Lively this! It is one of the little incidental discomforts of travel! The American is in the same plight himself. But he found out soon after we started that there was no restaurant-car; it only runs three times a week, for the season hasn't begun yet!

We call the Egyptian attendant to find out if there is any prospect of buying anything on the way. He stands grinning very affably but doesn't understand a word of English. Presently, however, he seems to understand, and dashes off, to return triumphantly with a feather-brush in his hand with which he violently flops the seats of the carriages and all our personal belongings until we are choked and smothered with the dust.

In English fashion we have kept the windows open, not realising that in this country it is impossible, and that slowly we have been silted up with a layer of fine soft dust; but we didn't feel the inconvenience of it much until this idiot stirred it up and made it unendurable.

Having accomplished this great feat he stands still, grinning and holding out a broad palm. Officials on the trains are probably forbidden to utter the wicked word "Bakshish," meaning tips, but they can ask quite as well without it.

Having got rid of him, we turn in despair to the station at

which we have just pulled up. There is a fine mingled crowd on the platform. Lying in the sun, awaiting their master's pleasure, are two beautifully kept white donkeys, with their hides clipped in neat patterns, very superior creatures indeed to what we know as donkeys, more like mules in size. A group of children, fascinated by our strange faces, draw nearer and gaze their fill unwinkingly; one poor little mite of about four has a mass of flies crawling all over its face, especially about the eyes. It never attempts to brush them off, for long habit has made it callous. Formerly very many children were so afflicted, and the crawling flies, carrying disease, made them blind; but since the British took the matter in hand the evil is much less. Yet so indifferent are the mothers, that in many cases even when lotion is supplied free for the children's faces they will not trouble to use it!

There is nothing eatable being sold in the station except fruit, but there seems plenty of that, and by the time the train starts again we find ourselves with a fine assortment in rich colours of purple and orange and scarlet. First there is a packet of dates which looks all right on the top, but turning them out we find the purple side of one had been placed carefully uppermost, and the rest are all hard, green, and unripe, not in the least like the sweet juicy dates we are accustomed to. The attendant, who is watching, scoops them up and devours them as if he hadn't been fed for a month. Then comes a bit of sugar-cane, stringy and sickly, which makes us feel as if we had bitten into a piece of sweet wood when we try it. That great purple pomegranate is, like

all pomegranates, unsatisfactory and full of seeds, and though the little green limes are refreshing for the moment while we suck the juice, after a while our lips begin to smart as if they were raw, and we both keep on furtively wiping them. It is a tantalising feast, and the American smiles serenely as he smokes in his corner and refuses to have anything to do with it. The only thing we do get out of it are some really good green figs, which cannot, however, be eaten without shameless messiness, as they are so difficult to peel.

When the afternoon sun grows scorchingly hot the grinning attendant proves himself for once useful, by showing us that we can pull up sun-shutters with wooden slats outside the glass ones. He has indeed been anxious to pull them up all round the compartment ever since we started, and nothing but physical force has restrained him, for he cannot conceive how anyone could want to look out. Even now we keep down those on the sunless side, which grieves him deeply.

So all the afternoon we watch the glorious scenes changing in sunlight; we see the sailing boats, with their tapering white wings, laden with cargoes of straw, drifting up the canal, driven by the strong north wind; we pass innumerable villages, and some larger towns, where market-day has attracted vast crowds.

The small villages are indeed wonderful, and the first one excited us all three so much that we had to hurry to the window. Imagine a colony of last year's swallows' nests under the eaves, or a collection of ruined pigsties and sheds, only they are not ruins



at all, but living, thriving villages with healthy people in them. The houses are all made of mud; a few are fashioned out of mud bricks, but many are merely of mud stuck and moulded together as a child would form a mud house with his hands. The doors and the holes for windows are crooked and lop-sided as they would be in a childish attempt. The roof is covered over with an untidy thatch of straw, thrown on anyhow, with piles of cotton scrub on the top of it. This scrub is for firing, and it is kept up there in the Egyptian's only storehouse; it is backed up by cakes of dried buffalo dung used for the same purpose. As it never rains the fuel is quite safe from damp.

Every man builds his own house as it pleases him, without regard to the style or position of his neighbour's, consequently the streets are narrow crooked passages of uneven levels; there is not a green thing in them, and the people live in dust and eat it and wallow in it. Here and there you can see a tray of flat cakes pushed out into the midst of the dust to bake in the sun and form a playground for the flies and the microbes, for the Egyptian has no respect for microbes, he is germ-proof; for generations he and his forefathers have drunk the Nile water, unfiltered and carried in goat-skins not too well cured. Yet the people are happy and the children apparently a gay set of youngsters. Little Gassim or Achmed, in the single unchanged and unwashed garment that covers their little brown bodies, dance and roll and sing and drive the loathly black buffaloes to the water and eat scraps of sugar-cane, and are as happy as the day is long. They work hard, it

is true, from the time they can toddle, but so does everyone else, and all the animals do their share of toil, day in and day out. "I can't understand why they don't find a way of harnessing the turkeys," says the American sarcastically as we pass a lordly camel, stepping, with protest in every movement, alongside a sturdy bullock who helps to drag a primitive plough. The plough merely scratches the surface of the ground, but that is enough, for the Egyptian will never go deeper than he need.

We are getting very hungry indeed! Six hours more! How are we going to stand it?

Hurrah! A bit of luck! The American has been along the corridor and come across some friends who are getting out at the next station. They have presented him with the remains of a lunch-basket supplied by their hotel, and he is generously willing to share it with us. Never was prize-packet opened with greater eagerness; suppose it should only contain enough for one?

Amid the white wrappings of the open pannier we find slices of tongue, rolls of bread, chicken legs, hard-boiled eggs, and a bottle of soda-water!

Never did food taste better! We sit gnawing the chicken bones and blessing the American!

Meantime the sun falls and a splendour you never yet have imagined fills the air. Streaks of flaming colour shoot athwart the sky, bursting up behind the tufted palms; the eastern sky catches the reflection and shows softest blues and pinkest pinks in contrast. A veil of amber light hangs like a curtain overhead and

changes to orange and again to apricot as the afterglow sweeps the sky before darkness falls like the curtain on a scene at the theatre.

# CHAPTER VI

## A MIGHTY MAN

Our beds face the windows, which open like high glass doors, French fashion; before retiring we set them wide, and close outside the long shutters made of slats of wood. In the morning we are awakened suddenly, almost at the same instant, by a red flame glowing between the slats as fire glows between the bars of a grate. Springing from our curtains we fling open the shutters, expecting to see a great conflagration, and behold, it is the sunrise!

The sun does not greet us in such boisterous fashion in England! Here it fills the sky with a blood-red radiance and lights up the palm groves in the garden below, where a mighty congregation of small birds are shrieking out their joy to greet the god of morning. There is an intensity in it all, in the flaming sky, and in the thrill of the birds' clarion that sends exhilaration into our veins and makes us feel it is good to be alive!

It is not long before we are out and around the garden – and what a garden! Strange coffee-coloured men in blue garments like smock frocks, with baggy blue trousers caught tightly round their ankles, appear and disappear noiselessly, their bare brown feet making no sound on the sanded paths. There is something unreal about it all, something that makes one think of the

*Arabian Nights* and an enchanted garden. The hotel is called "The Winter Palace," and in England we should associate such a name with a vast artificially warmed glasshouse filled with broad-leaved plants of dark green; here, right overhead, is a tall bush covered with masses of sulphur-coloured flowers, shaped like tiny trumpets, hanging in festoons against a sky of glorious blue. Through plumed palms we catch glimpses of the spreading fingers of a deep red poinsettia; there is a pink frilled flower shooting toward the sky, so decorative that it looks exactly like those made of crinkled paper for decorations; this is the well-known oleander. The grass is so vividly green that it seems as if the greenness sprang away from the blades; as we draw near to it we see that it is not all matted together and interwoven, as is our grass, but is composed of separate blades, each one apart and upright, all together standing like a regiment of soldiers. It has to be sown every year freshly, for no roots can survive the long drought. Close by is a lawn of bare earth, and a boy of about your age, with a thin pathetic brown face, runs round and round it, shouting and waving a flapper to keep off the birds from the newly sown seed.

We are just going to plunge into a grove of trees – some acacias with leaves like delicate ferns, and others eucalyptus with long narrow leaves looking like frosted silver – when we find they are growing in a swamp, with the earth banked up all round to keep the water in!

Other flowers, familiar to us in England, such as roses, look

rather pale and washed-out here in contrast with the flaming beauty of richest mauve and brightest orange worn by those which are at home in a hot country. As the sun gets strong we hear the drone of a swarm of great creatures like prodigious wasps with legs like stilts, which fly around the sweet-scented blooms. In ancient inscriptions this wasp, or hornet, was used as the sign of Northern or Lower Egypt. Across the flower-beds run miniature canals of stone, by means of which the water from the life-giving river is carried all over the ground, so that it can be easily watered; a very large part of the time of the blue-bloused gardeners is spent in watering. A garden which was watered from the sky would be a miracle to them.

We come back again to the hotel and pass through to the other or front entrance, where we catch sight of the majestic Nile, which we could not see in the darkness of our arrival last night. Standing on a high terrace, bounded by a parapet covered with riotous masses of magenta bougainvillea, we see the turquoise-blue river, flecked with boats carrying high, white, three-cornered sails; on the other side rise calm hills of orange-yellow. We shall visit those hills, for in them are buried some of the mightiest kings of Egypt, and the wild fastnesses form a truly royal burial-place, grander than any ordinary mausoleum or cemetery could ever be. On both sides of the river at one time stood the royal city of Thebes, one of the best known of all the capitals of Egypt which sprang up from time to time in its age-long history.

If ever you "do" the ix. book of the *Iliad* in your schoolwork, you will find that Homer speaks of Thebes as having one hundred gates and possessing twenty thousand war-chariots! It extended for about nine miles along the river-bank.

After breakfast our first plunge into sight-seeing is a visit to the temple of Luxor, which faces the river just five minutes' walk along the street from the hotel. This is the very first Egyptian temple we have examined and it is astonishing how much we can learn from it. That mighty row of columns, larger and higher than any cathedral pillars you have ever seen, makes us feel like midgets. Standing close together the columns spring right into the clear sky, as there is no roof left. Not so very long ago they were covered up to the capitals in sand and débris. The poorer Egyptians had built their mud huts in and around them for generations, and when one hut crumbled away another was put up on the top of it, and thus the level of the accumulated earth grew higher and higher. Then some learned Frenchmen saw the wonder of the buried temple and bought the people out, persuading them to go elsewhere, and they gradually cleared away the rubbish until the original beauty of the temple was visible again. Even now, high up on all sides, you can see the depth of the earth surrounding it like cliffs, and on the top are squalid huts with dirty children and fluffy impudent goats and shrill-voiced, black-clad women, living their daily lives and looking down into the temple.

The ancient Egyptian writing was by signs – a bird meant

one thing, a flower another, and a serpent another, and so on, but for a long time the meaning of it had been forgotten, and it was impossible for anyone to read these wonderful signs. But at the very end of the eighteenth century a great stone was found which had upon it an inscription written in Greek and in hieroglyphics, as the sign-writing was called, and also in another writing which used to be employed by the priests, and from this, before many years had passed, clever men were able to understand the language of signs and read the inscriptions on the temples, which told who had built them and much else. This stone was called the Rosetta Stone, after the place where it was found. It is now in the British Museum.

This was long before Luxor was unearthed, and the inscriptions were deciphered as they came to light; by their help it was found that the temple had been built chiefly by two kings, Amenhetep iii. and Rameses ii. who came after him, though not immediately. Rameses added to the existing work and carried it on. So far as we know all this was between three and four thousand years ago. In a village in England people are proud if they can point to any part of their parish church and say, "This is Norman work," and yet the Normans only came over to England less than nine hundred years ago! Go back more than three times that, and try to realise the age of this temple. And even this, as we know, is not old compared with the Pyramids! Doesn't it make us feel that, as a nation, we are rather young after all?

Long before we were a nation these mighty kings flourished



in Egypt and lived in pomp and splendour. They each had a different name, of course, and more than one, but yet they were all Pharaohs, just as at one time in the Roman Empire each emperor was a Cæsar.

The Pharaohs had unlimited power in their own dominions, and forced their subjects to work for them as they pleased without giving them any payment. By some means we can't understand these mighty blocks of sandstone composing this temple and many others were brought from a place farther up the river. It is supposed that they were put on great rafts and floated down at flood-time, but the handling of them is still a mystery. The men who dealt with them had no steel tools, no driving force of steam or electricity at their backs, yet they reared buildings which we to-day, with all our appliances, think masterpieces.

Rameses ii. was called the Great; he reigned for over sixty years, and he has a peculiar interest for us because he is believed to have been the Pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites, while his son and successor, Menepthah, was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Walk up the great aisle of giant columns into the courtyard at the end, there, between the pillars, stand massive images of granite, most of them headless, but one perfect except for the ends of the fingers and toes.

Sit down on this fallen block and look at that marvellous image; it is the mighty Rameses himself! There is a repressed energy and indomitable purpose about him that tells in every line of a man who never let go and never allowed himself to be

thwarted. His almond-shaped eyes and full lips, the proud tilt of his head, are not merely conventional, they are an actual likeness of the man taken from life. He is every inch a king. His successor, who was his thirteenth son, was probably of the same type, and one can well imagine his scornful indignation at being asked to yield up that nation of slaves, the Israelites, whom he treated as we would not treat animals nowadays. The miracle is that Moses was not instantly slain for his boldness in proposing it; he was, of course, screened by his relationship to Pharaoh's daughter, but that would have counted little had he not been protected by a power far above that of the king of Egypt.

Close down under the knee of the standing Rameses is the figure of a plump woman, his favourite wife, Nefertari. The Egyptians had the rather childish idea that size meant importance, and to them now, as well as then, women seemed of much less importance than men, so the wife was represented as being about as high as her husband's knee. In spite of this, however, women of royal blood were treated with great deference, and royal ladies enjoyed a freedom like that of western women to-day. They gave their opinions and transacted business and were seen in public. Many a king only sat securely on his throne because his wife had a better title to it than he had. This did not, however, prevent them from making women very often quite diminutive in size in their statues, though in some cases the king and queen are the same size and are shown seated side by side.

It is very quiet and beautiful here in the temple this Sunday morning; the natives themselves are not allowed to come in, and visitors only on production of a ticket costing twenty-four shillings, which admits to all the temples of Egypt; and, as it happens, there is no one but ourselves. The sparrows twitter overhead in the holes and crannies of the pillars, and the great grey and black crows wheel silently against the blue sky, throwing moving shadows on the honey-coloured columns.

If we walk round the back of these solemn statues we shall see that there is a quantity of deeply cut hieroglyphic writing on a great plaque at the back of each. The name of the king himself is always written enclosed in an oblong space called a cartouche; sometimes this cartouche is supported by two cobras, who are supposed to defend it. The rest of the writing tells of the deeds of the king and all the mighty feats that he performed.

Turning to the walls we find them covered with pictures, not coloured but done in outline by means of deep-cut clean lines. We see the king offering fruit to weird-looking beings with men's bodies and animals' heads – these were the Egyptian gods; there were numbers of them, far too many to remember, but here are a few: Anubis, the jackal-headed; Thoth, the stork-headed; Sekhet, a goddess with a lion's head (some say a cat's). Besides these there were others of great importance: Osiris, the god of the dead, and Isis, his wife – these were the father and mother of Horus, the hawk-headed god. But it was to the glory of Amen-ra, the king or chief of all the gods, who can be recognised in the pictures by

two tall feathers like quills standing straight up on his head, that that particular temple was built.

On one of the walls we see a long row of men, all exactly similar, one behind the other – these are some of the numerous sons of Rameses making offerings. You soon notice that in spite of the vigorous and excellent outlines of these pictures there is something funny and stiff about them. That is because the Egyptians had an odd custom of drawing a person sideways, with his two feet in a straight line, one behind the other. No one stands like that in real life, and if you try it you will find how difficult it is not to fall over! Also, though the people they drew were invariably shown from the side, yet the artists used to make them look as if they were squared round in the upper part to show the chest and both shoulders, so that Egyptians in pictures always look oddly wedge-shaped, being very broad at the top and narrow below. The eye was also put into the profile face as if it were seen from the front! Look at any typical Egyptian picture and you will soon pick out these peculiarities. It seems rather a pity they kept so rigidly to these silly notions, as they really drew extremely well; but no artist was original enough to dare to break away from the established custom!

Inside the temple walls all these scenes have something to do with the gods and the offerings made to them by the king, but come outside and on one of the finest bits of wall still standing you will see a most spirited battle-scene. Look at the king in his chariot with the plunging horses! He is drawing his bow and

pursuing his enemies, who are dead and dying under his wheels, and fleeing before him. To show how much more important he was than the enemies he had himself made very large and the enemies shown very small. That is not quite our idea of honour and glory nowadays; we should think it more glorious to overcome enemies larger and stronger than ourselves! This afternoon we are going to visit a still larger and more wonderful temple, a mile or two away, called Karnak, and there you will see pictures of the king of that time holding the hair of his enemies' heads in the powerful grasp of his left hand while he prepares to strike off all their heads at one sweep with his sword.

The original entrance of Luxor temple does not face the river on the side we came in; to find it we have to scramble over heaps of rubbish to one end and there we see a great obelisk, a companion to the one which is now in the principal square of Paris, the Place de la Concorde, and we see also two huge buildings reared up on each side of the ancient entrance – these were called pylons and were always built in Egyptian temples. On festival days they were decorated with flags on tall staves and made very gay.

Then we go out again into the main street amid all the life of the place, and see men cantering past on gaily caparisoned donkeys; we note dancing, capering, gleeful children, guides in gorgeous gowns, shopmen of some mixed nationality from the Mediterranean, who run out of their shops and entreat you to come in. "Only look round, no paying, not wanting you buy," they

lie. "Look and be pleased; there is no charge just only to look."

We stop at last and buy two fly-whisks with short bamboo handles and long silvery horsehair tails; of course they do look very smart, but we do not buy them just for that, but because they are useful.

As we have found already, nothing less than physical force suffices to remove an Egyptian fly, who sticketh closer than his English brother. No shake or puff will induce him to stir an eyelid, and yet he is quick on the wing and you rarely get him, sleepy as he appears! He doesn't buzz, and there generally appears to be only one of him, but if, by the aid of a fly-whisk, you get rid of him, another takes his place immediately!

# CHAPTER VII

## THE CITY OF KINGS

I think this is the gayest scene I have ever looked upon in my life. See those mahogany-coloured boatmen in their brilliant scarlet and white striped jerseys and blue petticoats, grinning so as to show all their milk-white teeth. The boats are apple-green and scarlet, and they are reflected in the clear still water, and the dragoman, who marshals all the party into them, is a very splendid person indeed, in a long overcoat of turquoise blue cloth as soft and fine as a glove, with a striped gown of yellow Egyptian silk underneath.

We are off with a party of Cook's tourists to explore the Tombs of the Kings on the other side of the river. It is a pretty stiff day's work, so we are up early, and it is only half-past eight now. As we near the other side of the river we see an excited group of donkey-boys who have brought their animals over earlier, and now stand expectant, looking like a fringe of blue beads.

"Lily best donkey – Lily name for Americans, Merry Widow for Engleesh – "

"Come, lady, with me, Sammy best donkey in Egypt, verry good, Sammy my donkey, best donkey – "

"Kitchener, lady, best donkey in Egypt, me speak verry good Engleesh, alla way gallop."

And so on in a continuous yell. The dragoman shouts out the numbers of the donkeys, and helps the ladies of the party to mount. Some ride on side-saddles, others, unused to any form of riding, prefer to get up astride, which they find difficult in the tight modern skirts. One German girl, after a frantic attempt, has to give it up, and sits wobbling on her saddle with her arms round the donkey-boy's neck, agonisingly appealing to him not to move! A very stout lady in black is lifted on to her mount by the united efforts of the dragoman and two donkey-boys, and, held in position by the boys, moves off, threatening a convulsive landslide to one side or the other at every step.

We are lucky in securing two fine greyish-white animals, almost as large as mules and very well fed and kept; yours is named "Sirdar" and has a single blue bead slung on a string round his neck as a charm, while mine, "Tommy Raffles," has a rattling chain of yellow and blue beads and much scarlet wool in his harness. You won't have much difficulty, I know, as you have been used to a pony since you could walk.

At first the soft powdery sand makes the going stiff, and we have much difficulty in restraining our boys, who run behind, from smacking or prodding the donkeys as they plough through. These boys are very proud and fond of their donkeys and treat them well, but it is the ambition of every donkey-boy to see his donkey head the cavalcade, and he is ready to die of envy and mortification if any other boy's donkey gets in front of him. We pass through clouds of dusty earth and then turn on to uneven



narrow ways between tall green stalks of growing dhurra, stuff which looks like maize, except that it has a heavy head of grain which is ground up for making rough bread for the poorest people.

Along by a canal, over a bridge and a railway line we gallop, our animals going well. Their trot is impossible, as we soon find, but the easy loping canter delightful. We pass many black-clad women working in the fields, with crowds of bright-eyed friendly children who murmur "Shish" in the vain hope that we may throw them some money. Then we see herds of black goats in among the cut stalks, and a tethered baby camel, who looks at us with innocent wondering eyes.

Far off rise up from the plain two mighty seated statues, the Colossi, set up by Amenhetep iii. as part of a temple now vanished. Presently we all stop to see another temple, interesting enough, but not so interesting as those already visited at Luxor and Karnak.

The dragoman, whose work is not easy, brings up the rear of the cavalcade, having managed to keep even behind the fat lady, who has stuck to the slippery surface of her saddle with many a desperate plunge firmly resisted by her escort.

The dragoman describes the temple fluently and intelligently, first in English, then in French, and adds a little explanation in German for the benefit of two men of that race who have talked loudly in their own guttural tongue all the time he has endeavoured to make the rest of the party hear. The dragoman

does not reel his words off as if he were repeating a lesson, as, alas, so many of the guides at our own cathedrals do. He is a clever man, well educated and capable. It has taken him years to learn all he knows, and it is only the clever boys who can become good dragomans. One of our donkey-boys, a bright little fellow who speaks far better English than most of his companions, tells us, "I am going to be a dragoman." He says it deliberately, with a pause between each word to get them correctly. "Thus I speak always with the English and the Americans. To the English I speak English, which is what I have learned, but when I am with Americans I can talk to them in their own tongue too."

Laughing, we mount and are off again.

We are now penetrating into the great hills of sandstone we saw afar off from the hotel. The road winds into a gorge, and at each turn displays more vivid beauty. We feel a strange joy rising within us, so that we would like to sing or shout at the tops of our voices. The brilliance of the air shows up every line in the great precipices of orange-yellow, streaked with red and purple, which rise against a sky of thrilling blue. There is not a blade of grass or a leaf to be seen in these vast solitudes, only the massive stones, broken and split and scattered, lie in the fierce sun or black shadow. We can imagine these defiles looking much the same when three or four thousand years ago the funeral procession of one of the mighty Pharaohs wound its way into the heart of the mountains, carrying the man who had never known opposition or denied himself his slightest wish. They were very magnificent

these processions, composed of hundreds of people who carried all sorts of things – furniture, chariots, boats, animals, fruit and flowers – with tremendous ceremony.

It is a longish ride before we alight again, and leaving the donkeys under a slight straw shelter penetrate into the fastnesses of the hills.

How many of these rock-tombs were made here will probably never be known, but year by year more are uncovered. The first we step into is like a large well-lighted cave cut out of a cliff-side, from it opens another cave-like room, and from that another, each sloping downward and the whole series giving the impression of a series of puzzle-boxes fitting into one another and then drawn out. The walls are covered with pictures, paintings on plaster, not outline pictures like those we saw in the temples, but filled in with blue and green, orange and terra-cotta, laid on thickly, and as fresh as the day they were done. Ever descending we pass on until we reach the last chamber, where the great sarcophagus or coffin of the king was placed right up against the face of the rock. The sarcophagus might be a mighty block of granite, enclosing a wooden case, and that again another case, probably carved and gilt, and finally, as a kernel, there was the body of the king, preserved and dried by spices, lying awaiting the final resurrection. The Egyptians believed in a future world, but they could not imagine a future world without there being human bodies in it such as we have now, so they took infinite trouble in preserving the dead body that it might be ready

for its time of call. Most of the sarcophagi from these tombs have been removed and taken to the museum at Cairo, but in one to which we penetrate, hewn out at a slope so steep that we have difficulty in keeping our feet as we slither down, the mummy has been replaced and is left uncovered.

Lit up by electric light we see King Amenhetep ii., with his skin blackened to a parchment, drawn tightly over his chiselled aristocratic features. In the dome-shaped forehead, the Roman nose, and the tightly compressed lips there is an expression of infinite disdain, as if he, in his time the mightiest ruler in the world and the leader of civilisation, knew that now he was exposed to the gaze of a party of outer barbarians whose national histories were but of mushroom growth. This king struck terror into the hearts of his enemies; he raided the land of Syria, slew seven chiefs with his own hand and brought them back to Thebes, hanging head downward from the bows of his boat!

The very day after a king ascended the throne he used to begin hewing out the sepulchre where he should lie. The scenes drawn on the walls show what he expected to find in the other world. We see a pair of scales with the heart of the dead man in one balance and a feather in the other; a monkey sits on the top and adjusts the weight. The heart must weigh the feather exactly, for to be over-righteous was as bad as being wicked! The dead man also had to pass before forty-two judges, who each examined him searchingly as to whether he had committed one particular sin. As one of the party remarked in an awe-struck voice, "And if he

did pass them all safely and another started up and asked him if he ever told a lie he'd be done, for no man could deny that he had committed any of the forty-two principal sins and remain truthful!"

To accompany the soul to the other world many things used to be buried in the tombs, clothes and food and utensils and weapons, and, thanks to this custom, numberless things have been saved to show us how the ancient Egyptians lived. These, however, have mostly been taken to Cairo for safe keeping. But here in Amenhetep's tomb one thing has been left. In a small side chamber, with the light falling full upon them, are three mummies, each with a hole in the skull and a gash on the breast, showing that they were the king's slaves, killed in order that their souls might accompany him and serve him beyond the tomb!

They lie there with their hair still on their heads, and even the false hair, they used to increase it, showing; on their faces is a ghastly grin. We wonder if they submitted quietly, proud of having been chosen, or if each fought fiercely for the life which belonged to him and was not any man's to take away.

It is very hot and close down in the rock-hewn chamber, and we are glad enough to stumble up and out again, though we are blinded by the sunshine as we emerge.

The next part of the day is the hardest of all, for we scramble up a mountain-side to gain a splendid view of gorges and valleys on one side and the flat plain spreading to the Nile on the other. The view is indescribable; from lemon-yellow to orange and

saffron are the hills, with blue-grey shadows in their folds. Right opposite is one absolutely perpendicular, with immense rounded columns looking like giant organ pipes rising on its face. A fresh wind is blowing, and when we mount our donkeys, which have come round to meet us another way, and ride along a path a few feet wide, with no fence of any kind and a drop of some hundreds of feet on one side, we are devoutly thankful that the German girl and the stout lady went round the other and longer way by the valley!

Over the summit the donkeys are set free to get down the steep descent as best they may, and they are as sure-footed as goats, but we who follow find considerable difficulty as the loose stone and sand fall away in miniature avalanches from beneath our slipping feet and we get very hot. We are sheltered here from that fresh wind which is such a joy in Egypt, the sun is at its height, and we have done a good morning's work already after an early start. There, far below, looking like a doll's house, is the rest-house where we lunch, and beside it two of the men of the Mounted Police Camel Corps in khaki on their long-legged beasts.

Whew! That last bit was tough! I am glad to get a long drink and equally glad to go on after it to an excellent cold lunch which has been brought to meet us. Hard-boiled eggs, salad, cold meat and fruit! We try them all and then rest on the verandah looking at the towering orange cliffs which hem us in. They seem to hang right over that little temple near, to which we shall presently pay a visit. That is the temple of Der El Bahari and was built

by Hatshepsut, the greatest of Egyptian queens. Hatshepsut was the daughter of one king and the wife of another, and after her husband's death she ruled for about sixteen years. She made expeditions to the Red Sea and acted in every way like a man. In the drawings of her on the temple wall she is represented as a man and is dressed in man's clothes. When her son-in-law, Thothmes iii., who had married her daughter, succeeded her, he scratched out her name wherever he found it and chiselled out the pictures of her. He had evidently had a bad time while she lived, but he must have been a small-minded and spiteful man to take that petty revenge after her death!

On the way home across the dhurra fields I see you stop riding suddenly and stare intently down at something on the ground. I think at first it is a scorpion you have found on the patch of light-coloured sand, but it is only an immense black beetle, with a strong horny skin and a horn or trumpet-shaped excrescence on the front part of its head. He belongs to the scarabæus, or dung-beetles, and big fellows they are; this one would just about cover the palm of your hand. The Egyptians called one of their gods Khepera, or the beetle, and believed him to be the creator of all things, so they used to make images of these beetles and put them in their temples; you saw a huge one, you remember, on a pedestal at Karnak, and any time you are in London you can see them at the British Museum. There were also tiny images of them made in stone and amethyst and porcelain, and almost anything else, and these were frequently buried in the tombs with

the mummies. Sometimes they had the name of the person with whom they were buried inscribed on the back in hieroglyphic writing, or the name of a god. These scarabs, as they are called, are bought and worn in rings and ornaments by visitors. The natives quickly found out that there was a demand for them, and as they could not always find old genuine ones they set to work to make them! Hundreds of new ones are palmed off as old in this way on unsuspecting tourists.

"Scarab!"

A solemn girl-child clad in a rust-coloured garment has come up on seeing our donkeys halt and holds out a brilliant blue scarab for sale in a hot little hand. She nods violently, repeating, "Scarab! Verry old." "Found in tombs," says our donkey-boy gravely, willing to help her to take us in. He picks it up and pretends to examine it carefully, "Genuine anteeekar," he pronounces. Laughing, we hand the "genuine antique" back to its owner, knowing that it is probably "genuine Birmingham," and then we canter after the rest of the party.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE NILE

In my ears is the sound as of the tuning up of a thousand fiddles! I hear the agonising scrape of strings, the squeal of the bows! I have heard it all before at many a concert, but this time it is intensified a thousandfold and penetrates even into my dreams. I imagine I am in a concert hall and spring up wildly with the intention of getting outside until the music begins, but the movement wakes me, and behold I am not at a concert in London on a dim Sunday afternoon, but in a brilliantly white two-berth cabin with the sun flooding in through the square window! Peering out I see we are running smoothly along up-stream close in to a high mud bank, and that is where the noise comes from. It is caused by the squeaking of one wooden rod against another as hundreds of Egyptian fellaheen raise the water from the Nile to moisten their crops.

It is not long before we are both dressed and out to examine the curious sight. The banks are about the height of a high room, and at the distance of, it may be, fifty yards, all the way along them there are deep cuts like miniature denes, or chines, running down to the water. At the foot of each of these a brown-skinned man stands with his bare feet at the edge of the water, gripping with his toes to save himself from slipping in the mud. At this

time in the morning he is clothed in a quantity of garments, mostly mud-colour, but as the sun grows strong he throws them aside and stands forth a fine bronze statue with his skin gleaming in the clear light. Just above his head there is a pole bridging the cut, or chine, and fastened to the middle of it at right angles is another, which swings up and down upon it like a see-saw.

A huge lump of mud like a swollen football is plastered on to the far end of this, and at the other end a basket or basin made of skin is attached to a string. The mud ball is heavy, and when it is allowed to go free it hangs down to the ground; but the brown man constantly reaches up and raises it by pulling down the basin, which he dips in the Nile water, then lets the heavy end swing it up as high as his head, when he tips it up, and the water from it flows into a pool at that height. Another man stands on the edge of this pool and he has a similar arrangement, by means of which he raises the water out of the pool with a basin like the first, and there may be another above him, and another again. This primitive arrangement is called a *shaduf*, and by its means the water from the Nile is lifted up to the surface of the fields, where it runs away in miniature channels to water the roots of the maize. This is one of the most extraordinary sights in the world. Think of all the mills in which machinery does delicate work like that of the human hand; think of the patterns made by the machines, of the newspapers printed and folded with very little human guidance, and then leap back to this clumsy device used now by the Egyptian as it was used by his ancestors thousands

of years ago! A few pints of muddy water raised by a weight, half of it falling out of the badly constructed basin as it goes, and the same drop of water handled again and again by four men till the tiny trickle reaches the fields! We watch with amazement. The shrieking and squeaking of the *shadufs* goes on, the brown figures stoop down, rise again, and swing with regularity, minute after minute. We steam on round the next corner and see more of them and yet more again; how many have we not seen already in the short time we have been on deck? Multiply that times without number for all the miles we came up by train and double it to include both banks! Imagination gives way!

"I can't bear it," says the nice American who was in the train with us and has now joined us in the trip up to Assouan in one of Cook's steamers. "It's maddening! Why can't a whole village form a company and get some sort of machine to work? It would water all their crops in a tenth of the time."

As he speaks there comes into view something just a little better. At the top of one of the deep cuts on the bank two bullocks plod slowly round and round in a circle as if they were threshing corn; they work a wheel, which revolves horizontally and is fitted into another which turns vertically, deep down into the hole it reaches, low enough to touch the water at the bottom. Earthenware jars are strung all round it like beads on a necklet, and as each pot dips into the water it brings up its share, and when it reaches the highest point it tips it into a little channel, where it runs away. This is called a *saddiyeh*. The wheels groan and creak,

the patient beasts turn in their dizzy circle, and the youngster seated on the wheel prods them with a sharp-pointed stick when they slacken. At least the water runs away in a continuous stream at the top, however tiny.

Then the steamer takes a sharp turn, leaves the bank, and careers across into midstream! We go up on to the top deck and see three dark-skinned men, warmly wrapped up in brown coats, sitting in a little glasshouse in the bows and watching earnestly the channel ahead.

This is the *reis*, or captain, with his two assistants. They know every turn and dip in the river; but the river changes ever, no two days is it alike as it falls and washes away a bank or deposits sand so as to make an island where none was before. So the three men watch intently and steer the boat to this side and that wherever they can find the deepest channel. The Nile is low for this time of year and caution is necessary; when there is any doubt as to there being enough water, one of the crew below handles a long pole, dipping it in to find the bottom and calling out the depth as he goes.

There are twenty passengers or so on the boat and they sit about the sunny decks watching the panorama of the banks and the wonderful changing scenes ahead, hour by hour. Hardly anywhere would you find a greater variety of nationalities than on one of these Nile boats, for Egypt draws people from all parts of the world with her mystery and beauty. The odd people one meets add to the interest, and the strange manners, which are not

ours, are like flavouring in the dish of travel, which, if it were composed only of scenes of perpetual beauty, might be a little insipid.

To begin with, I am English and you are Scottish, we have our friend the American and four of his compatriots, not by any means so delightful as he is. He takes care to steer clear of them, we notice! One of them is a little man who might be any age from twenty to fifty; if we examine him with field-glasses we shouldn't be able to discover how old he is. His yellow skin, drawn tightly over a bony face, gives no sign of age or youth. He eats sweets all day out of a box as large as a child's coffin, and he is attended by three stout ladies, doubtless "his mother and his aunts." They are veiled and swathed in wraps, and seem to spend their time gossiping or asleep in the innermost recesses of the cabin. We never once catch them admiring the scenery or taking any interest in the wonders we pass. Then there is a Swiss, a gentle-mannered bronzed man with a brown beard; he speaks only French, and in an unobtrusive way seems to have seen a great deal of the world; we discover, for one thing, that he has lived out in the desert near Tunis for many years. There are three Russians, mother, father, and daughter, who speak practically nothing but Russian, with a few words of French; they are brave to have started out on such a journey so ill-equipped. Coming across a Russian dragoman in Cairo they trusted him joyfully; he bought three temple tickets for them at their expense and promised to meet them somewhere up the Nile. They seem to expect to find

him sitting on every sandbank, and their faith is pathetic; they'll never see those tickets again, for the man will sell them to the next party of victims. Then there is a Belgian, also a couple of lively pleasant French people, and two Germans, a sister and brother, who dress in clothes intended to be very sporting.

It is an interesting crowd, and it is well kept in hand by the manager, who looks like a fair-haired, brown-faced boy of two-and-twenty, but has been everywhere and speaks half a dozen languages fluently. In addition to this he sketches in water colours, plays the fiddle, and breaks in horses! You have to travel to come across people like that! Here he is nothing so out of the way – every dragoman is able to talk in three languages at least. Doesn't it spur you on to feel how much we have to learn and how ignorant we are in our stay-at-home villages?

All the morning we sit about and watch the graceful white-sailed boats coming down with cargoes of every kind. Sometimes we see them stranded on a hidden sandbank with the crew making frantic efforts to get them off again. We see the reaches lying ahead glittering like jewels in the sun, and then we land and ride a short way to a temple, under the care of the dragoman of the boat. The most moving thing in all that temple is a set of scenes of a hippopotamus hunt shown with great spirit; the poor little hippo looks more like a pig when he is at the bottom of the water with a spear or harpoon sticking in him, but when they haul him up by means of a noose round one leg the ancient artist represents him becoming bigger and bigger as he comes to

the surface!

The walls are, besides, covered with all the usual scenes of the king making offerings to the gods, and overriding his enemies, and doing all those noble things which kings wanted their posterity to know about them.

A high-pitched voice, speaking in a hyper-refined affected tone, breaks in on our enjoyment; it belongs to one of the English people from the boat, a lady who evidently considers it her mission in life to instruct people; information flows from her ten finger-tips, she cannot help it, she was born to be a schoolmistress certainly.

"That is the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt," she says, "that the king is wearing; sometimes you see him with one and sometimes with the other, here he has both together."

As this is about the first thing a dragoman tells anyone in the first temple he sees, and as it is repeated at least once at every temple afterwards, only an idiot could fail to know it. We murmur something politely and turn away. Round a corner we stop to admire the rich colour still left in the ceiling, where a heavenly blue, covered with golden stars, represents the sky.

"When we were here three years ago," says the lady at our elbows, "they had not uncovered those pillars, but we are told – that –"

The peace and beauty are spoilt! Again we murmur something and make a dive to get away, but are confronted by a clean-shaven man in glasses. "When we were here three years ago," he begins,

"perhaps my wife has told you – "

It is rude, but there is nothing for it but to bolt; people like that would take the effervescence off newly opened champagne! We leave them confronting each other, and wonder what they do when they are alone together! Do they force their mixture of guidebook and water on each other?

When we look back upon Egypt these river days will stand out most clearly, for the glory of them and the interest of them are unailing. We have to leave this boat at Assouan, but we shall come back and go right down the Nile to Cairo on our return journey, so that is something to look forward to.

At Assouan we are not going to stop but to change on to another steamer, one belonging to the Government this time, and we shall penetrate farther into the heart of the land to see something, which, after the Sphinx, is the most wonderful thing in Egypt.

But we can't step off one steamer on to another, for at Assouan is the first of the many cataracts that for ages has hindered the navigation of the Nile. The river, hemmed in between two rocky sides, tears down, dashing over stones and whirling round corners in a dangerous way. So the steamer for the upper part of the river waits above the cataract and we have to make a short train journey of half an hour or so to join it.

Picture the scene at an English railway station of any size, with its solidly-built platform and its gloomy roof and its row of uniformed porters drawn up waiting the arrival of the incoming



train. I don't suppose anywhere you could find anything less like this than the station at Assouan where we await our train this afternoon. There are great palm trees springing out of the platform itself, not fenced in in any way. There are masses of scarlet poinsettias growing. And the porters! yes, they *are* porters, not criminals waiting to be hanged! There they stand, a ragged regiment indeed, dressed in any sort of garment that takes their fancy. Most of them look as if they had collected all the dish-clouts and dusters which had seen service and piled them on anyhow. To add to their adornment each man has a double coil of shabby-looking rope hung round his neck, this is to fasten together the luggage he hopes to carry. The men are of all sizes and all colours. That good-looking fellow at the end is not darker than a sun-browned Englishman, while that stout, round-faced, thick-lipped one next to him is as black as the polished boot seen in an advertisement. He is a Nubian, for here we are on the borders of Nubia, now counted part of Egypt. The porters are making a tremendous hullabaloo, chattering and quarrelling at the tops of their voices, so a native policeman in khaki comes along and smacks one of them hard on the side of his face, and then catches him a crack on the other side to make him keep his balance; the man does not resent it at all – he rubs his cheek and takes the hint. Fancy a policeman in our country smacking a porter on the face; what a row there would be!

Here is the train! The engine-driver and his mate are dressed in shabby European clothes crowned by turbans which have

gaudy orange and red handkerchiefs twisted round them. They get down on the platform, and suddenly the fireman sees a rather unpleasant-looking man, with a beard, standing away from the others; he rushes at him, bows low before him, and finally kisses both his hands. The man is probably a sheikh of the Mohammedan church.

The train is a corridor one, and we mount the platform at the end of a carriage and find ourselves in a compartment thick with dust, where the seats vary from straight leather-covered benches to comfortable-looking basket-chairs. The place is crammed with "kit"; dispatch-boxes, helmet-cases, sword-cases and leather bags fill every corner.

"Allow me," says a pleasant-voiced sunburnt man as he stoops to remove some of his things to make room for us. "We've come right up from Cairo and things get a bit scattered," he adds apologetically.

When we get clear of the town we find that in addition to glass windows and wooden shutters there are also windows of blue glass to keep off the glare, a splendid idea, as they do not hinder the view. One of these is up, and peeping through it we get our first real glimpse of the desert, transformed as if it lay beneath bright moonlight. From the other side we can see it as it is in its yellow colouring. How fascinating! It runs away in sweeping low waves to a line of hills and is crossed by caravan tracks; even as we watch we see a man riding a small donkey ahead of a string of camels laden with huge bales. The railway is still but a small thing

in Egypt; it runs right ahead, with few side-lines, and from it the desert tracks lead off in many directions. The camel, who has been the bearer of Egyptian traffic for generations, still does a large share of the transport. A good camel is expensive, but a man who owns one is sure of a livelihood, for he works backwards and forwards across the great solitudes, eating his handful of dates or grain, and drinking the water he carries with him, if he is not lucky enough to camp near a well. Oddly enough camels are not represented on the wall-drawings of the ancient Egyptians, and though it is true they were probably not to be found in the country in the very earliest times, yet they were certainly introduced as early as the horse, who is often shown in battle-scenes.

What rivets our attention directly it comes into sight is an encampment of low mat huts like beehives right out in the midst of the sand.

"Those belong to the Bisharin," says the same fair-haired, keen-faced man who had first spoken; "tribe of fuzzy-wuzzies! They extend right away from here to the Red Sea. Live on raw grain mostly. Quaint lot!"

Some of the men from the camp are standing near the railway line, so we can see them well; they are very tall and extremely handsome, with well-cut features and well-proportioned figures. Their hair is cut exactly after the fashion of the palm trees, with a tuft standing up in the middle and two tufts dropping away from it on each side. These men are quiet enough now that they have learnt the British power, but not so long ago they were inflamed

with fanatical hatred.

You have heard of the dervishes who were killed in thousands at Omdurman, outside Khartoum, in the great battle at which Lord Kitchener won his title when he freed the Soudan from the power of the Mahdi? Now, having seen the Bisharin, you can imagine what dervishes looked like. For they dressed their hair in the same way, they wore the same dirty-white garments, and as they came yelling onward at a run, brandishing their weapons, it must have taken some courage for the Egyptian soldiers to meet them steadily.

All the men in the carriage with us are going on up to Khartoum and beyond. They are soldiers, administrators, and Government officials, men whose lives are passed on the outposts of civilisation, and who carry the British ideals of cleanliness, honesty, and straight-dealing far into the desert; but they do not talk about it, as Kipling says they speak: – "After the use of the English in straight-flung words and few – "

"Go to your work and be strong, halting not in your ways,  
Baulking the end half won for an instant dole of praise.  
Stand to your work and be wise – certain of sword and pen,  
Who are neither children nor gods, but men in a world of  
men."

Khartoum is the capital of the Soudan, but we have not arrived in the Soudan yet. This great province was won from barbarism and brutality by the English, who had trained and

commanded the Egyptian army for the purpose through years of heart-breaking work, and it is held jointly by England and Egypt.

Then we arrive at Shellal, the station where the steamer waits, and in a moment we are plunged into a turmoil of confusion and shouting.

The red sun is setting in a flame of glory over the great lake-like expanse studded with black rocks; this is the huge dam or reserve of water held up for the use of the crops when the Nile goes down. The scene beggars description; bags, bundles, bales, boxes are pitched out pell-mell. Gleaming black faces are lit up by the flames of leaping fires lit on the sand. Petticoated porters thrust metal numbers at us so that we may be able to recognise them again and reclaim our luggage safely. We make our way to the steamer and mount to the first-class deck and look down on the whirl of turbans and red fezes (also called tarbooshes) below. The perpetual chatter, the long low cries, the beating shout of men staggering under heavy loads make up a resounding din. Clamped boxes, camp-chairs, enamel basins, dispatch-boxes, helmet-cases are carried swinging up the gangway. Here is a man wildly waving a gun-case which a non-commissioned officer wrenches from him; another is struggling under a folded tent, the end of which catches on a post and nearly precipitates him into the water. Black Nubian sailors in white and blue jumpers are wrestling with an endless series of mail-bags; third-class passengers, lost under piles of bedding, straggle into a great barge alongside. In the midst of it all one sailor detaches himself a

little from the rest and drops down on his knees on the quay, prostrating himself and bowing with his forehead to the ground; he rises again, stands straight, with head erect, then down he goes again. He is praying at sunset, as a good Mohammedan is told to do. No one notices him or ridicules him. What would happen to an English sailor who knelt to say his prayers on an English dock? We feel that we have something to learn from this people, who are at all events not ashamed of their religion.

A man is selling oranges on the quay, another has large round flat loaves of bread tucked well under his arms and hugged against his body. A black hand, extended from the lowest deck beneath us, grasps one of these loaves and begins to finger it with a view to purchase; we cannot see the owner of the hand, but we can see his fingers feeling cautiously all around that loaf; he nips it between finger and thumb, he prods it, kneads it, rubs it, and finally, when no inch of it has been untouched, he hands over reluctantly a small coin and withdraws with the bread.

"Hope that isn't for us," says the cheerful voice of a young officer leaning over the rail beside us in the dark. "Think I'll cut off my crust at dinner to-night on the off-chance, anyway!"

# CHAPTER IX

## A MILLION SUNRISES

It is very cold and quite dark when I wake. The steamer is anchored close up to the bank and not a sound comes from the still water. My blankets are very comfortable; it can't be time to turn out yet. It is an effort even to stretch out a hand and strike a light to see my watch – 5.15! Yes, we ought to go!

You take some waking, and only my threat of, "You'll never get another chance in your life," brings you out of your bunk at last.

If you've ever done anything nastier than trying to dress against time, two together in a small cabin on a cold morning in the pitch dark, I'd like to know it. The electric light is off, because the engines are not running, and there are no candles. By the time we've got into some sort of clothing we're both at snarling-point. Twice I've violently tried to put on your boots, thinking they were mine, and I know you've got my shirt on, because I couldn't find it and had to drag out a clean one!

A walk along the cold dark deck and across a slippery plank to the mud bank does not improve matters. Apparently we have this exhilarating entertainment all to ourselves, for the rest of the fifteen passengers have not appeared.

The sand is like the softest silk, and it seems sometimes as if

we must be walking backwards so little headway do we make. If it wasn't for this icy wind I should think I was still dreaming. All the time that red bar in the east glows steadily brighter, and warns us that if we want to see one of the grandest sights in the world – Abu Simbel by sunrise – we must hurry up.

When at last we get clear of the sand we find ourselves on a piece of ground cut up by cracks wide enough to put a foot in. There is just sufficient light to keep us from twisting our ankles if we walk along with our eyes glued to the ground, and so we get along somehow, till suddenly we stop – sunrise is here!

A considerable distance in front of us and above our level we see three mighty seated figures and the remains of a fourth in a flat recess chiselled out of the side of a great rounded cliff. That first touch of dawn has tinged them with rosy pink, and they sit with their faces to the sunrise, which they must have seen somewhere about one million times already. Night succeeding day, day succeeding night, light following darkness, darkness following light, thus has time flickered before them throughout their stupendous age. As we creep nearer and climb higher they seem to rise and rise in size. Silently we seat ourselves on a stone, forgetting the shivering wind, and we stare and gaze spellbound at the triumphant eager expression on those mighty features, which, as the dawn spreads, softens to a deep complacence. Then the pink changes to a splendour of living gold, which sweeps over like a curtain, and the full majesty of them strikes us almost like a blow.



Their expression has in it something akin to that of all mighty time-resisting images set up by man; it is found in the face of the Sphinx and on that of the Buddhas of the East. It is an expression of soul-crushing superiority, so without doubt of its own unassailable dignity that it can afford to be benign. We must make up a word and call it "supremity" – it is the only one that fits it.

Under the knee of each mighty figure is the plump outline of a little wife, small it looks from here, but draw nearer still, stand right under that colossus on the right and you will find that she is twice the height of a man.

As they tower above us, seeming to grow greater every instant as the light filters into the crevices, we get some idea of the monster size of these noble statues, and discover that each foot is nearly as long as a man! From the broken face of the sloping cliff they have been hewn, not built and pieced together and brought here from elsewhere, but born full size, springing to life from out the living rock. They all represent the king with whom we are already familiar, Rameses ii., who caused this great temple to be made to celebrate his victory over the Kheta, a tribe of Syrians, living far away by the river Orontes in the north of the Holy Land.

Two on each side of the temple doorway the statues sit, and between them, in low relief, is the small figure of the god Harmakhis. Running above, across them all, is an inscription, part of which signifies —

"I give to thee all life and strength."

Look up at it beyond those towering immovable heads, and from it again to the rough cliff untouched by tool, and from that to the sky, now of the purest, softest blue, hanging like a canopy above.

The high black doorway of the temple lies like a gash on the face of the cliff, and on one day of the year the ray of light from the rising sun falls through it clean as a shot arrow. The black-robed guardian has been expecting us, he stands waiting, holding his staff of office, and admits us to the interior. It is very dark, and even with the light of the flickering candle he holds up it is difficult to make out those great columns, each seventeen feet high, carved with an image of the god Osiris. As for the deep-cut pictures everywhere on the walls we can only get the merest glimpses of them. We pass on through several halls, noting how the angles and lines are absolutely plumb and true, and come to the innermost sanctuary, where we find the king again as one of four seated statues, not very large, the other three being gods! That was the idea Rameses had of his own importance!

Then it grows on us with increasing wonder that all this temple – the walls, the columns, the statues – are cut out of the actual rock, and that all the stone dislodged in the cutting must have been carried out through that doorway. How was it achieved? The depth of the temple to its farthest wall is one hundred and eighty-five feet, or almost three times a cricket-pitch! Imagine

this depth driven in to the rock and cleared out to a great height without any machine power or modern tools! And this was accomplished in the reign of one king. Rameses reigned some sixty years, and his great victory over the Kheta was five years after his coronation, so perhaps sixty years is the longest we can give for the construction of the temple, and it was probably much less. The story goes that in this great battle the king, cut off from his men and alone in the midst of a hostile army, performed prodigies of valour; he slew and hewed right and left until he sent the greater part of the Syrian army flying before him; all this is recorded on the walls. Of course in the case of kings these doings are apt to be magnified, still, there is no doubt that this was one of the most memorable occasions of his life, and he has certainly caused it to be remembered by building this enduring monument.

We hear voices, and are joined by half a dozen of our fellow-travellers from the steamer. As we all walk back together a child sidles up and holds out a strange little beast with a head like a skull and a long tail like a rat. It is about as big as your hand. One of the army men takes it and puts it in the sleeve of his green tweed coat, and as he walks along carrying it the quaint little beast turns a greenish colour. It is a chameleon and has the faculty of changing to the colour of its background whatever that may be; this forms a protection against its enemies, who cannot easily see it.

"I'll keep it," says the soldier, laughing and giving the child a coin. "He is a useful little beggar. You should see that tongue of

his flick out and catch an unwary fly half a foot away."

The steamer hoots a warning note and we all scramble on board hastily. Yes, I *told* you it was my shirt!

An hour or so later we pass the boundary into the Soudan.

"Now we are out of Egypt," says another of our friends, a Government official with years of experience behind him. "The Soudan is a greatly superior place; no one is allowed to bother you here – we don't let them. The children don't even know the meaning of the word *bakshish*; they are not allowed to learn it."

This sounds comforting and gives a good prospect for the day we shall have to spend at our stopping-place, Wady Haifa, before going back on the steamer to Assouan.

There is no railway between Assouan and Wady Haifa, and so Government steamers run all the year round to bridge the gap between the two ends of the railway. In the season Cook runs steamers too, and they give much more time for passengers to see Abu Simbel and other temples on the way; unfortunately, as we are too early in the year, we could not take advantage of them and had to go on a Government boat.

The men we have been with are all passing on by rail from Wady Haifa, and when we land there we go in the afternoon to see them off at the station. They are a keen, hard-bitten crew, and make us feel proud of our countrymen; they are reticent mostly, bearing the unmistakable stamp of responsibility. Men who "build the Empire" are little apt to "slop over" or demand sympathy. The boyish vigour remains with them later than with

most men, but it is tempered by a certain hardness outside. The train is particularly comfortable and well managed, with sleeping-cars that bear comparison with the best in Europe, and a good dining-car; and it is necessary, for these men have a journey of a day and a night before reaching Khartoum, the capital of the Soudan, and the way lies right across barren desert, where the sand insidiously creeps in at every chink in spite of the closely shut windows. To some of them indeed Khartoum is only a jumping-off place. There is one army man who received orders to leave Cairo at ten days' notice and plunge into Central Africa, there to hold an outpost as the only white man for hundreds of miles around. He knows little of what is expected of him beyond the fact that he is to purchase a year's stores in Khartoum, and that when he has gone as far as boat and waterway can take him, he will have to march at least a hundred miles through country where his equipment must be carried by natives, as it is the haunt of the dreaded tsetse fly whose bite is fatal to animals. He has a map made up mostly of rivers "unexplored" and country "unknown." It looks quite full of information and names when you merely glance at it, but when you begin to handle it you find a great deal of the print tells you only what is not there. The owner of it hardly knows what language he will have to speak, but he is as pleased about it all as a girl going to her first ball. In his own words, he "has got his chance." When we ask him what he is going to take with him, he answers with a merry twinkle, "I started with two dozen tooth-brushes; I should think in their line

they would be enough." So long as England produces men of this metal she need not fear the decadence of the race.

When we have parted from them all we stroll down the bazaar at Wady Haifa and are immediately followed by a horde of children of all ages, sizes, and descriptions, who, whenever we stop and look around at them, say with growing confidence, "Bakshish, bakshish!" even the tiny fat babe who can scarcely toddle murmurs "'Shish!"

Still pursued by the horde we make our way to a tea-house, where numerous natives of Haifa sit out in a little compound surrounded by a wooden fence and refresh themselves. We order tea, and get it after some difficulty; but it is more because the attendant guesses what we would be likely to ask for than because he understands us that we eventually are provided with a small pot of quite decent tea.

While we drink the children gather from afar; every one in Haifa under the age of fourteen is there I should say. They glue themselves to the fence and force their little faces between the posts, or spike their chins on the top and then watch in solemn deadly earnest the ways of these strange beings whom fate has so kindly sent to amuse them. The rest-house attendant does not approve of these manners, so he slips out of a side-door with a basin of water in his hand and pitches it straight over the little crew as if they were a flock of intrusive chickens; they fly, shrieking with delight, and return in thicker swarms than ever inside of two minutes.

An affable gentleman in a gown seats himself beside us.

"I wish you good-day," he says in English, and we return his greeting.

"I am dragoman here," he continues.

We point to one small girl with a face quite different from that of the other children, and her hair done in innumerable little tight pigtails, and ask him who she is. "Nubian," he says. "Eat castor oil, plenty oil, like it much." We tell him to bring the child to us, but directly he translates, she flies screaming, is captured by the other children, and a noise begins like that inside the parrot-house at the Zoo. I explain that we don't want her to be frightened, but that if she will come and speak to us she shall have bakshish. The magic word produces instant calm, the child comes forward at once with coquettish assurance and when, through the interpreter, we inquire her name, and she tells us it is "Nafeesa," we give her half a piastre and let her go.

When we start off again for the steamer the whole crowd follows hard on our heels, for it is we who provide the free circus to-day. One mite trotting forward with his eyes glued on us goes smack into a tree and so hurts his little face that he covers it with a crooked arm and sets off homewards wailing softly.

This is really a deserving case, even in England it is allowable to soothe the feelings of a hurt child, so we mutter "Bakshish," and all the eager crew rush after the little suffering child, yelling, "Bakshish," and they bring him back triumphantly with the tears already dried on his hurt face.

So much for the Government official!

Now we are off really! Back down the Nile and good-bye to this glorious land. Rapidly we fly down-stream, past Abu Simbel, past the sweeps of deep rich yellow sand seen nowhere south of Assouan in such glorious colouring; sand that is swept smooth by the wind into great banks and drifts with sharp edges like snow-drifts; past masses of plum-coloured rock sticking up out of it; past defiles of stony mountains falling sheer to the water; hiding here and there in their folds tiny villages indistinguishable from the rocks without glasses. There is hardly a *shaduf* to be seen and very little cultivation, it is either desert or stony hills on each side. Grand beyond thought is it when seen in the flaming light of the afterglow!

At Assouan we have time for a glimpse at the great dam, extending for over a mile in length and built of masonry eighty-two feet thick at the bottom. This banks up the water, we have already seen, among the hills into a prodigious lake when the great swirl of the river comes down at flood-time, and thus much of it, which would have rushed away and been lost, is stored and let out gradually through the sluice-gates as required.

Then we change on to one of Cook's steamers, and for days we fly down-stream to Cairo. We see the green fields of maize, and we watch the people going home in the evenings with the tired oxen and the little donkeys carrying their provender on their backs. And one day we arrive at Cairo and take the train for Port Said.



Good-bye to Egypt! Mysterious, beautiful land! Never in all our wanderings round the globe shall we come upon a country more interesting.

# CHAPTER X

## A WALK ABOUT JERUSALEM

We have passed along the south coast of Europe and have been into a corner of Africa, and now we are going to set foot on a new continent – Asia. From Port Said, before we go on eastward, I want you to see just a little of the Holy Land – the scene of the Bible. The Holy Land stands by itself, apart, and though it is in Asia it doesn't seem to belong to it. Someone once said that it is to the world what a church is to a town – the centre of religion. Anyway, it is curious and interesting to notice that it forms the middle point where three continents meet, so that they all share it. I expect you know the position quite well. At the east end the Mediterranean does not run into a point as it does at Gibraltar, but comes up against a straight wall of land which cuts it off squarely, and this straight line is the coast of Palestine, better known as the Holy Land. If the schoolboys of Palestine were set to draw a map of their own country, they would find it much easier than a British boy would if told to make a map of his country. For all that the Jewish boy would have to do would be to make a fairly straight line, sloping a little out at the bottom end. There would be hardly any indentations on it and only one small bay.

Palestine, of course, is the country of the Jews, though people

of many other races and nations live there, and thousands of the Jews are scattered in all parts of the world. Some people dream of restoring all the Jews to their own land, but it is difficult to see what good it would do them. Palestine is held at present by the Turks, but everyone can visit it when they please. It is not a very large country, only about the size of Wales, and yet there isn't a country in the world to equal it in importance. Thousands of people visit it every year in spite of the fact that it is very difficult to get there. There are no good harbours, and the landing at Jaffa, which is the principal port for Jerusalem, has to be done in small boats. As we have to make our visit in the winter we may find the sea rough and dangerous, and may even be carried on north of Jaffa and have to come back on another boat as some friends of mine did. The Holy Land is not great or powerful or even beautiful nowadays, though in the spring the wild flowers are lovely. Seen in the winter it is just a rather barren, stony land, with many hills, and it is inhabited by very poor people. Yet this little country has been more fought over than any other. For centuries there were crusaders, or soldiers of the cross, who went out to try to conquer it, to hold it in Christian keeping, but they did not succeed.

We must leave our heavy luggage at Port Said, to be picked up again on our return, and only take what we can carry in handbags. The rather small steamer which is to take us starts in the evening, and it is best to go straight to bed on board, as we shall have much to go through when we arrive to-morrow morning. After a rather

disturbed night we are glad to get up and dress and come on deck. The ship is at anchor off Jaffa, tossing up and down on the grey water, so that we have to clutch at handrails and hold on to keep our footing on the slippery deck, which is cumbered up with bags and bundles and people and crates in a most confusing way.

All around the ship are big clumsy-looking boats filled with swarthy shouting men wearing turbans and immense baggy blue trousers with enough stuff in them to clothe a whole family! Except that they are not armed we might imagine we were held up by pirates! In front of us, a little distance off, are cruel jagged rocks over which the waves pour and dash, spouting up in cascades as they come slap on the hard surfaces.

One of the boats is close to the ship and the men in her are hanging on by a rope which they gather up or let out as they rise and fall at the bottom of the long slippery gangway, much worse than that we climbed at Toulon. The men in our ship are pitching in bags and bundles very cleverly as the boat comes up, and among the things we see our own brown bags. Very soon we shall be pitched in too! How will you like that?

Near us is a very fat Turkish lady, who is so rolled up in clothes, head and all, that it is quite possible she might be mistaken for a feather-bed. Two sailors get hold of her and carry her down the gangway, depositing her neatly in the boat as it swings near.

Before you have quite realised what has happened a muscular man has caught you up like a sack of potatoes. You are run down

the gangway with his hand on your arm like a vice, the boat comes up, and just at exactly the right second, when it balances on the crest of the wave, your captor lets you go and you land on the seat gently and sink away again with the boat. I follow, but am not so lucky, for the next wave catches the boat awry and sluices me from neck to heel! However, I have a stout coat on and do not mind. Then, in the heavily laden boat, with the Turkish lady and the bags and the bundles, we start for the distant shore.

This is the principal landing-place for Palestine! Babies and bishops, pilgrims and pigs, pianos and potatoes have all to be pitched into boats!

Our excitement is not over yet, for as we near the rocks it looks as if we must be smashed by the heavy waves. The roar of the surf is so great that we cannot hear each other speak, and the rain and foam bespatter our faces. We blink and hang on to each other, see-sawing up and down, and wondering every second if we shall be feeling colder yet when we are actually in the water, and then the boat swings up on a wave and runs through into calmer water beyond.

We thread our way in and out of narrow channels, still between rocks, and see ahead of us a desolate land with a queer flat-roofed town.

When at last we are on firm ground our guide leads us quickly through some narrow dirty streets, and before we have time to notice anything we are in a noisy, fussy little train, bound for Jerusalem.

We are actually in the land of Israel, the land where all the Bible stories happened, not only those of the New Testament but also of the Old! Here Noah lived when the Flood came, here Abraham and Isaac and Jacob pitched their tents and pastured their flocks. From here the sons of Jacob, who was also called Israel, went down to the land of Egypt to buy corn when there was a terrible famine lasting many years. We know that they settled there, having found their brother Joseph in great power; and long, long after they had all been dead their descendants multiplied into a great people and were treated as slaves by the Egyptians, so God brought them back again to the land of their ancestors.

When they arrived here, after wandering many years in the wilderness, they found the country occupied by stranger races whom they fought and conquered; among them were the Hivites and Jebusites and Amorites and Hittites. Then the Israelites became a great nation and had kings of their own. The second king, David, was of the tribe of Judah, one of the best of old Israel's sons, and he drove out the people who occupied Jerusalem and made it his capital. His son, Solomon, built here the most wonderful temple ever known. But later on trouble came upon the Israelites, and mightier nations from the east swept down upon them, and carried them away as slaves. After long years of captivity some came back to Jerusalem, and they were the descendants of Judah and Benjamin, but the other tribes returned no more, and no one knows what became of them; they are spoken of to this day as the Lost Ten Tribes,

but the descendants of Judah were called Jews. These Jews, who returned and lived again in Jerusalem and other parts of the country, were again conquered by the Romans, and when the Saviour Jesus Christ was born the Romans held the supreme power in the Holy Land.

As the train goes on we see a bare and bleak country, which looks as if giants had had a desperate fight and hurled stones at each other, after which the stones had lain there ever since. This was the part of the land inhabited by the Philistines, against whom the Israelites had so many and such bitter fights. It is quite likely that Goliath of Gath, whom David fought, once strode among the fields; and we know that the great Israelitish hero, Samson, the strong man, lived about here and wandered in among the valleys. Most people are disappointed with the country unless they come in the spring, but when you get used to it you find it has a wonderful charm.

It takes nearly four hours in the train to reach Jerusalem station. It seems quite odd to think of Jerusalem having a station. We have heard the Bible stories so long that we forget that they are real, and that they actually happened just as truly as the stories in our own history. Jerusalem is a real town, just as real as York, though it is not like it, except for the fact that it has city walls. The station is a good way from the town, and a mob of eager men are waiting there to catch any tourists and drive them up. They are quite ready to fight each other or to clutch us to gain this privilege, and if it were not for our guide we might be torn

in pieces.

Our dragoman is a clever man; he chooses his driver at once and helps us into the ramshackle old conveyance and off we go over the hillside. Soon we see ahead of us the encircling wall of the city on a height above, and we wind up to it by gradually inclined roads till we come to the great gate. We cannot have the satisfaction of saying to ourselves, "Jesus actually looked at these walls with His human eyes," because the walls were built long after His death. The town was utterly destroyed about sixty years after the crucifixion, and nothing was left but piles of stones, and when the rebuilding began no one remembered where the streets had run or where the holy places had been. All we can say with certainty is that the present city must be very much the same kind of city as that Jesus knew.

The hotel is just inside the gateway, and here we can rest and get something to eat, and then we can go out; but we must have the guide with us, for any well-dressed European walking alone in the city would be pestered to death by beggars and touts trying to get money out of him.

It is not long before we sally forth and are led into a curious long dark alley or passage where the houses almost meet overhead; it slopes down steeply and there are shallow steps at intervals. The sun has come out, luckily, and looking up we can see a very narrow strip of blue sky, but down below it is very dark. You slip and nearly come full length on the pavement because of the old cabbage leaves, bits of orange peel, and other



messy remnants of food left about, and then I, in my turn, go almost headlong over a bundle of rags lying on a door-step. Immediately a shrivelled hand shoots out and a long melancholy cry which curdles our blood comes from the heap. It is a woman, so wrapped up in rags that she looks like nothing human. A small coin dropped in her hand brings down what we must suppose are blessings on us in her own tongue.

The wee strip of blue sky is cut across here and there by iron bars, high over our heads; these are "camel-bars" put to prevent camels passing through this way, though the donkeys and people can get along underneath. Then we turn a corner and pass into a slightly wider thoroughfare, though it is still merely a passage in comparison with any streets in our western towns. Swaying high above us is the head of a camel whose squashy feet come down almost upon us as we hastily tumble back into our entry, while the great bales on his back brush the walls as he goes on his lordly way. Women selling vegetables crowd the more open spaces at the crossing of the narrow streets. Men in red fezes and flowing garments like dressing-gowns stride along; brown-faced boys run in and out, and the din, the confusion, and the smell are very trying. We begin to wonder when we shall get out into the real streets and we ask the dragoman. He tells us at once that we *are* in a street, one of the principal ones, that, in fact, they are all like this, and no wheeled vehicle can pass in any part of Jerusalem! This is so bewildering that we feel as if we were in a labyrinth, and huddle close up to the guide anxious not to lose

sight of him for a moment.

Overhead there are arches sometimes spanning the narrow space, and at others we cross over curious little open bridges joining one house to another, then we plunge into a cellar and walk right through it and out on the other side. Everyone seems to be doing the same; it is a regular passage-way, and yet people live in that cellar, for we see them crouching over a red fire in the cavernous dark, and we wonder how they like strangers to make a highway of their home.

All the way we see people of so many kinds we have never seen before that it is difficult not to stand still and gape. There are men in cloaks and wrappings, weather-beaten and worn, and men in European clothes and brown or yellow boots, there are thick-lipped negroes with rolling yellow eyeballs, and warlike Turkish soldiers, who clank down the street thrusting everyone aside. The Jews themselves are the least attractive of all, with very greasy head-gear, from each side of which hangs down a corkscrew curl, as often red as black; they wear usually a kind of soiled dressing-gown garment and seem afraid of being struck. Of the many types of men the Arabs are the manliest, and come nearest to our idea of the old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They wear a kind of cloth on their heads falling down behind, you could easily make something like it with a towel any day. This is bound round the forehead by a fillet sometimes made of camel's hair, which holds it in its place tightly, like a cap. They have across their shoulders a striped narrow blanket of brilliant

orange or scarlet, and they walk with a free stride and their heads held up; they are men of the desert, accustomed to freedom and to taking care of themselves against all comers.

At one corner a man who has been angrily expostulating with another bangs him with a bag he carries, the bag bursts and the air is filled with a cloud of flour which envelops the two until they cannot be seen. Furious voices come out of the cloud, and as everyone hastens to the sight we take the chance to go the other way.

In every Eastern city there is a "bazaar" corresponding with what in England we should call the market-place. The guide leads us to the "bazaar," and at the first glance we can hardly believe he is right, for we plunge into a long narrow passage arched overhead so that it is simply neither more nor less than a tunnel. There are three of these, and the light only comes in from the ends or from some holes far overhead. In this dimness we see caverns or recesses on each side, quite open, with no glass, and these are the shops. There is a curious glare from some of them where the owners have a fire for cooking food or for heating their forges. Butchers and shoemakers abound, and the smell of raw leather is revolting. In the next passage many things are sold, and there are quite a number of chemists' shops. In most of these the owner sits serenely smoking as if he had nothing on earth to do. In one we see a chair tilted up against the merchandise, this is to signify that the owner is away and that no one must touch anything till he returns. In the third tunnel, which is the

noisiest and darkest of all, there are many silversmiths showing some wonderful work. It is no use our buying any of it, for we cannot carry it round the world with us. Even if we could, we should be rash to get it here, for every man asks about four times as much as he expects to get. That is one of the things which is so different in the East and West. Fancy going into one of the big west-end shops in London where an article was marked at a fixed price and trying to beat the shop assistant down. He would only smile, hardly answer, and turn away. Such a thing is absurd, but in the East any article is worth just as much as it will fetch, and the merchant says at first an enormous price in the hope that his customer is ignorant and will give it him, but if the customer bargains he will slowly come down. It takes much time to shop in this way, and is not altogether satisfactory, for you really have to know what the things are worth first.

After this we must go back to the hotel, for we have wandered about all the afternoon and are weary and bewildered, and we have many sights to see to-morrow.

Thoroughly rested after a good night we start out next morning to see something of the sacred places. Of course we know very well that when the long lane is pointed out down which Jesus bore His cross, the very spots where He stumbled and where Simon was made to carry it for Him, that these things cannot be true. Speaking of Jerusalem Jesus said once, "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down," and it came literally true, so the present streets are not those He

trod. Yet even so the scene is wonderfully interesting, for the old Jerusalem must have been like the present town, and the sights Christ saw must have resembled those we see, as for the first time we walk down these narrow steep alleys. We are going to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built over the place where the sepulchre of Christ is supposed to have been. As we go toward it we come across more beggars than we yet have encountered. A perfect army of halt and maimed and lame and blind crouch by the sides of the lane and live on the charity of the passers-by. This sort of thing would never be allowed in any Western country, and, as we are not accustomed to it, it strikes us as very distressing. Then we come out into an open space where there is a great building so irregular and piled up that it is difficult to recognise it as a church. Here are seated on the pavement numerous gaily clothed men with crucifixes and mementoes of the Holy Land for sale. They spread their wares out on the paving-stones.

Passing them all we go inside the church and find a darkened atmosphere where red lamps burn always.

We are led up steps and down steps and this way and that, and have many things pointed out to us. We are shown, for instance, the slab on which Christ's body lay and the sepulchre hewn in the rock where He was buried, and though we know that neither of these things can be true, still we feel we are in a more sacred place than any we have ever yet visited. For centuries men of all races and all nations have come here to worship and pray, as the shepherds and Wise Men came to worship and pray at the

manger in Bethlehem. The slab of the marble is worn away by the soft lips of adoring pilgrims, who fall prostrate before it and kiss it while tears roll down their cheeks. Of all that come from far the Russian pilgrims are the most devout. These poor people, worse off than any English labourers, save their pence from year to year, and then tramp hundreds of miles from their country homes to the seaport of Odessa in Russia in order to come across to see the Holy Land. They live on the charity of other poor villagers as they go, or they carry sacks of bread-crusts, getting more and more mouldy every week. Thousands arrive at the Holy Land every year just before Easter, old and frail men and women who have undergone incredible hardships. They say, "What does it matter what happens to our bodies?" and many of them die uncomplainingly. They are so good and simple that they believe everything that is told them, and almost faint with joy to think they have at last arrived at the holy places. The air seems to glow with their wonderful faith and love and kindness to one another. If, indeed, this is not the real sepulchre, at least it is a very holy place.

After this the guide leads us through so many churches of all sorts that we are quite bewildered, until at last we come out on a high open place where all is quiet, and in the midst there stands a huge church quite different from anything we have yet seen – it has a round dome rising from walls of exquisite blue and green slabs of polished stone. This is the church of the Mohammedans, called a mosque, and why it is so especially interesting to us

is because it stands on the very spot where stood the Ark of the Jews, and where, from the days of King Solomon, they worshipped God in the Temple. When Solomon built the Temple it was the most wonderful and beautiful church in the world. It was put together of massive stones, made ready and hewn and carved before they came to this place, so that there was no sound of axe or hammer in the sacred precincts. And the fittings were made of carved cedar wood, brought down by sea from Lebanon, while the furnishings were of pure gold. Never was any building before so carefully finished or so artistically designed. Solomon's Temple was utterly destroyed, but there were temples built and rebuilt on the same site, and that site is considered to be peculiarly sacred, because it is a peak of a mountain called Mount Moriah. You remember that it was to Mount Moriah Abraham was told to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him? The Jews hold that the very peak on which the mosque now stands is that place. It is, indeed, quite certain that there is an outcrop of rock belonging to part of the summit of Mount Moriah in the mosque which stands just where the Temple stood. You shall see it. Meantime we must put on huge loose slippers, made of sacking and straw, over our boots before we go in, for the Mohammedans always take off their own shoes on entering holy places, and as our modern boots are not constructed to be easily slipped off like Eastern shoes, we must cover them up. The man at the entrance ties on these enormous things and we shuffle along in them as best we can. Inside, the mosque is light and high

and very rich in polished stone and gilding; it is very different from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We are led through it, wondering and gazing, until we come suddenly to a bare rock cropping up out of the pavement to just about your height, and this, for all the ages past, has been a sacred rock. Indeed, no one can say that it was not on this mountain-top, then in the midst of wild natural country, that Abraham laid his only son bound. From this cause the mosque is often known as the "Dome of the Rock."

One more sight we must see before going out on to the quiet hillside called the Mount of Olives. This is that most curious place called the Jews' Wailing-Place.

To reach this we pass down long staircase-like streets in a poor quarter. We see many tall and fierce-looking men, with hooked noses and keen eyes, who wear a white cloak thrown round their heads and hanging down on their shoulders; but there are also many other Jews from all parts, – the Polish Jews are most conspicuous in their brilliant crimson or purple plush gowns, with round velvet hats of the same colour edged with fur; and then we come out into an open space with a huge wall as high as a very high house made of enormous blocks of stone. This is said to be part of the actual wall surrounding the Temple built by Solomon. It is Friday afternoon and there is a great concourse of men and women in flowing garments, bending and bowing and kneeling before the wall and wailing out their prayers. Some crouch low, others cling to the giant blocks and kiss the rough surface, others



beat their breasts as if in agony. Standing not far from us is a tall man who calls out some words in a long wailing cry, immediately the crowd respond as in a Litany. What they are crying out is something like this —

"For the sake of the Temple that is destroyed  
We sit solitary and weep;  
For the walls that are thrown down  
We sit solitary and weep."

We are alone at last. All the morning it has been raining heavily, and in our wanderings about the city we got drenched by water-spouts from roofs that stuck out across the street, and deluged by drippings from window-sills. In many of the narrow streets we simply had to wade, for the water rushed down them like mountain-torrents, and then we went back to the hotel to get warm and dry before sallying out again. Now we are sitting on a great grey stone on the Mount of Olives, and the sun is coming out and drying up all the dampness. We look down upon Jerusalem as Christ looked down on it that day when He entered in a triumphal procession and paused to weep over it. We can see the domes and the flat roofs with the sun glinting on them and making them shine out white, and the great wall with its turreted top running round all. It is not the same city He saw, but it must be very like it. These buildings, churches, and mosques were not there, of course, and there were a good many more trees than there are now. An olive tree never looks young; from the earliest

time it always has a twisted cross appearance like an old man who knows what rheumatism is. The blue-green leaves are small and narrow, and they turn edgewise to the sun as if they were reluctant to give anyone beneath them any more shade than they could help. There is one line of a hymn that always comes into my mind when I look at an olive tree, it runs —

"Beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade."

That is very good, because the brilliant clear white light of an Eastern moon would certainly pierce through any "shade" an olive tree could make.

Many, many times must Jesus have crossed this hill, and the most memorable time was when the people came running beside Him, singing Hosannas and cutting down palm branches, and even spreading their clothes for Him to pass over, on that first Palm Sunday so long ago. The association, which is the most sacred and heart-stirring, is of that night before the crucifixion, when He came out here with His disciples and, kneeling, prayed earnestly while they slept. That was in what is called the Garden of Gethsemane. There is more than one place on the Mount which claims to be that garden. The monks have fenced one in and planted it with gay flowers, and there is a good deal of reason to believe this may be actually right. In the country, places cannot be utterly swept away as they are in towns under an avalanche of brick and stone. We can look down from the hill into this

garden, even though it is surrounded by high walls. In the middle is a very ancient olive tree, said to have been growing in Christ's time. Rosaries are made from the stones of the olives which it bears. There are little round flower-beds carefully tended in the garden, and between them you can see a monk walking in his long coarse gown.

The hill is not very high, and the country is barren and stony and would be rather dull were it not for the thought of all the wonderful scenes that have happened here. Let us climb on to the very top. From there, away to the east, we see a long line of high blue hills, the mountains of Moab, and nearer, in a deep hole in the ground, we catch just a glimpse of the water of the Dead Sea. It is a strange name and a strange place! It lies deep, deep down, far below the level of the ocean, and though many rivers and streams run into it none run out. You would think it must always be getting larger, but no. The water evaporates very quickly. You know if there is a drop of water or a wet mark on your hand and you wave it about in the air, presently the water disappears, that is because of evaporation. The dampness has not really gone but turned into another form and made the surrounding air a little more damp. If that drop had been salt, the salt would not have entered into the air, but stayed on your hand, so when the air drinks up the water from the surface of the Dead Sea, the salt remains behind and the sea gets more and more salty; it is many times more salt than the water of an ordinary sea.

The sandy shores all round are full of this salt and nothing can

grow there, so all is desolate and dreary, and thus it is that the name Dead Sea is so appropriate. If you tried to swim in that sea you would find it impossible to sink, for just as sea-water holds you up more than fresh, so the Dead Sea water holds you up more than that of the ordinary sea. All the same, though you could not sink to the bottom you might drown, because the head and chest being heavier than the legs go down naturally, and a man might not be able to recover himself but be drowned legs upward, as many have been through not knowing how to manage a lifebelt.

The sacred river Jordan runs into the Dead Sea. We have met one of the sacred rivers of history already – the Nile, – and the Jordan, though very small, is another. It is almost absurdly small in contrast with the Nile, being only one hundred miles long! From all over the world people send to get water from the Jordan with which to baptize their babies; they have a feeling that it is different from ordinary water because Christ Himself was baptized in it. As you have heard, the Russian pilgrims go down in crowds to bathe in the Jordan in their shrouds, for they too look on the river as sacred.

About six miles to the south of where we are sitting is Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, and where the shepherds and Wise Men found Him. Much nearer is Bethany, where He often stayed.

To-day something of the wonder of the Holy Land has come upon us. We have got out of the narrow crowded lanes and away from the jostling people into the country; so the Bible story has

become more real than it ever was before. Here is the hillside over which He passed. There are the olive trees, exactly like those He saw.

We have visited Him in His daily life. It is now only left for us to go to Nazareth, where He spent all His life up to the time when He announced Himself as the Christ, the Messiah, and began His Mission. But Nazareth is a long way off. It will take us about three days to get there. We can ride or drive, whichever you like. You prefer to ride? All right, but don't expect a sleek, home-fed pony, or a fine horse champing the bit, or even a well-grown, well-fed Egyptian donkey; wait and you will see what riding means here!

# CHAPTER XI

## THE COUNTRY OF CHRIST'S CHILDHOOD

If you only knew how funny you look! Perched up on a dirty, thin, white horse which scrambles along somehow, while the great iron stirrups, shaped like shovels, dangle far below your feet. Aha! I thought so, one has fallen off. I try to pull up quickly to dismount and help you, and my bridle, which is made of worsted, like the toy reins children play with, breaks suddenly and my noble steed comes a cropper!

By the time I recover and get to you I find our guide, who looks more like a bundle of rags than anything else, tying up your stirrups with a crazy bit of string full of knots and quite rotten. This is the way we journey in the Holy Land in the present year! This is the third day of it, and these little accidents don't affect us; the harness must have been broken in at least two dozen different places since we started, and, as an Irishman might say, most of it is made of gaps.

To-day we ought to reach Nazareth while it is still light, though, as it is dull and grey, the evening will close in sooner than if the sky were clear. What a pity we could not manage to come here in the spring when the fields of blue lupins look like a strip of summer sky fallen to earth and fill the air with

their scent for miles around. There are anemones too, purple and red and white, and lilies, but I think nothing would strike us so much as the homely little daisies which grow here just as they do at home. There is something strange and yet familiar in this country, where so many different sorts of trees and plants grow, that a man coming from almost anywhere in the world will find something that carries his heart back home. Besides the daisies we have the sparrows, just as pert and neat as our own sparrows, yet other things are odd. Yesterday we saw a man carrying a sheep on his shoulders; he wore a striped garment hanging down on each side of his neck, and even the sheep did not seem quite the same as ours. It was some time before we discovered why, and then we found out that the long flapping ears hung down, while the ears of our sheep are small and upright. It is a most difficult thing to remember how an animal's ears grow. Nine people out of ten, on being told to draw a pig, will give him small, pointed, upright ears, instead of making the flaps fall over!

The rest of the flock of sheep quietly followed the shepherd who carried the hurt one, for in the East sheep are used to being led, instead of being driven by a dog, as in Britain, and that is why so often we hear in the Bible of the sheep being led. Jesus took almost all His parables from natural things around Him – the cornfields, the lilies growing, the sparrows, and the vineyards.

We have been steadily rising for long past, now we mount a steeper bit of rising ground and suddenly there comes into view a tiny valley from which the hills rise again, and on the opposite

slope, spread out before us, is Nazareth. We pull up and look at it in silence. The little, flat-roofed, white houses are dotted about among gardens and trees, and resemble the square white dice one throws out of a box. Very much as it appears to us now must this little hill-village have looked to Jesus when He lived here, except that the slopes of the hills were more cultivated, and there were more houses. Jesus came here as a small child and lived here until He was thirty. *You* know, of course, every tree and hole and stream and almost every stone and bird's nest about your own home in the country; you will never get to know any other place so well again in your life, for when one is grown up one can't climb trees and dabble in streams and build huts and root about in the earth. Jesus was just a natural boy; He grew to know all the byways between the little gardens, all the trees which bore figs or pomegranates or olives or oranges, and He climbed the hills around with other lads when He had a holiday – no other place would ever be to Him what Nazareth was.

One or two tall buildings stand out prominently, these are the churches, and they, of course, were not there in His time. None of the houses can be the same after nineteen hundred years, but many of them are probably exactly like those that existed then.

As we go down toward the village at a foot's pace we see grave, brown-faced, bright-eyed boys, who stand and stare but do not bother us for coppers, as the Jerusalem children did. We pass in among the houses and come to the well where both men and women are standing, for it is just the time that they come to draw



water in the evening. This well is one of the most interesting things in Nazareth, for it is the only one, and has been known for generations. It is almost certain that it must have been here when Jesus lived in the village. Now it has a stone arch over it, and as the water gushes out the women fill hand-made earthenware jars with narrow necks and curving sides, and having filled them they put them on their heads and walk gracefully away. Just so must Mary, the mother of Jesus, have filled her jar in the ages long ago, and the child Jesus may have clung to her skirts as that tiny brown boy is doing, shyly hiding at the sight of us. The women are very good looking, and dress in a great variety of colours, many wearing striped clothes. One or two have chains or bands of silver coins across their foreheads, very many have bright red head coverings falling down over blue dresses. There are some swarthy-looking men too, in sheepskins, and one is waiting to water his camel. On one side is a very handsome lad of sixteen with a flock of black goats. They all look at us with interest, but they are quite accustomed to strangers and are not at all embarrassed.

We go on between the houses by the widest road, which is now slippery with mud, and after our guide has asked permission of a man standing in a doorway, we dismount and get a chance of seeing inside one of these little dark houses. The only light comes from the doorway, for there is no window; it shines into one room with a mud floor, beaten hard by many feet. There are a few mats laid about, a few stools, and on one side a kind of shelf

with more mats and some cushions – this is where the family sleep at night. In a corner are some of the earthenware jars and some pots and pans. That is all. There is no reason to think that the house Jesus lived in was at all more luxurious than this.

As we turn to go out we hear a flutter of wings, and a flock of white doves rise from the ground and alight on the roof, cooing softly.

In this village are a good many shops, but they are not the sort we are accustomed to. Picture the village shop at home with its small glass panes and the post-office on one side. The window crammed with marbles and liquorice and peppermint, and slates and balls and copybooks and hoops and everything that the owner thinks anyone would be in the least likely to buy. In Nazareth the shops sell only one sort of thing, and those that sell the same sort of thing have a general inclination to come together. In one little street, for instance, are the saddlers' shops.

The front of the house is open, but there is no glass to fill it in, and we can see the men working at their trade inside. The harness is extremely gay, painted in all colours, red and blue and yellow, and made up with bits of tinsel and glitter. The more decorated he can afford to have his harness the prouder is the rider. As we stand watching, a number of women steal gently up behind us and offer some embroidery they have made; they do not push or scramble, and when we shake our heads they melt away again.

As we turn a corner, there, right in front of us, is a carpenter's shop with the front quite open to the street, as in the harness-

makers' shops. The bearded man who leans over a cart-wheel and handles it with long brown hands might have been Joseph himself. In just such a workshop as this Jesus learnt His trade.

The life of a little Jewish boy of those days was carefully ordered, and in his life there was much more saying of prayers and going to church – that is, the synagogue – than you have in yours. At school there was a great deal to be learnt by heart, and what with that and the churchgoing and the workshop there cannot have been much spare time.

We go slowly on to the inn, where we are to pass the night. To-morrow we will go down to the Sea of Galilee and watch the fishermen drawing in their nets as they did in Christ's time when He called them to be fishers of men.

After that we will come back, pass Nazareth once more, and make our way to a port called Haifa, where we can get a steamer to take us down to Jaffa instead of returning to Jerusalem again by three days' journey on horseback.

## CHAPTER XII

### AN ADVENTURE

We are late, very late, the moon is rising and I must confess I am just a wee bit uneasy. When we reached Haifa safely last night, coming from Nazareth, and found we couldn't get a steamer till to-morrow it seemed the best thing to drive across the bay and get a look at Acre, that celebrated town which has spent its existence in the turmoil of sieges and assaults. It is a great fort built out into the sea, and nearly everyone who wanted to get possession of the Holy Land has tried first to take Acre as the key to it. One of the most memorable sieges was that of two years in the reign of our own King Richard i., who ended it by arriving with fresh troops and helping his allies the French; but it is reckoned the two countries, between them, lost 100,000 men, one way and another, before they took the stubborn town. After that it remained in English hands for a century.

The Turks held it in much later times against Buonaparte; they were helped by an Englishman, Sir Sydney Smith, and if Acre is celebrated for nothing else it should be celebrated for the fact that it held out for sixty-one days against Buonaparte, who was in the end obliged to give up and go away!

We drove this morning, with three horses abreast, across the twelve miles of sandy bay between Haifa and Acre, in one of the

ramshackle waggonettes that take the place of omnibuses and carry any passengers who want to go. We came with numbers of natives, chiefly women, and innumerable bundles and bags, which they always think it necessary to drag about with them. We did not get here till midday, and after spending a few hours we had seen all we cared to of the place, and were ready to go back. But in the East things are not done like that. So we waited and waited long after the hour the omnibus was said to return, and when at last the driver did saunter up, the scarecrow horses had to be sought for, and then the harness, of course, had to be mended with string, and that wasn't nearly the end, because, after waiting again a long time for nothing at all that anyone could see, a Turkish woman who was evidently of some consequence, attended by a maid and quantities of baggage, came up, and everyone had to turn out until all her things were stowed away. So it was nearly nightfall before we got off.

The sands are in most places firm and make good going, but a couple of rivers run down across them to the sea; one of these is that "ancient river, the river Kishon," mentioned in Deborah's song of triumph when the Israelites had overcome their enemies. These rivers have to be crossed with care, and, not so long ago, some people got bogged and were set upon by robbers and stripped, and one was drowned by the incoming tide; but I ought not to tell you these things. We are half across now, and the moon is getting high, so we shall have more light presently.

Bump! The horse on the off-side runs out of his traces

suddenly and stands facing the other one in a sort of mild amazement. The harness has given way once more. Grumbling and growling the driver climbs down and pulls him back and goes on muttering to himself. Far off the lapping of the water is heard out at sea; it wouldn't do to be caught by the tide in this situation, but they tell us the tide has not turned yet. The moon sheds a curious unearthly light that fills the air with mystery. The long low sandhills on the shore show up plainly, and nearer there are countless wrecks which have been piled up on this desolate coast. That large one, nearest of all, looks just like the huge up-curving ribs of some mammoth that has had the flesh picked clean from his bones. Look! There is something moving close to it, in the shadow; what is it? It comes out a little way into the light, it is a furtive-looking little four-footed creature whose fur shines with a reddish tinge; there is another, peeping out from the sandhills, and another and another! They are all over, but so silent and light-footed are they that it is difficult to believe them to be anything but shadows. A wave of the hand and they have disappeared! They are jackals, inquisitively watching us with their bright eyes. Nothing to be afraid of. They dare not attack a man if he is alive, though they would gleefully devour him dead. They are much more frightened of you than you are of them. Weird, shy, furtive little beasts. One can imagine them on a night like this playing games and chasing one another in and out of the ribs of the drowned ship in a sort of witches' dance.

Heigho! Well, we're on again at last.

We journey at a foot's pace for another mile or so and the lights of Haifa begin to shine out clearly ahead, when all of a sudden the carriage seems to be going down on one side. The two Turkish women, who are on the high side, roll violently down on to us, screaming and sobbing hysterically. I don't know what you feel like, but I am nearly smothered by the flowing shawls and the strong smell of scent; when I manage to get free I find that you have disappeared altogether till I get hold of a leg and jerk you forth.

The carriage has gone further and further over; the horses are splashing and struggling; and as we stand up the middle one goes down and disappears altogether. The water must be deep and we are evidently in the river.

There is nothing for it but to go to the driver's help, so I leave you to reassure the ladies and get up to my waist almost at once as we pull the horse's head above water, while the sand slips away beneath our feet. The poor beast, after desperate kickings, gets on to his legs again, but no effort of ours can move the carriage, which seems to be sinking deeper and deeper. With the struggles of the horses the harness has all come to bits again, and the poor, mild, dismayed creatures turn round, quite free from their trappings, and look at the vehicle as much as to say, "What a shabby trick you have served us!"

The driver brings the horses alongside, and the bundle of scented wrappings, which is the more important lady, is lifted on the back of one. The man himself gets up behind her to hold

her on, and when she feels his wet embrace she raises a perfect storm of shrieks as if she were being carried away by a robber. He takes not the slightest notice, but solemnly sets his horse's head to the shore, and they splash away. By yourself you have managed to land on to the back of the next horse, and before you have time to turn round or do anything to help with the other lady, the horse kicks up its heels, sending you shooting on to its neck, and whinnying wildly scrambles off after its comrade. The Turkish lady's companion makes no fuss at all about coming with me. She slips on to the remaining horse as if she were used to riding all her life, and, sitting astride like a man, holds him in until I mount behind. It is lucky indeed this animal has no spirit left, or she and I would have been stranded!

At this rate we shall soon reach Haifa.

When we do get there what a chattering and what excitement! Unfortunately, as we can't speak the native tongue, we miss most of it, but the excited gestures and loud voices show that we are heroes indeed.

Next morning I find myself none the worse for my wetting, and before we leave we have the satisfaction of seeing all the bundles and packages belonging to the ladies safely recovered. But we gather that the waggonette remains immovable. We can see it, far off, partly surrounded by the swirling water like a little black island. The united strength of a dozen men and six horses have been unable to pull it on to firm ground. There it will stay till it rots, in the midst of the stranded ships, and the little soft-



footed shadowy jackals will dance around it and tell one another strange tales of that wonderful night when the air was shaken by piercing screams, and strange heavy animals galloped across the sands, making them shake and quiver, and yet, after it all, there was nothing left for them to eat!

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE GATEWAY OF THE EAST

The anchor is up and we are in a stately ship moving on slowly into the Suez Canal. When we arrived at Port Said – how many weeks ago was it? It seems to me like a year – we were on the *Orontes*, of the Orient Line, and we steamed into the harbour past a long breakwater like a thin arm; standing upon it is a statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the man who made the Suez Canal. That meant nothing to you then, for the canal was merely a name and not of any special interest, but now that we are actually passing into it it is different.

Just here, you remember, we are at the place where three continents meet, Europe being represented by the Mediterranean Sea. The other two, Asia and Africa, are joined by a strip of land called the Isthmus of Suez, about a hundred miles across. For ages men had it in their minds to cut through this strip so that their ships could sail straight from the Mediterranean into the Red Sea on the other side of the Isthmus. But it wasn't quite so easy to do as it sounds, for the land was mostly desert sand, and if you have ever tried to dig out a trench on the seashore and then let water into it, you will know very well what happens. The sides slip down, and in a few minutes your trench is level up to the top and is a trench no more!

The ancient Egyptians frequently marched across the Isthmus with their armies and advanced into Palestine and made war on the wild tribes there. They built also a strong wall across the Isthmus to prevent the inhabitants of Palestine from retaliating, just as the Romans built a wall across Northumbria to hold back the Picts and Scots.

It was not until comparatively recent days, that is to say, in the time of your grandfather, that the attempt to cut a canal across the Isthmus was successful, and the man who did it was Ferdinand de Lesseps, whose statue stands on the breakwater. He was a Frenchman, but he wished to get other nations to help in the great work, as France could not raise all the money alone; unfortunately Great Britain would have nothing to do with the idea, though luckily afterwards, when the canal had been built, the Government managed to buy a large number of the shares in it from the Egyptian Government. It took ten years to make the canal, but it was done at last after the expenditure of quantities of money and the loss of many lives, and even up to the opening day there were many who scoffed and said it could never be made useful; yet now that bronze statue stands solemnly watching, day by day, the great ships of many nations crawling slowly into the narrow opening at the northern end.

Not only had the canal to be made but it has to be kept in working order, for the sand silts back into the channel, and so numbers of dredgers are constantly at work scraping out the bottom so as to keep it deep enough for ships of large size.

At first the depth of the main channel was twenty-six feet, but now it has been deepened to twenty-nine feet; but even that seems less than we should expect.

At one time the storms of January and February used to drive quantities of sand from the Mediterranean into the mouth of the canal, and even now, though the breakwater has been lengthened to prevent it, there is always difficulty. Steamers are only allowed to go through slowly, otherwise the suction or pull of the water they disturb would tear down the banks and soon make the canal useless. You have no idea what a wave a big ship can raise in going through that narrow trough; even at a moderate pace it would be sufficient to tear another ship from her moorings by the bank, and then there might be a collision and disastrous results. Ships have to pay a heavy toll for the privilege of using the short cut, but the toll is needed to meet the working expenses and to pay the interest on the money spent in the construction.

The ship we are in is considerably larger than the *Orontes*; she is the *Medina*, belonging to the P. & O. Company, and was chosen to take the King and Queen to India in 1911. She is not very cheerful looking outside, being painted buff, with black funnels, but she is a comfortable boat, and we are lucky in having a large cabin on the upper deck, so that we can have our port-hole open whatever the weather may be.

The sun is setting in a flame of salmon and scarlet as we pass the canal offices and turn into the narrow channel. There are sidings dug out about every five or six miles, for as only one big

ship can go through at a time, if she meets another, one of them must stop and tie up. There are telegraph stations at every siding, and every ship entering the canal is controlled all the way by an elaborate system of signals which tells the pilot exactly what he is to do, whether he must "shunt into a siding," to use railway language, or if he may go right ahead.

Directly we are in the canal we see over the banks on both sides; on the west is a wide sheet of water lit up to smoky-red by the reflection of the sinking sun. Flocks of storks and pelicans and other birds cover it at certain times of the year to fish in the shallow salt waters, for this is a salt lake, a sort of overflow from the sea. One day it will be drained and then crops can grow upon it. The canal is cut through it and hemmed in by an embankment; farther on it runs through the desert and then goes through another lake. For the greater part of the way a railway line runs beside it, passing through Ismailia, the junction for Cairo, and going on to Suez, and from some parts of this line you can see a strange spectacle, for, as no water is visible, the ships appear to be gliding along the top of a sandbank; there is apparently just a huge modern steamer lost among the sandhills and making the best of her way back to the sea!

The pilot who is on board now takes us to Ismailia, half-way down, and then another replaces him as far as Suez, where the canal ends. Every ship over one hundred tons is compelled to carry a pilot, who is responsible for her while she is in the difficult channel. And, indeed, a pilot is necessary, for the canal is not by

any means a straight, deep trench; there are curves where it is a delicate job to manœuvre a ship of any length, and in places in the deeper lakes the course is only marked by buoys. It needs a man who spends his whole time at the work and gives all his attention to it. The danger at the curves is lest the propeller at the stern should come in contact with the banks, so the ship has to be manœuvred most slowly and carefully round them. Only at one place in the whole length of the canal was no digging out necessary. This is in the great Bitter Lake, where for eight miles the water is deep enough for the ships to pass safely.

There is not much to see at first; the banks are lined by scrubby bushes, and on them, in a sandy open patch, we see a man falling and bowing at his evening devotions; a few camels pass along the raised bank, looking like gigantic spiders against the illuminated sky, and there comes faintly to us the distant bark of a jackal.

When we come on deck again after dinner we find the air quite mild; we are only going at the rate of six miles an hour, which is the speed-limit.

Somewhere across the desert where we are passing to-night have passed also the feet of many mighty ones of history. Abraham crossed it with Sarah, his beautiful wife, Joseph was carried down a captive over the caravan track of that day. Later on his brothers twice journeyed, driven by famine, and lastly came old Jacob also. Many times, as we know, did the armies of the Pharaohs start out in all the panoply of war and return victorious bringing captives in chains. Across the

wilderness somewhere Moses led forth the children of Israel, and, most wonderful remembrance of all, Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, brought down to Egypt his wife and her infant son to escape the wrath and jealousy of Herod. Hardly any strip of land we could name has so many associations interesting to all the world.

Why do you start and catch hold of my arm to draw my attention? That is only a Lascar, one of the sailors, a picturesque fellow, isn't he? Didn't you notice them when we came on board? The P. & O. ships carry a crew of Lascars to work under the white quartermasters; they are dark brown men with shining eyes and gleaming teeth, who dress in bright blue with red belts and caps; they love a bit of finery and stick it on wherever they can. They come from the coasts of India and usually sign on for three years under one of their own headmen called a *serang*; you can always pick him out by the silver chain of office which he wears round his neck, Lord-Mayor fashion. I saw him just now, a little man rather like a monkey. He is a very important personage, for all the orders are given through him, and he receives the pay for his men and is responsible for their good behaviour. Woe be to the man who is insubordinate! Not only will he be punished now, but his whole village will hear about it, and he will be disgraced and find it difficult to get work thereafter.

The moon is covered with clouds to-night, which is a pity, but the brilliant reflectors the ship carries in her bows throw the light well ahead on to both banks.

Hullo! We're coming to something; there is another ship tied up waiting for us to pass. No, it is true I can't make her out, but I can see her searchlights, so I guess she is behind them. Very slowly we crawl on, making hardly a ripple; we are going dead slow now, scarcely moving, in fact. That light from the other ship is blinding; just where it strikes the water there are any number of little fish wriggling and squirming in an ecstasy of painful delight. The water is alive with them, churning and threshing over one another like a pot full of eels. Bright lights attract fish and it is a very old dodge, known all over the world, to hold a flare over the water and then spear or net the fish who are attracted by it. Fish must have something akin to moths in their nature, as many of them simply cannot resist a light.

Now we are alongside; the other ship's light is out of our eyes and our own falls full upon her. What a spectacle! She looks like a phantom ship carrying a cargo of ghosts! She is transformed by our lights into blue fire! Every plank and rope stands out brilliantly in the ghastly light. Her decks are crowded by a mass of turbaned and fez-covered men, mostly in light garments, and they, their faces and their clothing, are all blue-white. They stand silently, packed side by side like sardines; it doesn't look as if they would have room to lie, or even to sit down. As we glide slowly past a strange odour floats over from them enveloping us – an odour made up of spices and camels and tired unwashed humanity; there is a hint of coffee in it and a touch of wood-smoke – it suggests Eastern bazaars and the desert.



Then our light slips off them and we see the ship as she really is under the faintly diffused light of the clouded moon. She is a dirty commonplace hulk, packed with men in soiled clothes, no longer the radiant white ship of our vision.

"Taking pilgrims back from Mecca," says one of the passengers who is leaning over the rail near us smoking. "They pack them like cattle usually. On some of these vessels their fare doesn't include any accommodation or food; they have to bargain with the captain for a bit of deck to lie down on, and the highest bidder secures the best place!"

Mecca, which lies many miles inland from the port of Jiddah, half-way down the Red Sea, is the birthplace of Mohammed, and the sacred city of the Mohammedans; when they kneel at their devotions it is with their faces turned towards Mecca. Those who have managed to pilgrimage there even once in their lives are looked upon as superior beings.

The siding we have just passed is one of the largest in the canal, and three ships can lie up there together if necessary. It is here that the Syrian caravans cross over into Africa.

Next morning we are up on deck in good time, as we want to see all we can of the canal. We are by this time out in the wide water of the Bitter Lake, where we can go at a good speed, then the canal itself begins again and we pass one of the little station-houses where the signalmen live; it looks as if it was built out of a child's bricks, and stands on the arid banks with only a few scanty palms near. It must be a dreary sort of life for ever

signalling to ships which are going onward to all countries of the world, while you yourself remain pinned down in the same few square yards of land.

This narrow waterway that passes down between Asia on the one side and Africa on the other is stimulating to the imagination.

We catch a glimpse of Suez afar off and run by a tree-shadowed road that leads to a peninsula, where are the P. & O. offices and a row of houses inhabited by the men whose work in life it is to look after the canal. Notice that buoy on the port side of the ship, it is about as far from the bank as a man could throw a cricket-ball, yet through that strip of water, which marks the deepest channel, every ship has to pass either on entering or leaving the canal. Think of it! Between five thousand and six thousand ships steam through in a year, they are of all sizes, of many nations, carrying many kinds of cargo. There are the mail ships and passenger ships of the European countries, there are pilgrim ships from Russia and Turkey, there are transports carrying our own khaki-clad soldiers; you can always recognise one of these transports, for she is painted white and carries a large white number on a black square at the stem and stern. Then there are merchant ships innumerable; it is true that the heavily laden Australian ships go home round the Cape, as the distance (from Sydney) is much the same, but those stored with teak wood from Burma, with tea, cotton, spices, and silk from China, Ceylon, and India come through here. If a boy were to sit on the verandah of one of those houses and hear the names, destinations, and

freight of all the vessels he saw, he could learn the geography and commerce of half the world with hardly an effort!

That range of mountains across there, which look strangely like ruined forts and castles, forms part of the great peninsula of Sinai where the Law was given to Moses, and though it is in Asia it now belongs to Egypt. It looks as if you could hit it with a stone, so wonderfully do distant objects stand out in this clear atmosphere, but it is seven or eight miles away. That dark clump midway between it and the sea marks the place called Moses' Well.

We are in the Gulf of Suez now, and it must have been somewhere about here that the Israelites crossed over with the host of Pharaoh pursuing them.

We are getting up better speed, and it is not long before we have reached the end of the gulf and pass out into the wide waters of the Red Sea.

There were two delusions I cherished for many a year about this sea. I always imagined it a long, narrow strip, like a river, in which you could see from bank to bank as you sailed along; and secondly, I thought there must be some red colouring on the banks or in the water to account for the strange name. As a matter of fact, the sea is over one thousand miles long and varies from twenty to one hundred and eighty miles in breadth. Being on it in a ship is like being out in the open ocean, for one can see no shore. The name "Red" Sea has never been satisfactorily explained, but some people suggest that it may have arisen from

the spawn or eggs of fish which float on the surface in quantities at certain times of the year and are of a reddish tinge, others say it is from the coral which grows so well here, and others think it may have something to do with the rocks of red porphyry on the Egyptian side of the Arabian Gulf.

For the first time since we left England we begin now, as we go southward, to feel uncomfortably hot. It was never too hot in Egypt, for there was always a fresh wind. Here at first we have a following wind which makes it seem dead calm; there is a kind of clammy dampness in the air which makes it impossible to do anything requiring energy. The deck games of "bull" and quoits and even cricket, which have been carried on in such a lively way lately, fall off; no one cares to do anything.

Even the children cease from troubling. There are quite a number of them on board, for this is an Australian ship; if she were going to India there would be no small children. Here I counted fifteen at the table downstairs where they have their meals. You, of course, are treated as a grown-up person, and quite right too, as you are on the eve of a public school. I wonder how you will settle down at Harrow next winter after all this change! There is only one other boy of about the same age. I saw you talking to him this morning; what do you make of him?

A "rotter"? Yes, I thought so too. He seems to consider that the greatest fun on board is to rumple up the stewards' hair or to knock off their caps, and as they can't retaliate it is poor sport. He never plays games either, which is odd considering he is an

Australian.

Oh, I hoped that child had sunk into a sweet slumber! He is a nuisance; he can't be more than four, but he never seems to rest day or night, and he spends the laziest hour of the afternoon dragging a squeaking cart up and down the wooden deck, to the annoyance of everyone except the fond mother, who encourages it as a sign of genius! Odd one never can travel without at least one child of that sort on board. There's a nice alcove aft behind the smoking-room where we may find refuge.

Yes, I grant the little girls are just as bad as the boys; there is that pert spoilt little miss who rushes after the steward when he carries round the *hors d'œuvre* before dinner and clamours for them.

"They're not for children," he told her.

"But mother doesn't forbid me to have them," she retorted, standing on one leg with her finger in her mouth.

If she refrained from doing only what her mother *did* forbid her she would have a fairly easy time I think.

It is too stifling to sleep in the cabin, so we will try the deck to-night. It is rather pleasant stepping out on to the warm dry boards when the lights are out. The awning shuts us in overhead, but at the side we can see the smooth water lying white in the moonlight. Here is our place, with our mattresses laid out neatly side by side and the number of our cabin scrawled in white chalk on the wooden boards beside them. There is a story of a certain ape who got loose on board ship and paid a visit to the deck when

all the men were asleep! A funny sight it must have been as he landed on the top of one after the other!

In spite of the calmness of the night it is always more or less noisy on a ship: there is the flap of an awning, the crack of a rope, the creaking of the plates, and the frilling away of the water past the ship's side. I lie awake a long time, turning uneasily and feeling the taste of the salt on my lips. At last, low down between the rails, away on the horizon, I see the well-known constellation, the Southern Cross. You have often heard of it I expect. It is one of the most famous groups of stars in the southern hemisphere and as much beloved by southerners as the Great Bear is by us. As the Great Bear sinks night by night lower in the north so the Southern Cross rises into sight. It is not a very brilliant or even cross, but rather straggly, and the stars are not very large, but it means much – hot skies, blue-black and brilliantly star-spangled, lines of white surf breaking on silvery sand beneath palm trees, fire-flies and scented air – I am growing drowsy at last – sleep is coming... I must show you the cross another night.

Hullo! it's morning! A Lascar is standing by grinning, with a bucket of water and a deck-swab; they want to begin holystoning down the decks. How sleepy I am! And as for you, the night steward, who is still on duty, lifts you in his arms and carries you into your bunk, where you'll find yourself when you do wake. It's only five – time for some more hours yet. Sleeping on deck is rather an overrated amusement I think!

Before getting out of the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean

we have to pass through the Straits of Babel-Mandeb, which means the Gate of Affliction or Tears, because of the numerous wrecks there have been here. Then we stop at Aden, where the passengers going on to India change to another P. & O. steamer, the *Salsette*, which is waiting for them. The *Medina* goes across to Ceylon and then south to Australia, but the ship following her next week goes straight to India.

It is lucky for Britain that she owns Aden, for it is the doorway at the south end of the Red Sea, as the canal is the doorway at the north end. Of course it is more important to us that the route to the East should be kept clear than it is to any nation, because in case of difficulties in India we should have to send troops there at once. It is more by good luck than good management that just these little corners of the world, that mean so much, should happen to fall into our possession – Gibraltar, for instance, the gateway of the Mediterranean. And though the British Government refused to have any hand in the making of the Suez Canal, yet afterwards, because the Khedive of Egypt was hard up and willing to sell his shares, we bought at a reasonable rate and have much influence in the management of the canal.

Standing beside us, watching the passengers for India climb down the gangway, is a fresh-looking, pink-faced young man of about one-and-twenty. He has a simple look, and you would think he was too young and innocent to go round the world by himself.

"I'm right down glad I'm not going to 'do' India," he remarks.

"I'm sick of travelling; I'm just longing to get back."

"To Australia?"

"Yes; I'm a sheep-farmer there. I've worked four years without a break, so I took a holiday in Europe."

Anything less like one's idea of a sheep-farmer it would be hard to find! I always pictured them stern bearded men, with brick-red faces and sinewy limbs. This lad doesn't look as if he had ever been in a strong sun, and his slender loose-jointed legs and arms do not give the impression of an open-air life spent mostly in the saddle.

"You have a sheep-farm? Hard life, isn't it?"

"Best life in the world," he answers with enthusiasm. "Always on horseback, miles of open country, not shut in by beastly houses."

"But there's a lack of water, isn't there?"

"You can always sink a well, that's what they do now. It costs a good deal, but you can get water almost anywhere within reason."

"Are you far out?"

"No, only about three hundred and forty miles from the town where my mother lives. I go down to see her at week-ends; we're lucky in being close to a station, only a fifteen-mile ride."

Three hundred and forty miles! About the distance from London to Berwick! Good place for week-ends, especially with a fifteen-mile ride at one end! I suppose our ideas get small from living in a little country. Pity we can't visit Australia, but we can't manage it this time. That great island-continent and its sister,



New Zealand, are well worth seeing. Except for the Canadians there are no people nearer akin to us than the Australasians. The world-famous harbour of Sydney, the great hills clothed in eucalyptus, hiding in their depths vast caverns of stalactites, the wide open ranges stretching for leagues inland, all these things are attractive. In New Zealand, too, we should find tree-ferns of gigantic size, lovely scenery, and spouting geysers; it is an England set in a very different climate from ours! Then we might pass on to those strange South Seas, gemmed by coral islands, and to the latitudes where the mighty albatross swings overhead like an aeroplane, only, unlike an aeroplane, he glides in a never-ending plane without apparent effort or even one flap of his huge twelve-foot wings.

Alas, we can't see everything this trip!

# CHAPTER XIV

## THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN

Now we are right out in the Indian Ocean, and it is a bright day with a certain freshness in the air, instead of that horrible muggy heat that made us feel so languid when we were in the Red Sea. Look over the ship's side and watch the rainbow in the spray; that is one of the prettiest things to see on board. As the vessel cuts through the water she raises a frill of foam on either side – what the sailors call "a bone in her mouth." The frill, rising to a continuous wave along the side, catches the sunlight and a perpetual rainbow dances in it, changing always but remaining ever. Whew! What a rush! Flying fish. Look at them! These are the first we have seen so near; when they spring out of the water like that and skim along in the air they are not doing it for fun, but to escape a bitter enemy in the water, the bonito, a ferocious large fish who preys upon them; he is their chief foe, but there are many others also. They curve up all together like a glittering bow and slither down again. In dropping back into the sea they make a kind of pattering noise, though, of course, we are too far to hear it, and the fishermen in the small islands near India make use of this in trying to catch the bonito. They go out in boats specially built for the purpose, with a kind of platform overhanging the stern; here they sit and make a splashing with their paddles, at the

same time using some little fish, which they catch and breed in tanks, for bait. The noise attracts the large fish, who think there is a shoal of the small fry about, and they jump at the bait and are caught. The catch is often very good, and the boats come back to the huts laden with the ogre fish, destined to be eaten in their turn!

Have you ever thought what it must be like right down there in the deeps below the green water? We can't see because of the light striking the surface, but if we had a water-glass we could. This is a wooden funnel like that made of paper by village shopkeepers to roll up soft sugar in. At the broad end is a piece of strong glass, which is thrust under the water, and by peering through the small end it is possible to make out what is happening below if it is not too deep; anyway, we are too high up out of the water to use one here even if we had it, but in a boat near the coral reefs and islands there are wonderful things to be seen by the help of one of these glasses.

If you dropped a stone overboard here it would sink and sink gradually for about two miles, until it found a resting-place on a slimy bottom of ooze in a strange dark place. You have a pretty good idea of what a mile is from running in the school races; in imagination set it up on end, and add another to it, and then think of that stone sinking that distance into the grey water! Down there it must be quite dark, for the mass of water above cuts off the sunlight like a black curtain. There are many beasts living there, nevertheless; lobsters and other shell-fish as well as fish,

and in a great many cases those that have been examined are found to have no eyes; it is probable that they have lost their eyesight in the course of many generations, because it would be no help to them in getting a living in those black depths. The subject is not fully understood yet, because *some* deep-sea fishes have exceptionally good sight, but these may possibly live higher up in the water, where there is a certain amount of glare, and then their eyes would become sharpened by necessity.

The bed of the ocean is not a level plain; if you could see it emptied of all water, you would discover that the land slopes down, sometimes gradually and sometimes with terrific precipices from the shores, and that at the mouths of great rivers there are great banks of mud brought down by the current and piled up, making a fat living for innumerable sea-creatures. But at the very bottom, in this carpet of slime, there are no weeds, or as we might call them sea-vegetables, for they cannot live altogether without light, so the creatures which have their home in what to us would seem this cheerless, miserable retreat, must live on one another. They are differently built from surface fish, because they have always resting upon them the weight of an enormous pile of water. Picture a pyramid of water two miles high resting on anybody. It would crush him to atoms; but the fish and crustacea down there are used to it, and fitted by nature to support it, and so, if they are brought up to the surface by any means, they burst! In deep-sea trawling it is quite a common occurrence to see fishes literally burst open, with their eyes protruding from the sockets,

and this annoys the fishermen, because they are of no use for the market in that condition. It is difficult to imagine creatures unable to live without a great weight resting on them, but as a matter of fact it is the same thing with us in a less degree. There is a column of air some miles high resting on every one of us, and if we could imagine ourselves lifted out of it into space, our heads would throb, and our eyes would burst out, and we should be as helpless as a deep-sea fish brought up to the surface.

As for light, they have strange methods down there in the black depths. A great many of the deep-sea inhabitants carry their own lights, for they are more or less luminous, shining by internal light as glow-worms and fire-flies do. One extraordinary fish has a row of shiny spots stretching from his head to his tail, and when he is swimming about he must look like a liner with a lighted row of ship's ports stretching along his side. Even lobsters and crabs shine luminously, and what use it is to them when they are frequently blind it is hard to conjecture; it must have something to do with catching prey, who are perhaps not blind and may be attracted by the lights. There is at least one fish who hangs out what is like a red lantern, only it is the tip of his fin, and by this means he draws to himself small creatures who swim right into his capacious mouth; thus his dinner comes to him without his having to search for it!

I want to go to the bows, for it never seems to me I am in a ship until I can get to a place where there is nothing to shut one in. These modern liners are horribly shut in, one might as well be in a

drawing-room most of the time. Here we are at last, and it is good to draw a deep breath, feeling the huge dome of the sky above and the wide rim of the horizon around with nothing to cut them off. Look down where the ship cleaves the sea with her bows cleanly and beautifully like a living thing. Hullo! there is a dolphin! We are in luck! Can you see him dancing round us and plunging in under water and coming up again, much as a dog does on land when he goes out for a walk with his master? There is another, and another! What they call a shoal. They go fast enough; I expect we are making about fifteen or sixteen knots, or miles, an hour, which is good going, and yet these little chaps swim round and round, cutting across ahead of us, diving under us and coming up again all the time; to them it is mere child's play, and they really are playing; they are full of fun, and there is no earthly reason why they should behave like that except for amusement!

There goes the bugle for lunch.

Seems early, you say? As if we had only just finished breakfast? Yes. Look at your watch. It is hopelessly wrong, of course; so is mine and everyone else's. We are going just about due east now, so we are meeting the sun half-way, so to speak. That is what makes the time different. You know that when the sun is at the highest point overhead at any place then it is midday, and as the earth spins round from west to east a constant succession of places come beneath him in turn, each getting their midday a little later than the one before. In the British Isles there is really very little difference between the hours when the eastern

and western coasts meet the sun. Take Yarmouth, say, and Land's End; there is perhaps something like half an hour between them, but as it would be awkward for railway work and business if every place had a little different time, so, for convenience' sake, one "standard" time is adopted in England, Scotland, and now even in some of the nearest continental countries; this is the hour when the sun is highest above Greenwich, where is our greatest observatory. And this is called midday, even though as a matter of fact the real midday at different places may be earlier or later.

As we journey east across the world, however, we are constantly going forward to meet the sun. We are not only on the earth, which is turning round all the time, but we are going ahead ourselves as well, and out-running the earth, and so we arrive at noon sooner and sooner each day. Our watches of course take no heed of *real* time as judged by the sun, they are just mechanical and tick away their sixty minutes to each hour whether the sun is overhead or not. At this moment we are about four hours ahead of our friends in England. It is one o'clock here, but they will only be having breakfast! When we live always in one place it is easy to forget that we are on a ball spinning round in space, but this brings it home to us and makes us realise our absurd position in the universe. Well, let us get our lunch. There is one thing on board, everybody is always ready to eat an amazing amount after they have got over sea-sickness, and the number of meals we manage to consume here would surprise us at home!

As the evening closes in, the day undergoes a change; there

is a thick bank of black-looking cloud in the west, and just as the sun goes down this breaks up into wild streamers and shows deep ragged gulfs of livid light between; there are glimpses of green and tawny-red and angry orange flashing through, and then the veil of cloud blots out the light. Yet it is still, there doesn't seem to be a ripple of wind, and the sea has a curious oily calm upon it. Would you like to come along to the bows after dinner? Don't, if you don't want to. It is more difficult to get there than we expected, for though it looks so calm there is a big swell, and we are rising and falling considerably on the smooth-backed hillocks of water. Creep under these ropes and over this barricade. Then we are free from all the entanglements. There are no dolphins now, but there is a strange light dancing away like fire from the cutting bow; it comes in streaks and flashes, one moment it seems as if it must be only a reflection in the cut water, and the next one could swear there was a real flash.

That is phosphorescence, which is very common in tropical seas, sometimes the whole sea is alight with it. Look at that! It is a vivid light like a wave of green fire, most beautiful! It is only, however, where the ship strikes the water that we see it to-night. But sometimes, though not often at this season of the year, the whole ocean seems to be alight with it; it is the effect of innumerable millions of tiny sea-creatures floating on the surface, though exactly why they do it at one time more than another is yet unknown. The curious thing is that there are so many different kinds of phosphorescence; there is the bright fiery



kind like this we are seeing now in flashes, and there is a dull luminous kind which sailors call a "white sea." Then the whole sea appears as white as milk, or, as someone who has seen it describes it, as if it were changed to ice covered with a coating of snow. This was on a dark night before the moon had risen, but when she did get up it all disappeared and the sea looked much as usual, glittering only where the beams struck it, except for odd patches of shiny light here and there, and oddly enough exactly the same thing happened the following night. I'm afraid we shan't be lucky enough to see that.

Is the motion making you uncomfortable? No? I'm glad of that; you're a first-rate sailor. Let us go back to that jolly alcove at the end of the smoking-room looking aft, where we can see the great green-black waves rising suddenly behind us.

Yes, this is distinctly comfortable and quite interesting. It seems as if every wave rose in a great hill suddenly just after we had passed the spot! We must have come over it, but sitting like this we didn't feel it, we are riding so smoothly.

If we look out ahead we shall see the same sort of thing happening; we approach a black hillock of water, and just as we get to it it rolls down and disappears under us. The ship is so large that though she climbs those hills, we get the impression that the hills straighten underneath her. You must have noticed something of the same kind in riding a bicycle; if you are running down one hill and see another rising in front, the other one looks terrifically steep, but as you get on to it, it flattens out in an inexplicable

way; it is the change in our own position that accounts for the phenomenon.

It is very close to-night and there is an uneasy feeling in the air; the captain did not appear at dinner. It is a good thing that they put off that fancy-dress ball which was to have been held this evening, for there could not have been much dancing. Your costume will come in useful another time. I want to see you sometime as a little Egyptian with a skull-cap and a garment like a flannel night-shirt! But we shall have another chance.

"Hope we're not in for a cyclone," says one of the men, appearing out of the smoking-room with a pipe in his mouth.

"Very unusual at this time of year in the North-East monsoon," replies another as they disappear.

At that moment forked lightning plays across the sky in a great ragged streak, and immediately there is another display as if answering it, but we can hear no thunder.

What is the North-East monsoon? It sounds rather like some kind of animal, but it is only the name given to a certain wind that blows always at one season of the year.

Across broad spaces of the ocean there are always steady winds to be counted on, such as the trade-winds, which are caused by the air at the Equator getting hot and rising, and being replaced by the cold air from the Poles which rushes in; besides this there are other winds which blow half the year, called monsoons, these are due to very much the same causes. The North-East monsoon comes in the northern winter; the air from

the North Pole coming down slowly is met by the earth as she turns, and as she rushes into it she makes it a north-eastern wind; this, coming over the land from the north, is a dry wind, while the other one, the South-Western monsoon, coming from the south over the ocean in the other half of the year, is a wet wind and brings the rain which is such a boon to India.

The lightning is continually playing, and I shouldn't be surprised if we are on the edge of a cyclone, but with a big ship like this, and a captain who knows his business, there is nothing to be afraid of. These cyclones, which are called typhoons in the China seas, are curious storms which twist round and round in a circle, all the time progressing onward too, and the danger is in getting into the middle of one, for there, as you may imagine, the wind comes from all quarters at once, and the waves are piled up on all sides like huge overhanging pyramids. I've never been in the middle of one, I'm thankful to say, but those who have, and have escaped with their lives, say that the ship is buffeted as if by mighty billows which smack down upon her from all directions. Sometimes there is seen a space of blue sky, and there is a great calm, but this to the commander is the most ominous sign of all, for he knows he must be in the centre funnel of the storm, so to speak, and that it will be worse for him directly!

We had better go to bed, there's nothing else to do.

Are you awake? Yes, I thought even you could hardly sleep through that! What a smack! It sounds as if the heavens had opened and a water-spout had descended on deck! What a roar!

Can you hear me? All right, come in here beside me if you like, but there is precious little room. It seems as if every noise on the ocean had been let loose. The rain must be simply one great volume of water, and the thunder – Even through our port-hole the cabin is as light as day with the lightning; it is just two o'clock in the morning. The thunder seems to come absolutely instantaneously with the lightning; we must be right in it! I never heard such crashes. One minute our heads are down below our feet and the next we are almost standing on end. Hang on! We shall probably get through all right, this noise doesn't mean anything very bad. But I thank my stars I'm not an officer on the bridge. How they ever manage to keep on their feet I don't know, much less how they give directions. One man told me that he was once in such a sea that when he was pitched off his feet into one end of the bridge he hadn't time to recover himself before the same pitch came again and sent him down just as he was trying to get up! At any time the life at sea is hard, but doubly so in a storm like this! Hour after hour it goes on. I don't suppose anyone has slept through this, and many must be feeling very ill. We are lucky to be spared that!

Next morning, though the lightning had ceased, the wind is terrific, it goes screeching past, and the rain comes down in buckets; with great difficulty we get into our clothes and scramble up to the smoking-room. It is a miserable day and very few of the passengers appear, but by the afternoon the worst is over, and we can get out into our alcove. We are still labouring

heavily in a blue-black sea, and can see a very little way as we are surrounded by mountains of water. Hurrah! There is a cleft over in the east, which means the storm is breaking. Our captain knows the law of cyclones and has judged rightly which way to turn to get out of the track of the storm. We have passed through a corner of it, and though we have got out of our course, that won't mean much delay. Anyway, you've had an experience very few people have had, for there are few indeed of all the thousands who go to India who have ever been in the tail of a cyclone! It is most unusual, but in these seas one never knows what will happen.

# CHAPTER XV

## A TROPICAL THUNDERSTORM

We have really arrived in the East! We are in Colombo, the capital town of Ceylon, the great island which lies swung like a pendant from the southernmost point of India. We are sitting in the shady verandah of one of the largest hotels, the Grand Oriental, called G.O.H. for short, and as we sip lemon-squash we look out over a scene so full of interest that it is difficult to take it all in. This is quite different from Port Said. There it was bright and clear, but there was not the wonderful smell and sense of being the East that we have here. The air is full of scent, a kind of spicy smell mingled with a touch of wood-smoke, and there is a balminess in it that we have never felt till now. The water in the harbour is a glorious emerald green, and small boys, almost naked, play about on roughly shaped log canoes called catamarans. They used to dive for pennies, but the sharks lopped off a leg here and an arm there and swallowed one up whole now and again, and so the Government forbade it. The dark wooden wharf forms a frame for gay figures in pure pinks and greens and yellows, and on the roads there run past continually the funniest sturdy little men with their loin-cloths tucked up, pulling light-looking chairs on high wheels with people in them. These chairs are called rickshaws and are the chief way of getting about. Very

comfortable they are too, and quite cheap; we will go in them presently. The men who pull them have funny chignons of frizzy black hair sticking out under their little red caps, and it would be easy to mistake them for women. That attendant from the hotel at your elbow is asking you if you'll take another lemon-squash; he is quite a different sort of man from the runners, isn't he? Much taller and with a mild expression; his straight hair is adorned by a curved tortoise-shell comb of considerable size; he wears it round the back of his head, and how he makes it stay on among his very scanty locks is a miracle. His flowing white garments are immaculately clean, and he doesn't look as if he could kill a mosquito! He is a Cingalee, and the little men who run in the rickshaws are Tamils; these races live side by side in Ceylon, though there are many more Cingalese than Tamils. They are quite distinct, though they both originally came over from India, and in the old days when the Cingalese gave a line of kings to the island they were always fighting the Tamils; to-day both live together peacefully under British rule.

This place is a positive bazaar! There is a deep, crafty old merchant sitting like a spider over his pile of sheeny silks in the corner – he hopes to get good prices from the unwary tourist; there is another with a stall of beautiful brass and copper hand-worked things, and others with jewellery and carved ivory. But more interesting than any is the snake-charmer, who has just squatted down in front of us, prepared to give us an entertainment.

That is a cobra he takes out; you know it by its large, flat head. It seems sleepy and stupid, but its bite is deadly. It is possible, of course, that he has abstracted the poison-fangs which make its bite fatal, but even without them I shouldn't care to handle it. It is a huge beast, seven or eight feet long I should guess. See how he teases it; he is making it rise up on its coils and swing this way and that, darting its forked tongue out at him, and yet all the time it fears him. He has a marvellous power over it; its narrow, wicked light eyes are fixed on his face; it never looks away. Now he begins to play to it on a little flute; it is dancing, swaying its lean unlovely body to and fro and up and down in time with the tune. He puts down his pipe and makes a motion to it as if he were mesmerising it, passing his hands this way and that, until it comes to him and puts its flat head on his shoulder, nozzling into his neck. It makes one shudder to see it! It coils round his body again and again; he is enveloped in the coils. I should not care for that profession! It is not every man that can do it, only some of the natives have a gift for it, and they really have a power over snakes, even those in a wild state, for they make them come forth out of holes when called and remain passive at their feet. This man deserves a good tip. Bakshish they call it here too; that word accompanies you round the world!

I think we'll go for a jaunt, if you're ready, as the light falls quickly here. There is no difficulty in getting two rickshaws, and how they spin along. They say the men who drag them don't live many years, as the constant running wears them out, but



they look healthy enough and show no more exhaustion after running than a horse does after trotting. Each one has twisted up his dhoti, as the white skirts they wear are called, showing his bare brown legs; the upper garment is simply a European cotton vest. We spin along the bright red road by the sea, seeing the long lines of foam breaking gently on the beach, and then turn into shady roads where trees with brilliant yellow leaves light the wayside. Then we pass through a native village with huts of thatch, while plantains, which at home we call bananas, grow on broad-leaved plants by each door. There is dust enough here, and mangy-looking pariah dogs, and cocks and hens, and multitudes of bright beady-eyed children with hardly any clothing on. There is plenty of foliage and greenery and a freshness and richness of colouring that is much better than the grey leafless harshness of an Egyptian village, for this land gets plenty of rain. Everyone seems good-humoured and happy, and the children look fat enough; some of them are very black, with woolly heads, of a different type from the others. These are the children of a race called Moormen.

When we get down near the hotel I want you to come into this jeweller's shop in the arcade; you'll see a strange sight. A crowd of tourists are sitting round a table which is covered with little heaps of shining stones, unset and piled on squares of white paper; some are brilliant blue, others flashing crimson, others sombre in hue, but showing a glitter of living light whichever way you turn them. The odd thing is that the visitors are handling

them and turning them over, and examining them quite freely, while the owner, a wizened old man in horn spectacles, hardly watches!

"They're not real?"

Indeed they are! Rubies, star-sapphires, opals, and many another precious stone. That native owner has a queer faith in the honesty of his customers! Long may it last!

We are only in Colombo for one night, and to-morrow we are going up-country to stay with a friend of mine, a tea-planter.

As we are undressing you give a sudden start, "What's that?" Only a lizard scuttling over the dark-washed bedroom wall, first cousin to the chameleon you saw at Abu Simbel. He is quite harmless and lives on flies. He runs like a little shadow across the wall and sometimes he loses his balance and comes down thump on the floor, or breaks his fall on the mosquito curtains. He is one of the signs that we really are in the East; here is another. Listen for a moment at the window. There is a distant barking of dogs, a far-away crow from a defiant cock, a strange murmurous chant of men, weird cries intermingled, and now and then the deep beat of a parchment drum. The people of the land are all awake and stirring though it is late – the East never really sleeps as profoundly as does the West; there is a restlessness in the blood that stirs too much, and a pulsating warmth in the air that does not allow of deep slumber; it is the restlessness of the jungle translated into town life.

Next day at the station we find that the porters, though dressed

in neat blue suits, have pronounced chignons of the same type as their brothers who draw the rickshaws, and in spite of their European-cut coats and trousers they run about with bare feet! We might make a museum of the strange porters we see on our wanderings, collecting a specimen from each country!

The train is comfortable enough and there is a luncheon-car, so we shan't starve this time; besides, the journey to Kandy is only a few hours. There I hope we shall be met, as I haven't the least idea whereabouts my friend, Mr. Hunter's, tea-plantation is; however, I sent him a wire yesterday directly we arrived to say we would come by this train, so he is sure to be there.

The line for the greater part of the way is laid on a terrace or shelf cut out of a hillside, and it winds along climbing ever up with a towering wall on one side and a precipice on the other. The little stations have hardly room to wedge in, but they are very gay with flowers – indeed the whole line is, for great yellow daisies and the terra-cotta blossoms of a pretty creeper called lantana climb everywhere. As we get higher and higher we can look down and see the country spread out before us like a map; it is cut up into neat little fields and would be like a draught-board except that the fields are often on different levels one above the other, made on land cut out from the hillsides. These people grow rice, which is to them what maize is to the Egyptian. In the fields, before it has been threshed, it is known as paddy. They live on rice and very little else, and seem to thrive on it. Rice pudding if repeated every day for a month at both breakfast and dinner

would grow monotonous, but the man of the East does not find it so. His rice is not cooked with milk but with water, and is eaten with a little curry made of fish or vegetables to give it flavour.

Higher yet, and soon we see the hills laid out with rows of a tiny dark-green bush, planted as neatly as rows of turnips; this is the tea for which Ceylon is famous, and we shall get a nearer look at it presently. That and rubber are the staple crops that Englishmen come out here to raise, but they also grow coffee and other things too.

When we arrive at Kandy there is no sign of anything to meet us and no white man on the platform, so I make inquiries of the stationmaster, who is a Eurasian, which means that he has some white blood in his veins. He knows Mr. and Mrs. Hunter perfectly well, he says, though he has not seen them for a day or two. If, as I say, I wired, they are certain to send in a trap to meet us; but it may have been delayed or still be in the town. If we care to go up and look round, and come back again, he will meantime make inquiries. With many thanks we take his advice. The town is quite near and we find the main part of it built around a pretty little lake near which is the famous Temple of the Tooth. This is a massive building visited by thousands of pilgrims, because it enshrines a relic of great sanctity, nothing less than the tooth of Buddha! What Mohammed is to the Mohammedans so Buddha is to the Buddhists, among whom the greater part of the people of Ceylon may be counted. But Buddha is more than a prophet; his followers say that he has appeared on earth many times, and

that the last time he came in the form of an Indian prince who, instead of living in careless luxury, left his home and wandered forth among the people to discover the meaning of life. When he found it, after deep meditation, he left certain precepts and rules to his followers. Some of them are very good, resembling our own Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not lie," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquor." But, unlike the Mohammedans, the Buddhists do not believe in God. Their idea of blissful happiness at the last is to melt away into a kind of nothingness of perfect peace, with no desires, no worries, and no cares.

All over the East you find temples which are supposed to contain some part of Buddha's person, hairs, teeth, even a collar-bone! Of course it is impossible that these things should be genuine, and in any case, if they were, there is nothing sacred about them. The worshippers always say they do not look upon Buddha as a god, but only a great spiritual teacher, yet the poor and ignorant come and worship and bow down in these temples, and there is no doubt that to them the image itself stands for a god. The tooth which is here is kept in many caskets, one within the other, and it is never shown except on very great occasions. Mr. Hunter saw it once, and says it is not a human tooth at all, but a great thing like a boar's tusk or possibly an elephant's tooth. He couldn't get a good look at it, anyway he saw enough to be quite sure that it is not human at all, and the same may be said without doubt of all similar relics.

What a lovely scene! The graceful dark-skinned crowd in their softly flowing garments of the purest pinks you ever saw, with sulphur yellow and rich red draperies thrown over them, are idling by the hoary grey steps of the temple and dropping bits of bread into the ponds in front. They are feeding the tortoises, fat lazy beasts who will hardly move to snap at the fragments unless they fall before their very noses. These beasts are supposed to be sacred too, and so they have an uncommonly good time of it. This massive building, temple and palace in one, was inhabited by the old line of native kings who made Kandy their capital.

We must get back to the station or we may miss Mr. Hunter. When we arrive there we find there is no sign of him, whereat the attentive stationmaster is greatly distressed. He advises us to hire a trap and drive to some place with an unpronounceable name, where Mr. Hunter is sure to meet us; visitors often do that, he says. I try to discover why we can't drive all the way, but his answers are not enlightening; "big hill," he replies, and I don't see why the trap can't go up a hill! However, we shall see. He engages a trap for us, anyway; with a scarecrow horse and a friendly looking driver whose hairy legs protrude from wrappings of cinnamon-coloured cloth – once white, I suppose – and we are off. The roads at first are very good; and there is none of the dust we suffered from so much in Egypt, for Ceylon is a moist land. In fact, it looks rather like rain now, with heavy clouds gathering up.

After going at a slow trot for a considerable distance the driver pulls up, and pointing with his whip to a tree-covered

mountain says something unintelligible, which turns out to be "Unter Tuan," after he has repeated it about six times. This means Mr. Hunter, "Tuan" being the same term of respect here that "Sahib" is in India.

There is no sign of a house or any living being; the place is absolutely deserted. In vain I sign to the man to go ahead; he shakes his head and remains seated on his box like an image of despair. I get out and see that the road runs away to nothing in the bushes and scrub in front, it just ends suddenly for no apparent reason, and while I am looking I hear a slight crackling in the bushes, and a tall, thin, very dirty-looking youth appears and salaams respectfully. The driver immediately begins to converse with him, whereupon the youth takes our bag unceremoniously out of the carriage and putting it on his head beckons to us to follow him. There is nothing else for it, so, after paying the driver, we do so, feeling like two infants in charge of this fellow.

I try the lean lad in English, asking him if he knows Hunter Tuan's place, but he swings round, looks at me gravely, and continues his graceful, elastic walk.

It is pretty warm, and the path is narrow and lined by thorn bushes, so the going is not easy; but the youth seems to float on ahead with mysterious ease, and we pant after him feeling as if our lives depended on not losing sight of him. At last the bushes get so thick that we have to push our way through, and we suddenly see him a good distance ahead, half-way across a broad and shallow river which bubbles round his knees.

"Hi!" we shout after him. "Stop!" And he turns, but only to beckon imperturbably and continue evenly on his way. It is evidently the custom of this country to walk through rivers when you meet them! Easy enough for the inhabitants, who are not encumbered with shoes and stockings, but for us...

Down we go and are soon hard after him with our boots slung round our necks and our stockings stuffed into them; the cool water splashing round our legs is rather pleasant. Lucky it is not deep. We have to stop and re-clothe on the other side. Here our coolie has condescended to wait for us, and just as you are about to sit down on a convenient hillock of bare brown earth he waves you away, and you see that big red ants with a most fierce and warlike appearance are running about it; it is their home and fortress! Once more booted we struggle on, uphill now, on a stony path, and very stiff work it is. When we tell our guide to stop for a moment he looks at us condescendingly and stands with his burden poised on his head, not even caring to put it down as he waits until these poor creatures, who are not carrying anything at all, regain their breath, and that makes us feel so inferior we don't like to stop often! The clouds gather and blacken, the perspiration is running down my back, and I am as wet as if I had waded through the river up to my neck. I should be glad to see the house, for we have been scrambling upwards for quite an hour now. What a place to live in! Fancy having to come down here every time you wanted to do a little shopping!

Another hour at least! A few drops, muttering thunder, and



then, quicker than one can say it, a blinding, crashing downpour. Never in my life have I seen rain like this until that night at sea when we passed through the edge of the cyclone, and now twice have I met it in a week! It is simply a water-spout. A brilliant flash of lightning shows us the youth crouching under a bank some yards ahead, and we dive into the nearest place, following his example. Luckily the bank is high here and there is a kind of cave beneath a mass of broad-leaved plants; there is just room for the two of us huddled close together, and the wall of water sweeps past the entrance like a curtain. The rain makes a deafening noise, it literally crashes down; the path is a mountain torrent; if we had stayed there we should have been swept off our feet; it seems as if the whole mountain-side must go. We hang on to each other, avoiding the trickles as best we can. Hullo! this plant is a cardamom, carrying little seeds rather like spicy pepper; nibble one, it may keep off the effects of the wetting we have been unable to avoid altogether. How cold it seems to have grown all of a sudden! Is it the rain, or because we are so much higher up? I suppose really it is the latter, because I remember now that the planters always live on the tops of hills to get the fresh air, which is more healthy there than in the stifling valleys.

It is a long time before the storm passes, and when at last it dies down to a few drops and we emerge and shake ourselves, all trace of the coolie boy has vanished! Yes, it is true! He has gone, and the bag too! Well, he must have gone upward or we should have seen him pass, so let us hope he is honest and has

taken the bag to the house. There is only one path, so we can do nothing but follow.

On we climb again, and presently the scene changes; we have got into the tea-scrub, and wander among rows of bushes about the size of gooseberry bushes, receiving deluges of cold water against our legs. The path zigzags this way and that, rising each time so that we can look back and see it lying below us in fold after fold. At last! There is an opening! I see a glimpse of green lawn and some poinsettias! This must be the place! Yes, I can see the bungalow, and here is a mackintosh-clad figure hastening down the path to greet us.

"My dear fellow! However did you get here? Why on earth didn't you let us know? We'd have sent to meet you!"

As we grasp hands I explain about the telegram. "Oh, then I shall get it with the letters to-morrow morning!" he says lightly. "No matter, so long as you are here and safe. I was afraid you had got lost upon the mountain-top, and was setting forth to seek you."

"But how did you know?"

"Your coolie arrived with the bag a quarter of an hour ago, and your name is written on the label very large and clear. Delighted to see you! The missus is romping round getting your beds aired and pinning up curtains in your honour!"

## CHAPTER XVI

# A SACRED TREE

Do you remember that just about this time last week we were crouching in a hole in a muddy bank waiting for the thunderstorm to pass on? How different now, though we are still in Ceylon and, as crow flies, not so many miles from the Hunters' mountain-side. It is a gorgeous tropical afternoon, the bits of sky we can see through the feathery-leaved trees are of the deepest blue, and we are resting, because it seems too hot to move a limb. In front of us there stretches a sheet of limpid water which might be a lake except that it is surrounded by a raised bund, or bank, artificially made, with hewn granite slabs as steps going down at one end. We are glad of the shade of the trees falling across the short turfy grass, and we are seated on some broken blocks of granite, keeping a sharp look out for snakes. They will hardly be likely to trouble us here, but in that jingly bit behind it wouldn't be at all safe to rest like this. Even to sit on the short grass might be unpleasant, as there are all sorts of unknown insects here which bite and sting and stab, but we are safely raised on stones and are wearing thick boots. Examine that slab of granite there beside you; do you see that it has a most wonderfully carved snake upon it – a cobra with seven heads? It is so clear-cut it might have been done yesterday, yet it is part of the ruins of a mighty city,

a city as large as London, which once stretched its busy streets over this quiet glade. The cobra was a sacred beast to the Hindus, and a seven-headed one was peculiarly so, seven being a mystic number.

What a glorious butterfly! Its body is as big as a small bird, and its great velvety wings are the sharpest black and white. No, I don't for a moment suppose you'll catch it, so it is no use getting hot! I'm glad you can't, for we have no proper apparatus here, and it would only be a crushed mass to take home. Don't go headlong into the tank, though, in your frantic efforts; it might be awkward. No, I don't think there are any crocodiles, only a few sacred tortoises perhaps. Look! there is a tiny one – that small yellow thing that is walking away with the melancholy dignity of a retired general. Pick it up if you like certainly, see it wag its head and legs helplessly. I wish we could take it home. As you replace it, it continues its grave walk in the same direction as if it had never been rudely interrupted. At that instant a hare darts across an open glade and disappears in the thick undergrowth. What a country! Æsop's Fables in real life, where hares and tortoises live together!

"Was this city here at the same time as Rameses ii. was living?"

No. Egypt was past its best days before this city, which was called Anuradhapura (Anarajapura), was built, and you must remember Rameses ii. was by no means one of the earliest kings of Egypt, he came quite late on in his country's history.

His date was about thirteen hundred years before Christ, and it must have been about eight hundred years after that, though still you notice, 500 b. c., that this city was founded by some Cingalese who are supposed to have come over from India. That makes it between two thousand and three thousand years old, which we should think ancient enough if we hadn't visited Egypt first. Anuradhapura flourished for centuries as the capital of the Cingalese kings, who often carried on savage battles with the Tamils when they came over from India also.

Turn round now and examine that hill you wanted to climb a little while ago and tell me if you can see anything peculiar about it. No, I don't mean that large grey monkey who has just peeped at us in an impudent way and then swung himself into hiding, though I admit he is very interesting. I mean something odd about the hill itself. It is covered with trees and jungle scrub certainly, as any ordinary hill might be, but it is oddly steep and the sides rise very sharply from the ground. It is an even shape too, more like an inverted bowl than a hill; or, better still, just try to imagine some giant cutting off the dome of St. Paul's and setting it down here in the jungle, wouldn't it look something like that?

You don't quite agree, for you say that this has trees and bushes growing on it and St. Paul's dome would be bare. That is so, but if St. Paul's dome had been left for many hundreds of years in a country where vegetation grows as fast as it does here, wouldn't it probably be grown over too?

Yes, I *do* mean it. That isn't a hill at all, but a huge brick building called a dagoba, made by the same race of men who dug out this tank, and whose descendants to-day, with tortoise-shell combs in their hair, wait on us in the Colombo hotels.

We will go back now to the place where we left that native cart and driver and we'll find a dagoba which has been stripped of its trees, so that we can see what it really looks like.

Hush! Do you hear that curious singing like a chant? Wait; there is a procession of pilgrims. They come swinging round the corner of the road in their picturesque flowing garments, and just at the turn they stop and kneel with their hands held palms together before their faces, and they bow repeatedly before marching on again. Let us go and find out what it was that stopped them. We soon come to it and find that it is the seated figure of a man with one hand falling over his knee and the other on his lap, while his legs are crossed tailor-wise. It is painted white and it is not very much larger than life. This is Buddha, of whom you heard in Kandy, and all over here, and in Burma, and in a less degree in India, you will find images of him set up to remind his followers of the precepts he left for them to follow.

Our driver is dead asleep under a tree, but we manage to wake him and soon we are rattling along a tree-shaded road in the queer little cart to Ruanveli, the best known of all the dagobas. When we arrive in full view of it we dismiss the driver and climb on to a slab of stone that is raised from the ground and tilted slightly like a table with two legs higher than the others. Here we

can gaze upon this extraordinary monument which rises about one hundred and fifty feet into the air, and is about two and a half times as much across, just the shape of a pudding basin, you see. It is not a temple, not even a tomb, as the Pyramids are, but a solid block built of millions and millions of bricks with a tiny chamber inside containing an infinitely precious relic, nothing less than a few of Buddha's hairs. So they say! Only the priests were allowed to go into this sacred chamber, with the exception of one king, who had this priceless privilege granted to him. It is not very many years since mighty monuments were rediscovered, because the jungle had grown up all around them and no one knew even where Anuradhapura had stood; but now there are men who spend their whole time uncovering and preserving them, just as many men are working at the excavations in Egypt; and the trees and overgrowth have been stripped from Ruanveli, which stands forth sharp and clear-cut against this beautiful sky.

Men are very much alike all the world over! This great dagoba was put up by one of the Cingalese kings, Dutugemunu, to celebrate his great victory over the Tamils, just as Rameses ii. put up the inimitable temple of Abu Simbel to celebrate his victory over the Syrians. Before Dutugemunu came to the throne the Tamils had usurped all power and made one of their own men, called Elala, king, and the young prince, exiled from his capital city, met them in battle outside the walls. He fought with great bravery, and in the end the issue of the day was decided by a single combat between him and Elala, both mounted on huge

elephants. That must have been a fight indeed! Dutugemunu killed Elala and regained the throne of his fathers, but he must have been a singularly enlightened prince for his age, for he not only buried his fallen foe with great honour but he gave orders that henceforth all music should cease when bands were marching past his tomb, and that royalties were to alight from their horses or palanquins and walk past on foot to do honour to the mighty dead. Even in the nineteenth century one of the princes from Kandy, who was flying from capture, obeyed the order and would not allow himself to be carried past the spot! So the memory of Elala and the great fight he made were kept alive as Dutugemunu had intended they should be.

On this very slab where we are now sitting it is said that Dutugemunu died. If not the actual stone, it is probably the spot. It was about 140 b. c., and when he knew he was dying he gave orders that he should be carried out here, that his fast failing eyes might look their last on the greatest monument of his reign. In the midst of his great city, with its fine buildings and the great tanks he had caused to be made to give the people water, he thought most of all of Ruanveli, partly because of the sacred relic enclosed, but partly also because he had done a wonderful thing in paying for all the labour that was used in its building, instead of forcing his subjects to work for nothing, as was the custom in his time.

There is much to examine in Ruanveli; we can see the casing of granite running up the sides, we can examine a statue of



the king himself and many wonderful carvings; around the dagoba runs a magnificent granite platform wide enough for six elephants to walk abreast, as no doubt they did many times in the gay processions on festival days.

Behind the dagoba, not far off, is an immense lake, or tank, much larger than that we saw this morning. It was considered a peculiar work of merit for kings to make these tanks so that water could be stored up for the use of the people, and they are found all over Ceylon; there is one twenty miles in length!

The sun has fallen low by the time we pass on to the Brazen Palace. At first, when we near it, we see merely a forest of columns with nothing brazen about them; they are not very high, about twice the height of a man perhaps, and they are set in rows very near together. Altogether there are one thousand six hundred of them! There is no roof now, but in the days of its glory this great house, which was built for the priest, had nine, and was finished by a sheet of burnished copper which caught the sun's rays and flashed far and wide beneath the clear blue sky. The walls were decorated with glittering stones and the fittings were of the most costly and beautiful kind. The wonder is how the priests found room to walk about between those multitudinous columns which so filled the space in their halls.

One more sight in this city of ancient glory. Do you see across that park-like space of short grass some fires glimmering weirdly in the dusk which has now fallen round the most sacred object in Anuradhapura; I won't say what it is. Come nearer. A heavy

scent, like that of tuberoses, greets us as we approach; it comes from the white waxy blossoms of the frangipani lying in that cardboard saucer with all the heads put outwards like the spokes of a wheel. In the centre is a pink blossom. Those flowers are sold as offerings in this sacred place. Don't stumble over that dark bundle, it is a sleeping child. Step cautiously between the bright-eyed people who watch, furtively alert, like shy woodland creatures, as they crouch low over their fires, for the evening has suddenly become chilly with the loss of the sun. These are pilgrims come from afar, and they will lie down to sleep just as they are in the open. There are very few at this time of the year; but in June and July, which are the principal months, thousands and thousands arrive here, having crossed weary leagues to come. It is strange how the world is linked up by its pilgrimages. We saw the pilgrims in the Holy Land coming from afar to the Christian shrines, humble and devout, believing all that was told them and carrying out in their poor lives much of Christ's teaching; we saw them in crowded and uncomfortable ships journeying from Mecca, the shrine of Mohammedanism; and now we see them here reverently drawn to the only sacred place they know, there to pray to something unseen and unknown, that they may be helped by a power stronger than themselves. In all ages and all races man yearns for a god, and if he knows not God he still worships dimly any strange god he hears of.

We cross some brick pavement, and climb up a few worn steps on to a platform surrounded by a railing. Out of the middle of

it there grows a gnarled and ancient tree with crooked boughs splitting asunder with hardly any leaves on them.

*Now do you see?*

You only see monkeys looking like little black demons against the afterglow still lingering in the sky as they leap from the tall palm trees near, but this tree is not a palm.

Suddenly a leaf, shaped like that of a poplar, but much larger, floats down, and in an instant a slight dark figure, tied up in a bundle of loose clothes, falls upon it, and holding it between the palms of the hands bows again and again. That leaf is a precious relic, for this is the sacred Bo tree, said to be at least two thousand years old!

After the Cingalese had come over from India and settled here, a monk came and converted them to Buddhism; he was followed by his sister, a princess, as he was a prince, and she brought with her, so it is said, a branch of the actual tree under which Buddha sat when he considered all the problems of life and found an answer to them, which he left to his people. This branch, being planted, became a tree itself. So the story goes; and that there has been a tree here worshipped for untold ages is true, and if that is so, whatever its origin, this also to us is a sacred spot, hallowed by the thousands of poor souls who, knowing not the light, yet have come here with yearnings towards the light and to the "unknown god."

After dinner we wander out again into the tree-shaded road near, and a sight of extraordinary splendour startles us. Every tree

is brilliantly illuminated as if by a million points of electric light. You have seen an arc-light which seems to scintillate rays? These lights might be very tiny arc-lights, for each one vibrates in the intensity of its luminousness. We can see the outlines of the trees clearly. It is a wonderful evening for fire-flies. No one knows why on some nights they appear like this in countless thousands, and on other nights, apparently the same, there is not one to be seen. It looks almost as if they had parties and agreed to do their best on certain occasions. They have evidently done their best for us to-night, for the other people following us out of the hotel, who have been here longer than us, are entranced.

"Never saw anything like it, not even in the West Indies," says one man.

"Puts a Christmas tree in the shade," remarks another.

Catch one, he doesn't burn; don't grab him so as to hurt him, just take him gently; that is right; bring him into the light and open your hand a little. You see he is a flat, greenish beetle, with head set on a funny hinge so that he could nod it violently if he liked. Half shut your hand and turn away from the light; now you see two round green eyes glowing like emeralds. He doesn't seem embarrassed by all this attention, but you might let him go back to his party!

When we have let him go we will walk down the avenue of living light, where is one thing more to see to-night. It is only ten minutes' walk and as we near it it gleams in the dim light of the brilliant stars, a ghostly white object. As our eyes grow

accustomed to the light we see a building like a snow-white bell. It is small compared with the gigantic dagobas we have examined already to-day, for the very tip of the pinnacle, rising above the bell-shaped part, is only sixty-three feet, but it is very graceful and is considered the most sacred of all the dagobas, for it was built to enshrine Buddha's collar-bone!

We haven't seen the half of Anuradhapura yet, and there are numbers of other ancient cities in Ceylon to explore, to say nothing of rock-temples with strange paintings and carvings; but we mustn't be here too long or we shan't get through India and Burma before the hot weather comes, which no European can endure.

The white coating of this dagoba is a stuff called chunam, a kind of lime. It is startlingly white and looks beautiful at night, but otherwise it is just a sort of whitewash, clean enough but not particularly attractive. There are numbers of the same square-cut granite columns that we saw at the Brazen Temple falling about near the dagoba, some this way and some that. A good place for snakes, that is why we came round by the road and walked so carefully.

Hullo! There is one! Keep still! Did you see him wriggle across among the interlacing shadows of the trees? A large one too! Thank goodness he has gone harmlessly! I wonder what sort he was? We ought not to have come out, let us get back as quickly as we can.

# CHAPTER XVII

## UNWELCOME INTRUDERS

India at last!

We have come up the west coast from Ceylon and are now approaching Bombay. It is night-time, and far ahead we see a great yellow light which appears and disappears, and is visible for twenty miles out at sea. It seems to blink at us in greeting, peeping every few seconds to see if we are still there. Then at last we ride into the harbour, and such a harbour! We cannot see it now at all, and even if it were daylight we couldn't see more than a very small part of it, for it is fifteen miles one way by four or five the other, and a harbour that size cannot be taken in at one glance.

We have to sleep on board, for there are some formalities to be observed before we go ashore. There is our heavy baggage to get out of the hold, for instance, and to pass through the Customs. That can wait until to-morrow.

Our first impression of Bombay is therefore a city of lights. There are lights sprinkled about anyhow and anywhere; some in chains, some separate, some low, and some apparently slung high up in mid-air. These are on the hill above the town, which itself stands on an island.

The very first incident we notice is a ludicrous one, and I am

sure we shan't forget it. A rather stout Englishman who is landing to-night steps on to the launch, and in an instant is garlanded with marigolds hung in wreaths round his neck. A crowd of native friends surrounds him. Some are in European dress, and talk a queer sort of English very fast and fluently, as if it were being pumped out of their mouths by the yard; others wear the flowing drapery of the East. Many of them carry bunches of flowers, which look more like balls, because the native habit is to strip off every atom of leaf and then pack the blossoms with all their heads together as tight as they will go. Many such balls are being pressed upon the embarrassed Englishman, and the scent of crushed marigolds fills the air. This is all by way of welcome, and it is evident that the newcomer is a prime favourite with the people. He looks sheepish, but his round rosy face rises good-humouredly above the absurd garlands.

Next morning we are up in good time, and as soon as ever we get our baggage clear of the Customs we go sight-seeing. In our nostrils is the subtle scent of India; it has something of dust in it, but is not chiefly dust, as in Egypt; there is a waft of wood-smoke, and a strong flavour of mixed spices, and some hint of sweet flowers, and many other things not so agreeable. It is a blend that any Anglo-Indian knows, and if he smelt it suddenly when he was thousands of miles away, with the daisied grass beneath his feet, and the swallows wheeling overhead, it would carry him back with a jump to a land of dark faces and burning sun and red dust, and all the vivid sights of the East.

We are not starting on our great journey across India until the evening, so we can wander at will through the broad clean streets, looking into the magnificent shops that might be in any European town, and then we can plunge into the native part, where we find narrow, busy bazaars that might belong to the *Arabian Nights*.

Bombay was one of the first bits of India to belong to the English. The Portuguese held it before then, and gave it to our nation as part of the dower of Catherine of Braganza, the Portuguese princess who married Charles II. You know the old saying, "trade follows the flag," and it certainly did in Bombay, for the East India Company rented the city from the king at £10 a year. The Company pushed forward all over the rest of India year by year, and it was through their steady and persistent advance in the country that the British finally occupied India – so later on the saying was reversed, and "the flag followed trade," as it more often does. But you know that story, every British boy does, the story of Clive and Hastings, and later on of the Mutiny; it is a part of English history and one of the most thrilling parts too.

Bombay is a city of trade; her immense docks receive ships of all sizes, her wharves are laden with the produce of the world, her wide streets are open to traffic of all descriptions, her public buildings are splendid, her clubs and hotels palatial. Her merchants prosper and grow rich, and build for themselves houses on Malabar Hill, the long ridge above the town, which catches the sea-breezes. At one time that ridge was looked upon as sacred to Europeans, but now the wealthy natives settle there,



and there is not room for all the poorer Europeans, who have to be content with lower levels.

Stand still for a moment in this street, and look around. Here comes a motor-car, and in it lolls a hugely fat man with a yellow skin, and that crafty insolent look which marks the successful native trader; his thick neck rolls in creases above his purple brocade coat. But they are not all like this; some are thoughtful men who have given lakhs of rupees for the public good.

What a contrast! Here is one of the poorest of the poor. A bullock-cart comes along, drawn by two lean animals with their ribs sticking out. A heavy yoke passes across their necks, but otherwise they have not a scrap of harness on them. That lean man huddled up on the pole between them, clad in a few yards of rag, prods them with a pointed stick when he wants them to go this way and that. He dares not now twist their tails till he breaks them, or keep open running sores so that he may prick them in a sensitive part, as he would have done at one time, for if he did the police would be down on him.

On the side-walk there is a lady, yes, it *is* a lady – in very baggy green and gold trousers, with gold anklets tinkling as she walks. Her head and face are swathed in a "sari" or shawl of shot gold and purple, which only allows her heavy black eyes to appear above its folds. The street is alive with men in white; some wear long white coats buttoned down over the kind of white petticoat called a *dhoti*, others have the curious habit of wearing their shirts outside their trousers like a kilt, but you soon get used to this,

and cease to notice it. That fellow in a tall extinguisher cap made of lamb's wool is a Persian.

In the midst of all this queer crowd, which looks like a fancy-dress ball let loose in broad daylight, run the curving steel tram-lines. There are shades of every complexion to be seen. That very fresh, pink-faced lady, who has just gone dashing by in her smart "tum-tum" or pony-cart, is at one end of the scale – she is probably newly out from home, – and that ebony-black native woman of so low a caste that she goes uncovered in the public street is at the other, but even she, poor thing, cares enough about her personal appearance to wear a gold ring through one of her nostrils!

Now we can see the long outline of Malabar Hill quite clearly, and below all its trees and gardens and the great houses rising among them, but at one part, the highest, the hill is kept for other uses. Look up into the clear blue sky overhead, do you see a black speck? Not got it yet? Wait a moment and try again. There! That is right, and there is another and another; you can't help seeing them now. Their flight is the slow heavy flight of clumsy birds. What do you suppose they are? Vultures. They live, as you know, on carrion, which is dead flesh, and the vultures of Bombay are peculiarly favoured, for they banquet on human bodies.

In this district there are a large number of Parsees or fire-worshippers, and these people have their peculiar ceremonies. Under the British Crown every man is free to carry out his own religion in his own way; persecution is unknown. The Parsees

have their cemetery on the top of that high hill; it is a beautiful place, laid out in gardens, and reached by flights of steps. Only at one end are five grim towers shut in by a wall and called the Towers of Silence. Their parapets are high, and none may climb to the top except certain men set apart and dedicated for this terrible work. When a Parsee dies, his body is borne reverently and with care to the gardens on the hill, but instead of burying it in the earth, these men take it up the winding stairs of one of the towers and lay it on the roof, and then retire. The vultures do the rest! No human being has ever seen that dread spectacle, for when the men come back again about a fortnight later there are only the clean bleached bones of the skeleton to take away and lay in quicklime to be absorbed.

So the vultures hover over Bombay and sit like great images around the parapets on the Towers of Silence, knowing that they will never lack a meal!

We have seen many and bewildering things in this great city, and when at last we arrive at the station between five and six in the evening, for our first journey across this vast land, we are glad to rest. We engaged our places directly we arrived, for here, where a journey takes often nights and days, it is no use wandering in casually a few minutes before the train starts. We also engaged the whole of a compartment to ourselves, as we want a good night's sleep. It has been cleaned and prepared, and looks very comfortable when we come to claim it. There are two seats running lengthwise, the opposite way to that which they do

in an English train. Above them are two more which can be let down as bunks if required, so that the carriage can accommodate four, but as we have paid extra to get it to ourselves we ought not to be disturbed.

By the way, you haven't seen any Indian money yet. This is a rupee, a large and substantial coin you see, about as big as a two-shilling piece, but it is only worth one and fourpence; fifteen of them go to the pound. An anna is a penny, and that little coin like a threepenny bit is a two-anna bit.

We have had to hire a native boy to travel with us and look after the luggage, as it is difficult to do without one in India. All servants are called "boys" here, even if they are grey-headed; our man is probably about five-and-twenty. He is called Ramaswamy, and has a chocolate-coloured moon-face with big round eyes; I think he is intelligent though he looks stupid. He is dressed in spotless white, his garments consisting of a short jacket and a dhoti, and he wears a large round turban on his head, and a pair of neat little gold ear-rings in his ears. It is a very difficult thing to get a really trustworthy boy, but the Madrasses are the best, and Ramaswamy comes from the Madras country far south; he has been in service with a man I know for two years, and as he is only lent to us for this trip he will probably behave himself. He is piling up our bedding in a corner of the carriage, and later on when the train stops at a station for a few minutes he will come to spread it out. It seems funny to have to carry bedding with us on a journey, but it is very necessary here.

We have pillows and rugs and a couple of *rezai* each. These are rather like eider-down quilts, but are stuffed with cotton instead of down, so they are heavier, and very comfortable they are to lie upon when doubled up.

You remarked on the amount of luggage we seem to be taking in the carriage, it is a simple nothing to what is the custom here; look at all that being piled into the next compartment! Besides masses of bedding there is a deck-chair, a typewriter, a case for a topee, or helmet, a gun-case, two portmanteaus, and a box of books, as well as a lunch-basket. The owner, a pleasant-looking, sun-browned Englishman, stands by giving orders to his native servants in Hindustanee, which is a language spoken by the English people to the natives and understood pretty nearly everywhere. That man is almost certainly what is here known as a "civilian," that is to say, one of the men in the Indian Civil Service who govern India. They have to pass stiff examinations at home, and then come out here for a number of years to do all the work of government, being magistrates, judges, rulers, and general protectors of the native, giving up their lives to the country, and dealing out justice to all men. Some men have not the habit of command, but if it is in them at all it comes out here, where one white man alone in a district running to hundreds of miles often has everything in his own hands; he has to make decisions in an instant of emergency, and stand by them, compel evildoers to behave, save the miserable low-caste natives, ground down by those above them, and often to hold his life in his hand

for fear of the knife or bullet of a fanatic.

A little farther up the platform there is a gorgeous group, of which the central figure is a fine tall man, slenderly built, with a clear proud face. He is dressed in marvellous silks which shimmer and flash in the late afternoon sunlight. His upper garment is deep rich rose, and the lower one a medley of greens and gold. Watch the flashing of that great jewel which fastens the aigrette in his turban; it is probably worth anywhere about three thousand pounds. That man is a native prince, and those very splendid gentlemen in purple and yellow silk are seeing him off. There are many of these native rulers or maharajahs in India, and they keep up the state of royalty and are treated with respect. So long as they rule their people wisely the British Government does not interfere with them.

Sometimes one thinks of India as one whole country, as England is or France, but that is not true. It is not, and never was. The state held by a native prince may be only the size of a gentleman's country estate, but it may be as large as the United Kingdom. In the old days the rulers of these kingdoms were for ever fighting against each other, and though one of them sometimes got the better of his neighbours for a while, India was never ruled from end to end by one sovereign until it passed into the possession of Great Britain. The nations and races who make up this vast land are as different from each other as the races of Europe; to think of them as being one people would be as foolish as to imagine that you, say, and an Italian, were one people.

The size of India is a thing almost impossible to conceive. In old-fashioned atlases the whole of this mighty land was often given one page to itself, and little England was put on another just the same size, that is to say, they were drawn on quite different scales, a mile in England being given about as much space as forty miles in India! The best way to judge is this – picture India set down on the map of Europe, and you will find it would cover about half of it!

At the other end of the train, the third-class end, what a contrast to His Highness! Here a crowd of natives of all kinds have been crammed into what look like covered-in trucks, and they are squatting on the floor. There is no hardship in that, they prefer it; to sit on chairs is an art only acquired by the Europeanised. There are women here as well as men; look at that handsome creature whose crimson scarf has slipped off her sheeny black hair, showing the gold ring in her nose and the huge decorative ear-rings! She is hugging a tiny boy with one blue bead slung round his neck as a charm, just as it was round the donkey's neck in Egypt, – people are very much alike all the world over! This little chap has silver bangles on his podgy ankles but not a rag of any sort of clothing.

These people are packed so tightly you could hardly get a foot in between them, but they are very happy, because they love travelling. Natives have no idea of time, and when they are going to start on a journey as likely as not they arrive at the station the evening before, sleep rolled round in their garments where they

may happen to be, and next day eat a handful of something or other they carry with them, waiting patiently till that marvellous object, the train, condescends to start. Most of these here are munching sweetmeats; they love them as children do, and the sweetmeat-seller never lacks trade. There he is, with a tray on his shoulder! A man with a water-pot stops by the third classes and pours some of the precious fluid into the cups held out to him, and even into one man's hands. You notice that he is careful not to touch either hand or cup. In India there is an extraordinary custom called caste, deep-rooted in the natives. They are all divided into higher and lower castes, according to their birth, and those of a higher caste will not allow those of a lower caste to touch them or prepare their food and drink, for they fancy they would be defiled! Only the lowest castes of all will do dirty work, such as scavenging and carrying away refuse, and you can imagine what difficulties all this leads to. The Brahman, who is the highest caste, will not touch food which has been defiled even by having the shadow of another fall on it, he would throw it away and remain hungry sooner.

As we stroll back to our places we pass various men with marks on their foreheads; these are caste-marks and to those who understand they tell a great deal. Standing beside the second classes we see a short-sighted gentleman in glasses, wearing an alpaca suit; he has with him a lady, who, like himself, is coffee-coloured. She is wearing a full petticoat of brocaded silk, and has a very lovely shawl edged with sequins thrown round her head



in place of a hat, but, alas, all this magnificence is spoilt by the pair of tight and obviously most uncomfortable yellow leather European shoes, which she has put on to show how fashionable she is. When she climbs into the carriage she immediately takes them off, putting them on the seat beside her, and shows a pair of bare brown feet without shame. The shoes were only meant for show, and she has endured them to the utmost!

Well, we are off! And as it is dark we can't, unfortunately, see much of the country, which at first is quite pretty. Presently we cross the sea by a long bridge and notice the lights reflected sparkling in the water, and then we begin to climb up into the hills and it quickly grows colder.

While we go along to the restaurant-car for dinner Ramaswamy takes advantage of the stoppage of the train to hasten along, settling his turban as he comes. He must never appear before us without it; we are supposed to think it a fixture on his round cropped head, and also he must not come into a room where we are with his shoes on! Odd how fashion differs! With us men remove the head-covering on entering a room, but would not dream of being so rude as to take off their shoes!

When we come back after dinner we find our bedding neatly spread out and looking very inviting. As there is nothing else to do it is not long before we turn in and fall asleep, lulled by the rumbling of the train.

I am deep in dreamland when I am woke unpleasantly by a draught of icy air as the door at the end of the compartment is

pushed open, and I realise the train has stopped at a station. The native guard stands in the doorway apologetically fumbling with the key which he has just used in undoing the door. "Mem-sahib coming in," says he hopelessly, and a very disagreeable high-pitched voice makes itself heard behind him. Pushing rudely past come a man and woman so much alike they must be brother and sister; they have both coarse features and clumsy squat figures; they speak English but with a strong Colonial accent of some kind.

"They can't have it *all* their own way," says Madam viciously. "I'm coming in here, and that's flat."

An overloaded coolie follows, and dumps down masses of rolled-up bedding and trunks into the small space between our bunks and departs.

"This compartment is engaged," I say as politely as I can, conscious that I don't look dignified in shirt-sleeves, but thankful I have only taken off my coat and boots.

"Can't help that," snaps the lady.

"Isn't there any other – " I begin patiently.

"I telling the Mem-sahib," begins the guard plaintively, "that there is one with only – "

"Don't care if there is! Horace, undo that bundle. I'm going to bed at once," and the newcomer proceeds to remove her coat and hat.

The guard hastily lets down the two upper bunks and disappears as the train gets under way again.

Appalled at the idea of how much she may think it necessary to remove, and thankful that you are sleeping peacefully through all the turmoil, I get up and grope for my shoes.

"If you prefer the lower bunk it is at your service," I say, making the best of a bad job and gathering up my coverlets. She deigns to snap out "Thanks!"

"I will go outside until you're ready," I say, retreating to the small platform between the carriages; there is nothing else for it, as there isn't room to turn inside. Just as I leave I add to the man, "Don't wake the boy if you can help it, he has had a hard day."

It is intensely cold outside, and after having smoked two cigarettes I think I may venture in again as I hear no sounds, so I knock, and getting no answer enter. By the dim light I make out the form of the lady in my bunk; but that is surely not the brother in the one opposite? It *is*! The impudence of it! They have turned you out and made you go into the upper one. As I climb to my own perch, internally wrathful and debating whether I shall not poke the man up and make him restore you to your place, I hear your sleepy voice in a stage whisper —

"He made me come up here." Then deliberately, leaning over and with mischief in your voice, you add: "I suppose when you are fat like that it would be very difficult to climb."

I think you got your own back! I saw the fellow squirm!

Bad as they were at night our fellow-travellers are worse in the daytime. They won't get up until ten o'clock, and we have to stay outside until they do, as there is nowhere to sit

down. Ramaswamy brings us *chota hazri*, consisting of tea and toast and plantains, and we eat it outside. The Englishman in the next compartment looks out presently and invites us in. He laughs when he hears of our adventure. "Brutes!" he says tersely; "people like that should be hanged at sight. The worst is you meet them travelling more often than elsewhere; they have come into some money probably, and are so proud of it they think themselves little gods."

I think he was right, for when we pull up at the station, where we are at last to get rid of our tormentors, I happen to remark to you that I thought some restaurant we had been to in Bombay was rather expensive.

"Did you indeed!" says the lady, taking the remark as if addressed to herself. "Grace and I dined there and paid double that, and we did not think anything of it."

She then immediately turns, and seeing Ramaswamy standing outside mistakes him for a station-attendant, and orders him to tie up their bedding. He looks to me for orders. I nod to him to do it, and, hat in hand, make a sweeping bow —

"Only too glad if my boy can be of any service to you, Madam."

I think I also got my own back!

# CHAPTER XVIII

## THE CAPITAL OF INDIA

Delhi!

If you draw a line across the map of India from the north to the south at the greatest length, and another from east to west at the greatest breadth, the two will form a cross of the usual shape, with the cross-bar high up. Just at the point where they intersect stands Delhi, the chief city in India since the King-Emperor's proclamation in 1911. Before that Calcutta was the capital, but Calcutta, like Bombay, is a city of trade, and has practically no historic memories. Delhi is full of the romance of history. In the Mutiny the question as to who should hold it was of the greatest importance, and if the British then had let it slip from their grip, without an effort to retake it, their power in India would have been gone for ever.

Now, on the first morning that we are here, let us drive round and see what we can of this splendid city. First we will go down the Chandni Chauk, the main street which cuts Delhi into two parts. It is immensely wide and lined with trees of a good size. These stand on each side of a broad walk for foot-passengers, which runs down the middle of the street, foreign fashion, and makes a popular promenade. The gay colours of the natives' clothes flash in and out of the shadows of the trees

as the people pass along, each on his own errand. On one side are the tram-lines and on the other you can see a fast bullock-cart with pretty little white trotting bullocks as dainty in their own way as antelopes, and as different from the slow yellow ones as carriage-horses are from cart-horses. There are on both sides shops for jewels, for sweetmeats, for the richest and most beautiful silks and ivory, and mingled with them grocers' shops filled with tinned stuffs from England, and others with every kind of modern utensil for a house. Such a mixture! They are all heavily protected against the sun by awnings, for even at this early hour of the morning it is strong. At the end of the street is a tall red sandstone tower with a clock in it. In the distance we see the spire of an English church, and down that opening we catch sight of a Mohammedan mosque. The shop here beside us is a blaze of colour with Eastern carpets hung out like banners; the native owner squats on a thing like a wooden bedstead by his door and chews betel-nut, which makes his tongue and lips a deep red. Next door is a vigorous agency for the sale of sewing-machines! A Hindu religious fanatic, smeared with ashes and with hardly any clothes to cover his lean body, walks ahead with eyes unseeing, and at the same moment a smart motor-car stops beside us and the voice of a high-bred English-woman says, "I will meet you at the Effinghams in an hour," as she waves a greeting to her companions and steps out.

Hullo! There is a band. Round the corner swings a company of Ghurkas, the sturdy little men who helped England to overcome

the mutineers. They look very soldier-like in their neat holly-green uniforms, with small round caps set at a jaunty angle on their cropped heads. They are hill tribes from the north, and in appearance not unlike the Japanese. They are all so much of one size you could run a ruler along their heads. Their swinging stride would delight a soldier's heart, for it is like clockwork in its precision. They are born soldiers, brave and easily disciplined, devoted to their officers and without the knowledge of fear. They have faults, of course. The Ghurka is apt to be rather a gay dog; he gets drunk, and the girls he loves are many, but he is of the right stuff, and his officers are proud of him.

I was talking to one of them as we came up the coast on the ship.

"Nothing like them anywhere else in the world," he said. "They take to drill like their mother's milk, they thrive on it and discipline – the slightest fault that might be overlooked elsewhere we punish severely. They like it and live up to it. You could lead a Ghurka regiment anywhere; fighting is their pastime. They have nothing in common with the slothful races of Lower India; they are alert and vigorous and active as cats. The funniest thing is their love for the Highlanders; if a Highland regiment comes up the two meet and mingle as if they were brothers. You'll see a great Highlander in his kilt and feather bonnet arm in arm with one of these little chaps, hobnobbing as if they had known each other all their lives. And the Ghurkas won't have anything to say to the other Indian regiments; they despise them all except the

Sikhs – they get on with them all right."

We are lucky, for the Ghurkas are followed by a company of Sikhs, and anything less like the Ghurkas you could hardly imagine. The Sikhs are big men with stern bearded faces, they look like veterans and are a pleasant sight in their scarlet tunics with neat gaitered feet. There were many Sikh regiments belonging to our army in the black days of the Mutiny, and some wavered, but some held firm. Had it not been for the Sikhs things would have gone badly with us.

Now we are nearing the Lahore Gate and you can see that Delhi is a walled city. The walls run all round for six miles, and are backed up by a twenty-five feet ditch, so that it is a tough city for any army to take. The gate itself is a fine building. When the British troops, who varied at times from 5000 to 10,000 men, set to work to attack this strong city, held by 40,000 to 100,000 natives, many of them trained and disciplined soldiers, taught by the very men against whom they were fighting, it seemed an impossible task. The audacity of it! This gate was one of the hardest of all to break through. Four attacking parties had been sent against the walls, the other three got in, but the one that came here failed. Then the others tried to work their way through, inside the city, to capture this gate. They crept along the narrow lane running inside the wall, but it was commanded everywhere from the heights of the houses by the enemy, who poured down a murderous fire into it. Again and again the reckless men, who determined to take the gate, started off on the deadly errand,



again and again they were wiped off, and alas! one of those mortally wounded was General John Nicholson, whose utter disregard of danger and marvellous understanding of the native character had made many of the natives look on him as a god!

Now we are outside and driving up to the ridge. Every British boy and girl has heard of the ridge. It played a great part in the Mutiny. It is a long backbone of hill which runs close up to the city at one end. We will leave our carriage to go slowly along to the far end, where the road winds up, and we ourselves will scramble up at this side till we gain the Mutiny Memorial, a Gothic tower rising in many stages like a church spire. We can mount the steps inside to see the view. It is worth it, for miles and miles of country lie spread before us from this height.

I don't want to go into details of history, but if ever there is a place where history was made it is here. On this ridge for months was camped the British army, including some loyal native regiments, and all the time they never wavered in their determination to retake Delhi, then in the hands of the natives. Our men could not be said to besiege the city, because to besiege means to sit down all round a place and prevent the inhabitants from getting supplies from outside until they are compelled to give in or are too weak to resist the entrance of the besiegers; we never invested Delhi in this way. There were not enough men even to attempt it; the natives could always get supplies into the city, if they wanted, from the river Jumna, which runs past the other side. But the British sat steadily on their heights in grim

determination, and never lost the chance of a move. They died in hundreds; remember it was during an Indian summer, and even under the best conditions, with ice and punkahs and shade, the European finds it hard to get through the hot weather. Here there were no conveniences and very few even of what might be considered necessities. The men suffered from dysentery, fever, wounds, and sunstroke, and yet they carried through their forlorn hope triumphantly, and it was hardly a year later that the Queen of England was proclaimed Sovereign of India.

In that great plain, which stretches far as eye can see on the other side of the ridge, some twenty years later another proclamation was made, and the Queen was further proclaimed under the title of Empress of India; while in 1911 her grandson, King George, himself proclaimed Delhi as the capital of India in place of Calcutta.

Over the screen of trees you can see beautiful Delhi lying within its hoary walls. You can see the towers and steeples and minarets and domes of the city. Now look the other way, along the ridge. That great pillar close to us is very old; it was made by one of the Hindu kings, but it was only put up here ten years after the Mutiny, and is not interesting. That white house farther on is now a hospital; it was once a private house, and in it General Nicholson died. Look on again, much farther, past trees and other houses, and you will see a rounded building with turrets – that is the Flagstaff Tower so fiercely held.

Come down now to rejoin the carriage and we will go back to

the city by the Kashmir Gate. Of all the gates this is the one with the most daring story of adventure attached to it.

When the British had resolved to make an assault on the city they detailed four parties, as I said, to attack in four places. One of them was this gate. The other three places had been partially broken in by the guns, and there was a chance for those heroic madmen to get through, but this was entire. The assaulting party had first to break a way in and then get through.

And they did it!

The five told off to make the breach were Lieutenants Home and Salkeld, and Sergeants Carmichael, Burgess, and Smith. Some carried bags of gunpowder, and others, the fire to set them off. It was daylight when they ran towards the gate across a single plank spanning the ditch, so that they had to go one by one in full range of the enemy's fire from the walls. The marvel is that any lived to reach the gate alive. When one fell another leaped forward to carry on his task. The bags were flung down, and those who placed them tumbled back into the ditch, while their comrades set the powder alight and rolled down too. Out of the whole party only Home and Smith survived. The wicket of the gate was burst open by the explosion, and the storming party, also crossing that single plank, made for it, got inside, and beat back the foe, meeting their comrades, who had burst in at other points, inside.

The tale of "how Horatius kept the bridge" pales before this amazing pluck.

We must get out and look at the gate where this actually happened not sixty years ago.

There are two wide arches in the shattered wall, and the coping above is half gone; it remains unrestored just as it was that day. On a slab is an inscription telling of this noble deed when men died for their country without hesitation.

Close by is the cemetery where General Nicholson is buried. You can see his statue in the city raised high on a pedestal. He stands with bared head and drawn sword. But Nicholson's is not the only name immortalised by the Mutiny – there are the two brothers, John and Henry Lawrence, Outram and Havelock, Hodson, Sir Colin Campbell, and many another name which is a household word in England. These men, in those days of fierce fighting and desperate stress, made history and wrote themselves in its pages by deeds that still cause every British boy's heart to ring within him. We have passed through the Kashmir Gate, and here, on one side of the street, is a battered bit of arcade, another Mutiny memorial. In the early days, just at the first outbreak, when no one realised what was going to happen, the mutineers marched on Delhi. This bit of wall was part of the powder magazine, then in charge of nine men. They defended it against a swarming army of Sepoys, as the native soldiers were called, and when they found that they could not hold it in spite of their desperate defence, they calmly blew up the powder magazine, and themselves with it, to prevent its falling into the hands of the mutineers and being used against their kinsmen. The most

incredible part of the whole story is that three of those who blew up the magazine actually escaped with their lives!

We are now approaching the fort and palace, the kernel of the city, which it is best to see after the ridge.

It is a fine building that faces us, with an ornamental arcade running along the upper part. We pass in on foot under the gateway and see another, a Hall of Public Audience, with red sandstone pillars. Inside is a great throne of white marble, inlaid with mosaic work, where the old kings of Delhi used to sit and listen to their ministers. The last of this line was still living in the palace when the Mutiny broke out. He was a poor specimen, given up to indulgence and sloth; but the British had left him the state of royalty and all his wealth until the rising made it impossible any more. His sons and grandson, who, when the Mutiny broke out, themselves actually murdered and tortured helpless English women and children, and watched their agonies as "sport," were rightly shot out of hand, and the old king became a prisoner.

Coming out of this hall our eyes are caught by a gleam of something lustrously white against a sky which is now burning blue. This is another Hall of Audience, the Diwan-i-Khas, more beautiful than the first. It is of white marble, which, in this clear atmosphere, remains white, and it is richly ornamented with gilt. It is in the form of a square cloister or arcade, with a little dome at each corner, and if we stand inside and look out between the white pillars to see the lawns and the trees in the old palace

gardens, we shall find it difficult to realise that this place of beauty and peace was ever a scene of fierce revolt. The rest of the palace is now used partly as a barracks.

When the British, having beaten their way through the narrow streets, and swept them clear of the foe, arrived here on that fateful day, the 14th September 1857, they found the palace deserted, except for a stray sentry, holding his position with sublime courage. The rest had fled, – thousands flying from hundreds, – and well they might, for the British troops were wrought up by the cruelties of the Sepoys to a sublime and just fury that made them seem like avenging angels. It is said in one place that the sternness of the expression of the Sikhs' faces made the wretched Sepoys fly without a shot being fired. The palace area is full of beautiful buildings, and we shall see many more specimens of this kind of Oriental architecture when we visit the mosques in the town this afternoon.

So much is there to see, indeed, that it is not until the next day we can ride out for a sight beyond the walls.

Pull up your horse and look ahead. Do you see that huge column rising skyward from the plain? It is called the Kutab Minar and is two hundred and forty feet high. As we get under it and gaze up at it it seems to tower into the very sky. It is forty-seven feet across the base and narrows to the top, it is fluted all the way down, and has frills in stone around it here and there – truly a curious sight! There are three hundred and seventy-nine steps to climb to the top; do you want to try them? If so, I will

wait here and hold your horse. You shake your head. Wise boy!

There are other buildings around, parts of a mosque, and inside is an iron pillar said to be one of the oldest things in India. The Kutab Minar is supposed to have been built about the reign of our King John, though there are some who put it further back, the pillar is considerably older than that, but it cannot compare in antiquity with many things we have seen in Egypt. After the Hindu kings came a line of Moghul or Mohammedan kings who swept the others away; of these the old king of Delhi, living at the time of the Mutiny, was the last, and it is supposed that it was at the beginning of the rule of the Moghul kings that the Kutab Minar was erected.

Notice that brown-faced, scantily clad boy, who keeps beckoning and shouting "Sahib." We follow him as he leads us to a well, and almost before we realise what he is doing he goes down head first, a drop of at least eighty feet, into the black water below. There is a tradition that the water of this well cannot drown anyone. At anyrate it hasn't rid the world of this rascal, for here he comes shaking the water off his oily body and grinning. He has earned his bakshish!

As we are in Delhi for several days more we can go at our leisure through the bazaars, which really are well worth seeing. We choose a late afternoon, when there is no hurry and we can watch the people in their daily life and get a glimpse into the real India.

The streets are narrow, mere passages mostly, and lined by

the open-air stalls or wooden sheds which are what the native understands by shops. A marvellous array of slippers greets us first, for all of one trade tend to congregate together, a curious custom and one which you would think was not very good for trade, though convenient to the customer. There are slippers of all colours from scarlet to brown; you would never have thought they could be so decorative. They hang in bunches, festoons, and chains. Every man here wears slippers when he puts anything at all on his feet. Boots would be of no use to him, for he has so often to shuffle off his foot-gear in a hurry. Modern streets, with their stones and liability to nails and broken glass and other sharp things, has led to the native taking to strong soled slippers when he walks about his business.

There is a sizzling and a delicious smell from the next shop, and peeping in we see a huddled form crouched over a pot placed on a few red embers; it might be a witch stirring potions and muttering incantations. But it is only a native looking after a pan full of Indian corn popping out in the most fluffy and tempting way. I have often popped it on a shovel over the school fire. A native soldier, who is passing, stops and bargains for a handful, and carries it off, eating it as he goes; when he has had enough he will stow the rest in his turban, which serves as his pocket, his private trunk, and play-box all in one. This is the food he best thrives on, so his wants are easily supplied. A tailor sitting cross-legged on his board attracts us next; he is a good-looking old man with a grey beard and kindly eyes blinking



behind horn spectacles. His garments are of the dark red colour seen sometimes in certain parts of the country when the earth is ploughed. His turban is a mighty erection of green arranged with much dignity. You would think it hot and heavy to carry all those yards of stuff on your head, but the habit has probably arisen to protect the head from sunstroke.

"He is a *dhurzi*, Sahib," says Ramaswamy, who has followed us to interpret if we want. "He making all clothes for mem-sahibs. Very clever man and not asking too much money."

Yes, a *dhurzi* will come and sit outside on a verandah and work by the day and copy any garment you give him; sewing is a man's job here, and not a woman's.

Then we see a sweetmeat shop with a crowd outside and a cloud of flies bearing them company. While we look, many of the flies crawl slowly over the sticky, syrupy stuff which has just come from the pan, and get their legs entangled in it, but it doesn't seem to hinder the sale, which goes on cheerfully. There are sweets in rings and coils and fantastic shapes. A child gets a large pink slab for two pice, and ten pice go to the penny, that is to say, the anna, so it is not dear. The buyer tucks the sticky stuff up in the corner of her garment and ties it carefully into a knot before starting homeward.

Standing a little aloof from the crowd and looking at them disdainfully is a small boy with a twisted cord slung across his left shoulder. "He be Brahman, Sahib," says Ramaswamy timidly. "Very proud and not eating anything dirty peoples touch, just

having had cord." Standing where he is, so as not to approach nearer to the lad, he asks a few questions, which are answered curtly and proudly, with a glance thrown across at us as much as if to say they wouldn't have been answered at all except for our presence.

"Just two, three days he been made Brahman," explains Ramaswamy.

But he was born a Brahman, of course, and what Ramaswamy means is that up till then he was counted a child and could play and run about with other children without responsibilities; now that he has been invested with the cord he has taken up his birthright and is of the highest caste, the caste from which the priests come; he may not eat anything prepared by a lower caste, or even let others touch him, for he is set apart, and very proud of his new dignity in spite of the many difficulties it carries with it.

The child who stands staring at us with her shawl over her head is a little girl about the same age as the boy. She has been grinding corn between two stones and is a very thin and miserable little wretch. Her clothes are rags and there are no bangles on her little brown ankles. Ramaswamy tells us she is a widow! That child? She has probably never even seen the boy-husband who was so unlucky as to die; but because he did she is scorned by everyone. The worst life in all India is that of a widow. She has no ornaments, no amusements, and is treated worse than a slavey in a boarding-house, and for her there is no escape.

Right out in the street sits a man weaving a web of wonderful

colours; he throws the shuttles, carrying different coloured threads, across and across, without seeming to look at them, and all the time the web is growing into an intricate pattern under his fingers. So his father wove, and his grandfather and great-grandfather. All these crafts run in families. A little farther on is a potter spinning a wheel with his feet, while the soft lump of dull-coloured clay takes shape beneath his clever thumb as it races round. It seems to grow and swell and curve exquisitely as if it were a living thing. There are few sights more fascinating than a potter at work. You have often heard of the "potter's thumb," I expect? The thumb grows broad and flat and capable, because it is the chief instrument with which the potter works. On the floor beside him lie many of the clay jars of different sizes and shapes ready for the baking, others are being baked. There is always a good sale for them, and a potter in India flourishes exceedingly. Even now there is a woman passing us with a pot balanced on her head and a child on her hip. She swings along in the dust with a graceful gliding step, for she has been used to carrying things on her head almost from babyhood. These pots are brittle enough and frequently get broken, and even the poorest households must have a supply of them. But what helps the potter to make a living more than anything else is the custom that when a death occurs in a family, or a new life arrives in it, all the pots must be broken and new ones bought! It is a symbol of the life that has gone out and the new life beginning.

In church you must have heard those grandly poetic lines —

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Pass on to the silversmiths' quarter. Any of these men can do fine and beautiful work with very few tools. If you want anything made you pay them in a queer way. For the finished article is put in the scales and weighed against rupees thrown into the other balance, and when the rupees equal it then you give them to the workman, together with so many annas in each rupee for his work.

How can we ever take in all this varied life, so different from the life we are used to? The women sitting on the balconies above, the pariah dogs prowling for scraps below, the druggists and spice-sellers, the fruit and vegetable stalls? Over it all is that peculiar, scented, musty bazaar smell, made up of saffron and wood and dirt, with which we are already so familiar.

Wonderful Delhi! A city teeming with myriads of men of many races and customs, living side by side. Successor of seven cities which have stood here or hereabout in successive ages. From the earliest days a place of consequence, a place to be reckoned with, and now, by the proclamation of the King-Emperor, the first city in the land, as it is already the centre!

## CHAPTER XIX

# TO THE DEATH!

A curious building, isn't it? I mean that one right in front of us. It is something like a very large and many-sided crown, built of stone and set upon the ground. The sides are pierced with windows of the same sort as those seen in churches, and on each of the angles there is a little pinnacle. It rises up serenely against the soft blue sky of this early morning. We are far from Delhi now, having arrived at Cawnpore late last night, and we have come out here first thing this morning. It is only seven now.

Cawnpore! The Mutiny! Those two things rush simultaneously into the mind, for Cawnpore is associated with the most awful scenes of the Mutiny, and no Briton can ever think of it without those scenes flashing before him.

Come nearer and pass inside the crown and you will see in the centre a great angel of the usual sort, with high sweeping wings, holding palm branches folded across its breast. It marks the Well of Cawnpore.

You know that story, of course, and yet, as we sit here, on the very spot where it all happened, with the Indian sky above us, we cannot help recalling it once more. In telling it I shall not dwell on the agonies and bloodshed which have hallowed this place for ever; they are done with, and those who suffered have been at rest

for nearly sixty years. The deep peace around us overlies their torments and forbids us to think too much of the darker side of the picture. But the heroism, the courage, the indomitable spirit that animated these men and women, these things live for ever, rising up from the earth in a flood of inspiration for all who pass over the place.

There are certain little animals called Tasmanian devils, who do not know what it is to give in; they die fighting and attack their persecutors as long as one limb hangs on to another; of such stuff were the people besieged at Cawnpore. They were encamped here on a wretched piece of flat ground, quite open except for a low mud wall, which anyone could have jumped over easily. There were about nine hundred and fifty of them altogether, some soldiers, some civilians, some women and children and a few native soldiers who remained loyal. Outside were unending hordes of natives well armed and well trained, because the greater part were the men of the native regiments who had mutinied, known by the name of Sepoys. A few huts built of thin brick were all the shelter the beleaguered people had; they were constantly under a shrieking storm of bullets and shells, and were ringed around by steel. You would have said two days at the outside would see the end of it, and that then the black hordes would sweep clean over that field, having wiped out the garrison completely; but so amazing is the power of pluck that those within held the hordes at bay for twenty-three days! They not only prevented any single Sepoy from getting

inside alive, but they constantly sallied out and acted on the defensive, burning their enemies' defences and killing scores of them, while thousands fled in confusion before them! The sublime impudence of it! And all the time they were short of food; women and children were laid in holes in the earth covered with planks to protect them from the bullets. And water – ah, that was the worst – water had to be fetched from a well which was quite exposed in the midst of the encampment, and the Sepoys kept up an incessant fire on it. We are now beside it, this well where water was drawn at the price of blood, and yet volunteers were never lacking. The very ground our feet now rest upon was ringed around with the bodies of those who laid down their lives for the women and children. There was another well, a little distance off, now marked by an Iona cross, and to this, under cover of night, the British conveyed their dead for burial.

Read the inscription that circles round the wall of the well now in front of us: —

"Sacred to the perpetual memory of a great company of Christian people, chiefly women and children, who near this spot were cruelly murdered by the followers of the rebel, Nana Dhundu Pant of Bithur, and cast, the dying with the dead, into the well below, on the fifteenth day of July 1857."

Yes, we have not come to the end yet!

When the bloodthirsty tyrant, better known as Nana Sahib, found he could not crack this nut, when he realised that his whole army was held at bay by a few hundreds of determined spirits –

there were only three hundred fighting men to begin with, and they were daily killed – he made terms with them, promising to send the survivors safely in boats down the river if they would give in. Desperate as they were, without food or water, without shade from the killing glare of the Indian summer sun, the brave men held their heads high and only accepted on condition they marched out under arms with so many rounds of ammunition to each man.

This was granted.

Now leave the well and follow that heroic band who went down to the river on that blazing day some sixty years ago. It is about a mile away. The little garrison now numbered some four hundred and fifty all told, the half of what they had been three weeks before. Blackened with the sun and smoke and gunpowder, so as to rival the Sepoys in complexion, tattered and worn and wounded, but yet with courage undaunted, they went down to the river.

There is another building here, an arcade on the banks facing the placid stream; it has a tower behind and a broad flight of stairs, a ghaut, as it is called, flanked by walls running down to the margin. But on that day long ago there was nothing of this, nothing but a number of clumsy boats with thatched roofs to keep the sun off, native fashion. As the English took their places in them, suddenly a bugle rang out, and at that signal the native boatmen sprang from their places and splashed ashore; up rose an army of Sepoys from the scrub on the banks, and death



was rained on the victims of the blackest deed of treachery ever written in the annals of the world. Standing here on these smooth steps which mark the place it is difficult even to picture that scene of horror. Many were killed outright, many mortally wounded and torn, one hundred and twenty-five were dragged ashore and brutally killed afterwards; it was they who were thrown into the well; but three boats got away down the stream. Two went ashore and all the occupants were killed by the merciless brutes who lined the banks. The other had men in it, men who were filled with a madness of wrath that knew no bounds. In spite of their own condition, in spite of the odds against them, they leaped like tigers on the foe whenever they got the chance. They were followed by the natives, who fired on them repeatedly from a safe distance, and again and again the dead had to be cast into the stream. Yet when a Sepoy boat ran against a sandbank, twenty or so of the powder-blackened Englishmen sprang out into the water and raced with fury to kill them, though the boat contained three times their own number. It is good to read how they wiped out all but those who escaped in terror by swimming! At last only fourteen of the English were left alive and they got hopelessly penned in a backwater. These men charged the army of Sepoys on the banks and made them keep their distance. They secured themselves in a tiny temple on the margin of the river and killed all who approached. At length, seeing preparations made for blowing them up with gunpowder, they charged out; seven who could swim made for the river, the other six (one was dead)

rushed straight at the mass of Sepoys and dealt death on every side before they fell.

Four of the seven eventually outdistanced their persecutors and reached safety, and then, alas! one died.

It is good to hear that an avenging army descended on Cawnpore, though too late to save the remnant of the captives. The Sepoys were smitten hip and thigh, and thousands paid with their lives for those other lives they had spared not. Nana Sahib fled and was never heard of again. Stripped of all his wealth and luxury he must have skulked from place to place like a plague-tainted rat, till death took him and he went to meet the souls of the hundreds he had treacherously and brutally massacred.

It is finished! The price has been paid; the native has learnt that it is not well to meddle with white men. And we must not forget that hundreds of natives remained faithful, and gave their lives to save those of our fellow-countrymen.

As we wander back through the park in the sunshine, now growing fierce and strong, toward the Memorial Church showing above the trees, the chief feeling is not of bitterness but of pride. That little band, whose courage was unquenchable and untamable, were not picked men and women, but just an ordinary crowd made up of soldiers and civilians and their wives and children, yet not one act of selfishness or cowardice remains to stain their record. When the last extremity came, sloth and indifference and selfishness dropped off like sloughs and only devotion and bravery shone out. It is grand to belong to a race

which holds these qualities as the highest good.

One incident more. When the tyrant had brought his handful of captives up from the river he found there were a few men among them. So before he started to massacre the women and babies he sent for the men to come forth to instant death; he dared not leave even half a dozen men of the untamable breed, who are "little used to lie down at the bidding of any man," among them, even unarmed.

The men came forth, and among them was a lad of fourteen; he was only a year older than you, but he preferred to be reckoned among the men rather than to hide behind the women's petticoats. He chose a soldier's death and he had it, for he fell pierced by bullets with the rest.

# CHAPTER XX

## A CITY OF PRIESTS

Surely you have never before seen anything like this, there is nothing to be seen like it anywhere else!

We are at Benares, the sacred city of the Hindus, which stands on their sacred river, the Ganges. We have taken a boat and have floated out into the current, and are looking up with amazement at the spectacle before us. The city rises high on the banks, and towers and minarets and domes of a curious long-drawn-out shape, glittering in the sun like gold, arise out of the flat roofs. Down to the river at every opening between the houses stretch stairways, as you know called *ghauts*, some broad and some narrow. We judge that they are there, though we cannot see the steps, for every inch is covered by a moving mass of people, clothed in the colours of the rainbow. You have often turned a kaleidoscope over and over, and watched the bits of coloured glass falling into strange patterns. Half shut your eyes and make a tube of your hands and see if this doesn't remind you of a kaleidoscope.

Thousands and thousands of people are passing and repassing up and down, or sitting on every scrap of available building. They flow out over the steps and down into the water itself. They are standing there knee-deep, waist-deep, shoulder-deep, with

hardly any clothes on their glistening brown and yellow bodies, diligently throwing the water over themselves, washing their long, straight, black hair in it, or even drinking it!

Ah, what is that gruesome object? Take care, don't touch it as it floats by; it looks like a bit of charred stick, but indeed it is half-burnt human bones!

We have already seen a few sacred rivers in our wanderings – the gigantic Nile, the tiny Jordan, and now we see the Ganges, which in size comes between the two, being one thousand four hundred and fifty-five miles in length. Quite a respectable-sized river that! The Hindus regard it with such reverence that they count bathing in it a religious act, and when they die their one desire is to be burned beside it so that their bones may be cast into its waters. If we row a little way up we shall see this ceremony at the Burning Ghauts. There are funeral pyres of wood where the relatives are carrying out the last offices for the dead. Some prowling pariah dogs, of the lean yellow breed, and a few impertinent crows are hovering about, hoping that some scraps may fall to their share. The dead bodies are rolled up in white and red cloth and lie with their feet in the blessed water awaiting their burning.

Men are bringing logs of wood to pile upon the pyres, others are poking about in the ashes of the last burned to see if maybe an anklet or ear-ring has fallen off and may be scavenged.

The red flames rise and lick up the sides, while the enveloping smoke wreathes around the corpse. Remember that at one time

the miserable widow of the dead man would have mounted that gruesome throne and be sitting there to be burnt alive. This is forbidden by law now, as indeed it was forbidden by some of the wisest of the Indian kings too, only until the British came there never was any power strong enough to enforce it.

Benares is the religious capital of India; it takes the place that Canterbury does with us, and it has been the place of pilgrimage for generations.

We have met with Buddhists in Ceylon and Mohammedans in Egypt. There are Buddhists among the natives of India too, though not many, considering the population; there are many more Mohammedans, but by far the largest number of the people, outnumbering the Mohammedans by three to one, are the Hindus, and it is as a Hindu capital that Benares mainly exists. British rule throws protection alike over all races and all religions; never was there a broader based dominion; be a man a Hindu, Sikh, Mohammedan, Parsee, Buddhist, or Christian, the law protects him in the exercise of his faith so long as it does not lead to cruelty such as in the burning of widows, or so long as it does not encroach upon the rights of others.

The Hindu religion is an extraordinary one. At first sight, seeing the jumble up of strange gods, – the cow-goddess, the monkey-god, elephant-god, and others, – it seems rather to resemble the religion of the ancient Egyptians, but it is not a real resemblance. The highest idea of the Hindu, as of the Buddhist, is to pass out into a sort of painless existence of nothingness.

And to overcome the flesh and to arrive at a placid state, where nothing matters, is attempted here on earth by some. Some of the old men, fakirs as they are called, like the one we met in Delhi, do astonishing things merely by force of an iron determination. They will sit so long holding an arm in one position that it shrivels. Others will lie for years on a bed of spikes. They eat very little, live on charity, and are often lost in a state of trance.

As we row slowly back along the river we see countless flat umbrellas, like those known as Japanese umbrellas, studding the gay crowd; under each one of these there is a "holy man," and there are thousands of them altogether in this city, living on the offerings of the pilgrims.

Look at that fellow seated cross-legged on a plank running out into the river. He pours water over his feet every now and again out of a little copper bowl, and mutters something. He is so much absorbed in what he is doing that he never looks up or turns his head. Another, close by, has hung his gaily-coloured turban on a post and proceeds to unwind his garment and cast it from him before he steps into the water with hardly a rag upon him. This lady in an orange scarf, dripping wet, seats herself on the end of the board, and winds a dry scarf round herself so adroitly that it is like a conjuring trick; she stands up and the wet one falls from her. She would get well paid as a quick-change artiste at a music hall, and such a gift would be invaluable for bathing on the Cornish coast!

The men along the edge are very jolly, they chatter all the time

and splash and wash and enjoy themselves. No English seaside place on a trip-day can beat this crowd. The fact that dead bones and skulls are constantly thrown into the water, and that the ashes of dead people, and much else that is indescribably filthy, mingles with it, doesn't seem to disturb them at all.

When you have wearied of watching them we will go and visit one of the innumerable temples in the city, but we shall need a guide for that, as it is not safe to wander in these streets alone.

No sooner have we landed and fought our way into one of the narrow alleys, than the road is blocked by an enormous bull who stands placidly before a greengrocer's stall sampling his wares. The man makes no attempt to drive him away, but tries to tempt him by holding a choice bunch of his best stuff. The beast has slavered over much that will be sold for human food afterwards. What? A good smack on the flank! For goodness' sake take care! The animal is supposed to be sacred; to touch him would be to bring out all the inhabitants of these houses on to us like a swarm of hornets. Luckily the beast is so well fed that he soon moves on and we can get past.

Now we have reached the most important temple of all, known as the Golden Temple, and as we pass into the cloisters we see a couple more animals standing inside, as much at home as if they were in a byre, which, indeed, the place smells like, with a strange scent of sweet flowers on the top of it. It is a wonderful place, but oh, so dirty! It is dedicated, of all things, to the poison-god, Shiva! It stands in a quadrangle, roofed in, and above rise



some of those curious elongated domes we saw from the boat. If we climb up through that flower-stall where blossoms are being sold for offerings, we can see these domes, which really have cost a lot of money, as two of them are gilt all over; the gilding keeps its glitter here and rises dazzlingly against the hot sky.

There are other temples by the dozen and mosques too for the Mohammedans. If we wander round we shall see many strange sights; in one shrine is the image of the god Saturn, a silver disc, in another that of Ganesh, the elephant-god, surely the most hideous of all! Look at him! A squatting dwarf with an elephant's trunk! At another place is the image of Shiva himself; it has a silver face, though made of stone, and possesses four hands; it is guarded by a dog, and you can buy little imitation dogs made of sugar anywhere near. There is even an image of the goddess of smallpox, and if you ask why the Hindu chooses such repulsive and revolting things to worship, the answer is, because he is afraid. He says, "If the gods are good they will not injure me, but if they are evil I must propitiate them!"

Everywhere we go we have copper bowls or even the half of coco-nut shells thrust at us for offerings; the priests tolerate the strangers entering their temples only because they hope to get something out of them.

We are now far from Benares; we have left behind the narrow crowded alleys, the violent smells, and the gay colours, and are in the train speeding toward Calcutta, whence we will take a steamer to Burma. The train has just stopped at a wayside station

and there is a chance to stretch our legs. Ramaswamy appears and tells us they are going to stop here for a time. He doesn't seem to know why, – something about a sahib is all we can gather, – so we get out and wander along the village street. We have only gone a short way when we see a kind of litter coming along slung on bearers' shoulders. It is screened by curtains, and beside it rides a white man in a helmet, followed by natives. Why, that is the very man who came up in the train from Delhi with us! I wonder what he is doing here. That must be a sick woman in the litter. This is evidently what the train was waiting for, so we might as well go back.

We get to the station just in time to see the curtains pushed aside by the sahib, who very tenderly and skilfully raises in his arms the sick person inside, and supports him into the station. It is a gaunt scarecrow of a man, a skeleton of a creature, whose big pathetic eyes look dark in his hollow face. He is evidently very ill. He is half-carried across to a carriage next to ours that has been prepared for him, and is laid down on a couch on the seat, and it is not long before we get under way again. Going out a little later on to the platform between the two compartments we find our friend, the tall Englishman, standing there smoking. He recognises us at once and asks us about our experiences; it is not difficult to find out about the invalid.

"One of the best chaps going," he says shortly. "Simply broken up by the work he's been doing in the plague-camp up there. He is a doctor, so am I, and I've just got back from leave. I went

up-country to relieve Jordan, but the work is nearly over, and I found him played out. He has hardly had his clothes off for weeks. The difficulty is to persuade these people to get out of their infected houses into a camp until the place is made sanitary and the plague stayed. He was single-handed at first, now there are two other men up there, so I can be spared to take him down to the coast. He'll get over it; oh yes, he's got the turn now, though he was nearly gone once or twice, but he'll never be the same man again. He is invalided home for a bit, and the voyage will pull him up, but even as he is he's sore at leaving it. He wants to finish his job."

"Then when you've left him at Calcutta you'll go back to the infected district?"

"Yes, of course, why not? It's all in the day's work, and you know we've actually had only thirty deaths in a month since the beggars were got out into camp, and they were dying at the rate of hundreds a week before. Grand, isn't it?" His face lights up with enthusiasm.

India is full of such men; they don't play for safety, they take their lives in their hands at a moment's notice, and go blithely to grapple with death.

# CHAPTER XXI

## THE GOLDEN PAGODA

It is hot and still, we have passed across a place of broken tangled undergrowth and come out into a rather untidy courtyard, where some sneaking yellow pariah dogs barked at us until I cut at them with my stick, when they ran away and barked again from a safe distance. There seems to be no one else here but ourselves. A great tree covered with glorious magenta flowers stands on one side. It is our old friend the bougainvillea, but here it grows into a great tree instead of a creeper. It is backed up by the dark foliage of many mango trees. In front of us is a large house which seems to rise in many storeys, and the roof of each storey is carved and decorated, so that it shows up like lacework against the sky. The house stands on legs, so that the under part is quite open, and a broad flight of wooden steps leads up to a verandah on the first floor. Stop to examine the carving on the balustrade. It is wonderful! Figures of tigers, dragons, peacocks, monkeys, and elephants are all set among foliage and cut out very deeply.

When we arrived in Burma yesterday we came up the river Irrawaddy, which at its mouth is called the Rangoon River. What seemed like low green banks are really swamps filled with rushes growing high and strong; as we passed between them suddenly we saw afar off a gleam of gold, and by staring hard we made out

a great tower against the sky. We are going to visit it presently, but just now I want you to see something else quite funny. Step softly on the broad wooden verandah and peep round that corner.

There squats an old man with a perfectly bald head, smooth as a billiard ball; he wears a loose garment of dull yellow stuff which forms a sort of skirt and is draped across one shoulder as well, falling over his honey-coloured chest. He is all yellow, except for his round, shining black eyes, very like glistening balls of jet. On the ground in front of him, lying full length on their little stomachs, are about a dozen small boys. You thought they were girls? I don't wonder! Each one has a feathery tuft of hair in the middle of his head standing up like carrot tops, except for this the little skull is closely shaven all round. They all have skimpy white jackets and skirts from which their skinny little yellow legs stick out kicking in the effort to master their tasks. In a loud sing-song jabber they are repeating something which they read off the slates they hold in front of them. It would be funny to learn lessons lying flat on the floor, wouldn't it? But these boys have never sat on chairs in their lives; they will have to learn that as an accomplishment if they go into business offices when they are older.

The old *poongyi*, or monk, is the teacher. This beautiful carved wooden building is the house where the monks live, and it is called a *choung*. In the morning, very early, the monks wander forth, dressed in yellow robes and carrying begging-bowls and fans. They do not beg, however, they are much too proud; they

merely stop and stand about where there are houses, and the people rush to pour food into their bowls. It is a privilege for them to be allowed to do this, as they are supposed to "gain merit" by so doing. Nearly all the Burmese are Buddhists, and these men are Buddhist monks.

You would never guess what the fans are for; they are to put up as screens to shield the faces of the monks when they pass a woman, for they are not supposed ever to look at a woman, it is too frivolous! When the begging-bowls are full they generally contain a strange mixture, for everyone pours in anything he or she happens to have; there will certainly be rice, both cooked and raw, peas, perhaps fish, and this may be wrapped up in a leaf to keep it separate, which is necessary when it is curried; then there will be some cakes or cucumbers; possibly, in the season, mangoes and plantains. One of the greatest delicacies of the Burmese is a horribly smelly stuff called *ngapé*, made of rotten fish laid in salt; no feast is complete without it.

The monks are supposed to live on what they get in their begging-bowls, but, as a matter of fact, in wealthy monasteries they don't; they empty it out for the pariah dogs, which explains why so many dogs always hang around the monasteries.

The Burmese have some funny notions; one is that they do not like anyone else's feet to be above their heads, so they build their houses on posts and do not use the ground floor. It looks as if there were many more storeys rising above the first floor where they live, but that is a sham; the roof is only built to look like

that, and is hollow inside. In most of the monasteries there are schools, and the little boys are taught in them, as you see here. Besides this, every boy, when he gets to a certain age, must spend a time, longer or shorter, in the monastery. It may be only a few days or weeks and it may be years, according to the ideas of his parents, but while he is there he has to wear the yellow robe and carry the begging-bowl, and what to a growing boy must be most trying of all, he is not allowed to eat anything after midday!

That old fellow has caught sight of us; he is getting up and seems quite pleased to welcome us. It is a good thing we brought Ramaswamy with us, for he can speak Burmese and interpret for us; the monk knows no English. The little boys spring to their feet and stand gazing at us with wide eyes, delighted, as any boys would be, at getting an interruption to their lessons. They gradually come round us and begin to laugh and even to touch our clothes, but the old monk sends them all away and leads us into the wooden rooms of the monastery that open off the verandah. Several monks here are lying lazily about on mats half-asleep, but in a moment they all surround us, and for the first few minutes we experience rather an eerie sensation. Coming in from the bright sunshine outside everything seems very dim, and these curious men with their shaven heads and beetle eyes come close up to us and press upon us, pawing us and pointing to a great image of Buddha shining out in a ghostly way from a shrine at the end of the hall.

There are many little candles burning before it, most of them

sticking to the ground by their own grease. One of the monks takes one up and holds it so that we can see the image, about twice life-size, seated in that calm attitude of the sitting Buddha, with crossed legs and one hand on the lap, while the other hangs loosely down. There is a serene self-satisfied smirk on the marble face, which looks more like that of a woman than a man. Ramaswamy explains to us that this is a very specially holy Buddha, and that the little dabs of gold splashed here and there about him are the offerings of the faithful; they are simply bits of gold-leaf stuck on. Gold-leaf is expensive, for it is real gold beaten very thin, and these little bits represent much self-denial on the part of many poor people. A Burman's great object in life is to "gain merit" for a future existence, for he thinks that he will live again and again many times in different forms, and that as he behaves in this life so he will be born again into a better or worse state in the next; if he is very bad he runs the risk of becoming a snake or some other repulsive reptile. He is not afraid of overdoing the merit, as the ancient Egyptian was; the more he can pile up for himself the better, and the way in which he does this is to feed the poongyis, build choungs and pagodas, and set up or adorn figures of Buddha.

The priests at this choung own a priceless relic; it is no less than a hair of Buddha! After some persuasion they are induced to show it to us. They bring a great casket, which is solemnly unlocked, showing another inside, and again another, and at last we get down to a little glass box with an artificial white flower



in it, round which is wound a long and very wiry white hair. I should say many of the same sort could be got from any long-tailed white horse!

On a table near are various offerings, and among them we see a rather greasy pack of ordinary playing-cards and a soda-water bottle, besides several saucers of waxy white blossoms of the frangipani flower, such as we saw in Ceylon, emitting a very strong scent. The soda-water bottle and playing-cards look rather dissipated, but they are quite serious offerings, given by somebody who thinks them rare and interesting. Our ears for some time past have told us that an extraordinary amount of ticking is going on, and now that our eyes have become accustomed to the light, we can see numerous clocks on brackets and tables; these are of all sorts and sizes, including a 2s. 11d. "Bee" clock, cuckoo clocks, and even one large "grandfather." In between and about them, on the floor and on the shelves, are lamps large and lamps small, some brass, some china, and some glass!

The clocks are all going hard, ticking away as if they were running a race to see which could get ahead of the other. It is a funny medley! The monks are lazy enough and pass half their days asleep, but if they keep all these clocks wound up someone must have something to do. These are all offerings, and the more the better; no monk can ever get enough lamps or clocks to satisfy him!

We pass down and out into the courtyard, and all the monks

follow us in a body and gently edge us toward some ponds or tanks where fat tortoises lie on the banks or float lazily in the stagnant water.

There is a man sitting on the side selling balls of rice and bits of bread. Just as we come up a graceful Burmese woman buys a ball and throws it into the water. In an instant what looks like a voracious army of huge spiders floats up from below and attacks it, and as the ball of rice dissolves and falls apart every grain disappears. Looking more closely we see that they are not spiders at all, but a curious kind of fish with long feelers growing out all round his mouth and nose. As he thrusts up his mouth to the surface, with all the feelers wriggling, the rest of his body is unseen, and the appearance is exactly that of a round spider with wriggling legs. Buy a bit of crust and see the fish dart at it and simply tear it to pieces; they scramble at it from all sides, pushing and nibbling, and in less time than you could imagine every crumb is gone!

The woman is laughing, and we laugh back at her. She is short and very neat, with her shining black hair coiled round her head and secured by two big pins, while a dainty spray of flower falls down on one side. Her face looks quite light coloured, for it is thickly covered with a kind of soft yellow powder, and she has a brilliant gauzy scarf across her little white jacket and falling down over her tight rose-pink silk skirt. As she walks away with a curious shuffle we see that she has on the quaintest shoes, with red velvet caps and no heels; but the caps are so much too small

for her feet that she has had to leave the little toe outside! This is a fine dodge, and Mah Shwe can say she takes twos or threes in shoes with truth, even if her feet are much larger!

The monks are standing in a solemn group near their staircase when we go back, and when I suggest to Ramaswamy we should give them something he disagrees vigorously. "Not touching money, Master, only food and rice, no money." All right, we won't tempt them, and I put back the rupee I had taken out. You must have noticed already that the money here is the same as in India. Then we climb into the miserable little box on wheels which is waiting for us; it is the only cab we can get here, and calls itself a ticca-gharry. The little rat of a pony seems a very long way off; it is a tight squeeze for us inside, and there is certainly no room on the box beside the hairy-legged native for Ramaswamy, but he hops up on a board there is behind for the purpose, and hangs on as we jolt away to the Golden Pagoda.

The first thing we see when we arrive at it are two enormous monsters, not like any animal in existence, made of white plaster with glaring red eyes. They have dragons' heads and tigers' bodies and are most terribly ferocious. These guard the entrance to the pagoda and are called leogryphs. Between them there is a long ascent rising to the pagoda platform. The place is like a bazaar with people in their gay clothes coming and going, and the sun glinting through between the pillars at the open spaces. It is difficult to tell the difference between men and women, for all alike wear skirts and jackets, and you never see a man with a

beard, hardly ever with a moustache. But the true distinction is that the men have a gay handkerchief called a *goungbaung* wound round their heads, and the women wear no head covering, and, as you have seen, they never think of veiling their faces, like the Mohammedan women. The men's head-gear is very different from that we saw in India; it is not a huge and heavy erection, but just a silk or cotton scarf twisted up and tucked in, and very often there is a "bird's nest" of dark hair sticking out in the middle of it, for the men's hair is long as well as the women's, but they roll it up so that it is not seen.

Everyone is very bright and friendly, and the girls who are selling all sorts of little tawdry things on the stalls by the stairs call out to us persuasively to buy from them. On the whole the place is clean, and there is no bazaar smell, only a certain sharp wood-smoke flavour and the scent of many flowers. But at the foot of every white column are horrible deep-red stains that look as if some little animal had been slaughtered there. It is not so bad as that. You remember we saw a man whose mouth was stained red with chewing betel-nut, which he did in the same way that some of the roughest men in England chew tobacco? These are the stains of that betel-nut, for nearly everyone here has the nasty habit.

Up the steps we pass, higher and higher, and come out on to a great platform which looks like a street, for it is lined with buildings on all four sides and in the middle too; but rising above those in the middle is the great pagoda, the Shwe Dagon, —*shwe*

means golden, – and this is the most wonderful thing in Burma.

It is so wide at the base that it takes quite a long time to walk round it, and then it goes up in a bell-like curve, tapering to a steeple little less than the height of St. Paul's Cathedral. At the very top of all, so high that we can only see it by cricking our necks, is an iron cage called a *htee*, meaning "umbrella," decorated with swinging bells. Listen for a moment and perhaps you can hear them as the wind sways them about. No, the air is too still to-day. Deep in the innermost chamber of the pagoda are no less than eight hairs of Buddha, besides other relics of other Buddhas who lived before the last.

The marvel of it is that this great monument is pure gold from top to bottom. Much of it is covered with thin plates of real gold, and the rest, yards and yards of it, is plastered with gold-leaf.

Did you see that red glint from the top as the sun caught the *htee* at an angle? That was probably a real ruby, for it flashed out like a sword blade. There are many real stones set up there, and the *htee* alone cost £50,000!

Coming back to earth, look at the glitter on all these shrines that line the platform on both sides. Though it looks like a street it isn't really, for there are no houses, only shrines and temples. That one close to us is dazzling to look at. No, those blue and red flashes are not from real jewels; examine them and see. The shrine is encased with little pieces of looking-glass, some red and some blue and some plain, all fitted in together like mosaic.

The next is made of the wonderful carved woodwork the

Burmans do so well, and it is gilded all over; for my own part I prefer the dark teak ungilded, but still this looks very handsome among the rest. That tall post like a flagstaff, with streamers flying from it, is a praying-post; can you make out the figure like a weather-cock at the top? It is a goose instead of a cock, and doesn't tell the direction of the wind. It is the sacred goose. The brilliance of all this detail takes one's breath away. On every side we see the people worshipping, and yet it is not a festival day, for then we should hardly be able to move for the crowds on the platform – where there are tens now there would then be thousands. The worshippers drop down quite simply on the pavement before a favourite shrine and hold up their hands toward it, sometimes with an offering of flowers in them, or even a big taper. There is a woman passing smoking a monstrous "green" cigar. It is a huge thick roll of light-coloured stuff like shavings, about as long as your arm from elbow to wrist, and as thick as a man's finger. She has to open her little round mouth wide to get the end in. It is not filled with pure tobacco, but a chopped mixture of all sorts; even you could smoke it without any harm. Why yes, women smoke here almost all day, and children too. They do say the mothers give the babies-in-arms a whiff, but I haven't seen that myself!

Set up everywhere are coloured umbrellas with fringes of coloured beads, as large as those used for tents on lawns sometimes. We peer into numberless shrines as we pass and see Buddhas of every sort peeping at us out of the dim interiors; there

are Buddhas of brass, Buddhas of marble, Buddhas of alabaster, Buddhas coated with white paint, and Buddhas covered with gold. Most of them are seated, always exactly in the same position as the one we saw far away in Ceylon. This is supposed to signify Buddha as he sat under the Bo tree meditating. Others show him standing with one hand upraised, and this is to show Buddha as he was when teaching, and others are lying down, but these are the least common. They are supposed to show Buddha when he passed into eternal calm.

Pink is by far the favourite colour for the people's clothes, and it is very vivid, like the colour seen in striped coco-nut cream, but white is also much worn, and there is some yellow in orange shades. Many of the Burmese wear a shirt of maroon check, just like a check duster; these are their workaday clothes, on festivals they generally manage to come out in silks.

Come round now to the back of the shrines that line the platform on the outer side, here there is another open space, and on it are bells as large as church bells; they hang between two posts. Take up one of those deer's horns lying beside that one and stroke it hard. It gives out a clear musical note. Try now the piece of wood, that sounds different. Everyone who passes stops to strike one or the other of the bells, they want to call the attention of the "good nats," or spirits, to the fact that they are at the pagoda! In this shed is an enormous bell large enough to hold half a dozen men. I don't think you'll be able to make much effect with a deer's horn on that. It is the third largest in the world, and

once was in the bottom of the Rangoon River, for the English were carrying it away when it toppled over and sank. Engineers tried to raise it, but failed, because of its enormous weight; but the Burmans, after some time, were allowed to try, and somehow managed to succeed, and not only so, but they hauled it right up here! It does look as though there were something weird about its positive refusal to be carried away!

Along the edge of this part of the pagoda are a number of wooden platforms raised a foot or two from the ground, for the use of those who come from long distances, and on them many families are lying or sitting. On one sits a tiny boy with a quizzical intelligent little face. His top-knot sticks up like an out-of-curl feather. Beside him is a still smaller mite who cannot be more than two; he has little silver bangles on his fat wrists and ankles, and a strip of cotton rolled round his dumpy body, while papa and mamma and numerous aunts are seated on the platform behind gravely smoking.

I stop to light a cigarette close to this family, and in an instant the elder lad holds out his hand timidly. Just to see what he will do I give him a cigarette; he takes it with a self-possessed courtesy and looks at me, politely waiting for a light. I hand him the box and he strikes a match and bows a little as he returns it; even the children have excellent manners. Drawing in a great whiff of smoke he sends it out through his little round nose in keen enjoyment. But the fat baby has suddenly become alive to what is going on, and crawling on the top of his brother clamorously



demands a smoke more loudly than if he were asking for sweets. The bigger boy hands him the cigarette. He knows quite enough not to put the lighted end in his mouth, and in a second is puffing so vigorously that the cigarette burns away like a furnace; when his brother sees this he makes a desperate effort to recover it, but the fat baby pushes him off with one hand, while he clings to the cigarette with the other, and, turning away his head, smokes harder than ever.

We are both reduced to fits of laughter by this time, and the family on the platform are enjoying the joke too. Seeing that there are likely to be difficulties, I solve them by producing another cigarette for the elder boy, and the fat baby is left in full possession of the first one. The last sight we have of him is as he violently resists a grown-up sister who is trying to take away the stub!

## CHAPTER XXII

# THE KING'S REPRESENTATIVE

We are lucky! No sooner have we returned to the hotel than a gorgeous man, over six feet high, dressed in white, with a red sash, in which is stuck a tasselled dagger, greets us. He is a *chuprassie*, or messenger, and has come from Government House with a note inviting us to a garden-party there this afternoon. What a day of it! This is the result of my having been up there yesterday to write our names in the book kept for the purpose, while I left you to rest. That is the way people do here instead of leaving cards, so that His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor may know who has come to the country. I thought perhaps he would take some notice of us, because his younger brother was my great friend at the 'Varsity, but this is very prompt. I am glad you will have a chance of seeing something of Government House, as most people in England have not an idea how things are run here. Burma is counted as one of the provinces of India, and is under the Viceroy of all India, but within his own borders the Lieutenant-Governor is the ruler and representative of the King.

It is about four o'clock, when, having had a rest and made ourselves as smart as we can, we crawl up the long drive leading to Government House in one of the ridiculous small ticca-gharries which are the only conveyances one can get.

We are one of a long procession of vehicles going at a foot's pace, stopping and starting again. Some are private carriages, there are a few motors, a few dog-carts, and ours is not the only little box on wheels. Lean out a little and you will see a flash of jewels and satiny silk in that one in front of us; evidently some wealthy natives are among the guests. The long line of vehicles comes up to the door, and when the occupants have alighted the drivers curve on round the lawn and go away. At last our turn comes. A pleasant-looking man, all in white, with a red sash and sword, and a wonderful bunch of tassels and plaits in gold, called an *aiguillette*, on his breast, greets us as cordially as if we were old friends. Notice the plume of rose-pink feathers on his helmet! He seems to know all about us without our saying a word, and as he leads the way across the short grass lawn to where our host and hostess stand ready to greet their guests, he tells me that His Excellency's brother, my old friend, is actually staying here now.

His Excellency is in English costume, with a star on his breast; he shakes hands kindly and calls out to summon his brother, who is not far off, and we pass on to make way for the stream of newcomers.

We could not be in better hands. Claude and I have not met for years, but that makes no difference; we greet each other as if we had parted only yesterday. He takes us over to the tables for tea and fruit. And when he hears this is your first visit he insists on your eating a mango, which is the most famous fruit in the country and just ripe. These are a specially good sort, not very

large, with pink "cheeks"; when you have stripped off the tough skin you find you get down to the big stone very soon, and there isn't much room for the fruity part between, still, what there is of it is excellent, and I see you furtively using your handkerchief to get rid of the stickiness afterwards!

Then we sit in basket-chairs, not too near the band, and Claude tells us "all about it." It is a much more brilliant scene than an ordinary garden-party at home, because in addition to the Europeans there are a number of high-class Burmese. Those little ladies near us standing in a group are most gorgeously attired in much-embroidered fussy little jackets with short wings, or lappets, sticking out behind, and their skirts, or tameins, are woven of the richest silk. As that one turns you see that beside the flowers in her hair she has two big pins with heads the size of small walnuts; those are real diamonds, not perhaps of the first water, but still of great value. The ladies' faces are smooth with yellow powder, and there is something very neat about their movements. A little way off is a Burman with a pink goungbaum and very rich silk skirt. The grass, kept green by plentiful early morning watering, is quite vivid in colour, and the clear cloudless sky is of a thrilling blue. Government House itself is a great palace, not beautiful, as it is built of yellow brick and pink terra-cotta, but imposing and dignified. Burman attendants wearing turbans and skirts, called *lyungis*, of purest mauve, and dainty white jackets, glide about with the refreshments. Burmans will seldom take service with anyone, generally they leave that to the

natives of India, but they make a distinction in the case of anyone so important as the Lieutenant-Governor.

"It's all rather overwhelming to me," says my friend. "You know I am a quiet man; a well-seasoned pipe and a den full of books are about my mark. I had no idea till I came out here that my brother was such a boss; it makes me want to run away."

"Tell us about some of the guests," I suggest. "Why does that man in the saffron-coloured robe have yards too much of it?"

"That's his best garment, called a *putso*, I understand. The more stuff the better, all bunched up; to show he can afford it, I suppose. Doesn't leave much room for the tailor to display his cut. He's a prominent Government man. I don't know him personally. Those two ladies in the fussy little jackets are royalties; they wear that sort of thing because they're of the old royal blood, though otherwise you only see it in the *pwés*, or plays. They are of the house of Theebaw, the king we dethroned in 1885 when we took over Upper Burma. He's living still in India, where he was sent into exile. I don't know what relation these two are to him, but when every king had at least thirty sons, there was no scarcity of relations! It was the custom for the son who mounted the throne in the old days to kill off all his brothers if he could lay hands on them, as a precaution in case of accidents. I take it some of the ladies were spared, which would make for the inequality of the sexes."

"I suppose your brother is like a king out here?"

"He is the representative of the King. You should see him

driving in state with outriders in scarlet liveries. People in England don't realise it. I always say how he will suffer when he retires and goes to England, where no one will shiko to him!"

At that moment he springs to his feet to shake hands with a dignified short Burman in beautiful native dress, to whom he introduces us. This is the Sawbwa, or chief, of Hsipaw, one of the native states. The Sawbwa has been educated in England and speaks perfectly correct English. He has a passion for travel and wants to go round the world, he says, but he has to get permission from the Viceroy before leaving the country, as the English Government doesn't like the native princes leaving their territory. So long as he stays at home and governs his people well he is not interfered with, but when he wants to go away he feels the hand of Britain over him!

After talking a little while he asks us if we have seen the football – he calls it football, but, as he explains, it is a native game called *chin-lon*, which is not quite the same.

We saunter across the lawn and find that a sort of exhibition game for the amusement of the guests is going on. The ball is made of wicker-work and is kept in the air by the knees or feet of the players very cleverly, in fact, so cleverly that it looks quite easy to do. The young men who are playing turn and twist and always catch it just right, sending it spinning upwards very neatly. This is a game played by every village lad, but if you tried it you'd find it uncommonly difficult.

A little farther on two men are boxing with their feet, raising

their legs in the high kick and sometimes smacking each other's faces with the soles; the way they balance is extraordinary, there are roars of laughter when one nearly goes over but just recovers himself. He is a bit of a clown, that fellow, and does it on purpose now and again, though really he is perfectly balanced. Then we walk on with Claude toward the house, where the marble steps are lined by chuprassies, like the one who brought us our invitation this morning; we pass into the hall, with its high white columns and airy spaciousness, and then we see masses of wood-carving like that at the choung, deeply undercut, and a huge pair of elephant tusks. Everywhere are tall vases with great orange and red flags, something of the same kind as those that grow by riversides, only much larger.

The passages are in the form of great arcades, and the ballroom behind is vast. It is indeed a palace fit for a king!

His Excellency is very gracious, and when he is free for a few minutes he talks to us and asks us to stay with him and his wife on our way back from up-country, an invitation we gladly accept. He also promises to make everything easy for us on our tour. As we go away, after having taken our leave, I hear you say thoughtfully

---

"I think I'd like to be a Lieutenant-Governor when I grow up!"

It is a good ambition, but you will have to be clever and very hard working to achieve it, and even then you will want a bit of luck. You must go into the Indian Civil Service first, and after all, of course, you may never get there, but with a bit of luck —

# CHAPTER XXIII

## THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE

"This butter is uneatable, Ramaswamy."

"I wash him, Master."

He takes away the dish of nasty, yellow, tinned butter and presently returns with it fresh and white, with much of the disagreeable taste and smell gone. Good! Now we know.

We are sitting on a broad verandah of dark wood with a roof overhead. It is so wide that it is just like a room, only the outer sides are open. We look out over a moat filled with water and covered with leaves and pink flowers. These are the celebrated lotus flowers, or lilies. Behind rise red walls, with here and there quaint little maroon-coloured towers, all pinnacles and angles, showing up like fretwork against the sky. The moat is crossed by bridges of dazzling white. It is nearly midday, the hottest and stillest time of all the day, and we are lunching in the Circuit House at Mandalay, the old capital of the kings of Burma.

Everyone knows Mandalay by name from Kipling's poem, even if they know nothing of the rest of Burma. We came up here from Rangoon by train, – it took a night, – and by special permission of His Excellency were allowed to stay in this house, which is usually reserved for Government officials, instead of going to the rest-house intended for visitors, and not nearly so



nice.

From where we sit we can look through into the wooden unpapered bedrooms behind, with the little string beds on which our own bedding lies in heaps. Ramaswamy has not had time to put it out yet, for he has been busy cooking our tiffin. In these houses the keeper, or *derwan*, will do everything for you if you like, and you pay him so much for his trouble, but if you prefer your own servant to do it you can make that arrangement and borrow the pots and pans. Ramaswamy has given us already buttered eggs, some cutlets which tasted goaty, with some excellent little vegetables called bringals, as well as a dish of mixed curry, and he has now put some fruit on the table, and is bringing in coffee. He cooks out there behind in the compound. I saw him just now bending over a handful of sticks. However he manages to get the things hot I don't know. These natives have marvellous ways.

We must rest a while this afternoon and have an early tea before starting out to see the palace which lies inside that brick wall.

The tea is decent, the toast smoky, and the milk very poor. Ramaswamy says that it is almost impossible to get milk; the Burmans don't drink it themselves, and he thinks we shall have to fall back upon that condensed stuff. However, there is excellent jam, and that is a good thing. Look round this bare wooden room and notice how little furniture one needs for perfect comfort. A couple of deck-chairs, a couple of small chairs, a table, a lamp,

and a waste-paper basket! What a lot of superfluous furniture one does accumulate in England!

What are you smiling at? The recollection of the bath? It's a very good way of bathing, I think. A wooden tub in the middle of a tiny room without anything else in it. You can splash as much as ever you like, and even if you spilt the whole bath it wouldn't matter much, because the water would simply run down through the cracks in the plank floor, and any one who knows anything here knows enough not to stand underneath a bathroom which is built out on wooden legs.

We'll start now if you're ready! Hullo! Did you ever see anything so impudent? A great crow on the tea-table! Frighten him away, he's after those chocolates wrapped in silver paper that you brought up from Rangoon. The cheek of it!

When we have passed over the white bridge and got inside the wall of the palace we see a wide space of green with a few houses scattered here and there, and in the middle a group of buildings, one of which has a very tall spire. Inside this wall at one time, the Burman time, was crammed the whole of Mandalay – six thousand houses, more or less. It *was* the town. The British cleared out all the houses, and the town is now outside in wide streets, – we saw it this morning as we drove up from the station, – and the palace is left here alone in its glory.

That tall, many-roofed spire is the King's house. Only the King was allowed to rival the poongyis in the number of his roofs, no other Burman might do such a thing. It is an empty distinction in

two senses, for, as you know, the roofs don't mean floors, they are hollow. There is only one floor, for, of course, the King could never risk the frightful indignity of having anyone's feet above his head. At the top is a htee, or umbrella, as there is on the pagodas.

The palace is not all one big building, but a number of buildings, or halls, each only one storey, grouped about with courtyards between. We wander in and out of them, treading on polished floors and seeing brilliant bits of colour framed in dark doorways. Some of the pillars glow a dull red, others are a wonderful gold; some of the doorways are set in frames of carved wood gilded all over. We see columns encrusted with little bits of many-coloured looking-glass, like those we saw in Rangoon. The halls are very dim in contrast with the brilliant light outside, and there is a kind of tawdriness in the decoration which makes one feel how different in nature these people must be from the ancient Egyptians who built so solidly. Here all is gay, but you feel it is gimcrack – it won't last. Look at that balustrade, gleaming deep green; examine it – do you see what it is? Nothing in the world but a row of green glass bottles turned upside down and embedded in cement! This place isn't old at all. It has not been built sixty years; before that the capital was elsewhere.

All at once Ramaswamy, who has been following noiselessly, pushes you aside with a cry of "Scorpion, Master." There, on the ground, difficult to see in this dim light, is a round black thing about as big as the palm of your hand, with a tail sticking out from it. It is the shape of a tadpole. In another minute you would

have trodden on him, and if he had got in above your shoe, well – it would have been unpleasant in any case, and might have meant death!

He lies quite still, not attempting to run away until Ramaswamy's shout brings one of the guardians, a tall man in a dark blue uniform and red sash. He rushes to find a big stone. We won't stop to see it. Poor beggar! Doubtless they'll "larn him to be a scorpion!"

When King Theebaw reigned here he thought himself invincible; the many-roofed spire was "the centre of the universe." He imagined he could treat as he liked not only his own subjects but that white-faced race who had had the audacity to settle down in southern Burma. He soon learnt his mistake.

Leaving the palace we go on to see a very curious thing not far off outside the walls, this is the Kutho-daw, the Royal Merit-House. We enter by an elaborate white gateway and find ourselves in a perfect forest of pagodas. They are planted in rows and are all exactly alike and not very large. They are glittering white, and each one has a slate slab inside. The Kutho-daw was built by Theebaw's uncle, who acquired much merit thereby, and he deserved it, for there are no less than seven hundred and twenty-nine pagodas. On the slate inside each is inscribed some part of the Buddhist Scriptures. It was a grand idea thus to preserve indelibly on stone the whole Burmese Bible. Here it is for all time. Peep inside one and you will see the funny-looking Burmese writing, which all runs on without being divided up into

words, and looks consequently so incomprehensible to us.

What? How you jump! What is it? Another beast? Yes, I see him, that is a tarantula crouching in the darkest corner and looking at us out of wicked little eyes that shine like diamond points. He is a monster spider, isn't he? All hairy too, and his body striped with yellow bands like a wasp's. He sits still, but he is very much alive and ready to jump at a minute's notice. They are venomous brutes. Not quite so bad as a scorpion, but still the bite from one of these fellows is a very unpleasant thing. We will leave him, he can't do much harm here.

Now we will drive round the town and see how the people live.

Here is a happy family seated on a wooden platform stretching out in front of their house. The dust around and over them and in the roadway is almost as bad as Egypt, but here there is nearly always a tree or shrub of some sort to bring in a flash of green. The huts too are built of wood and mats and are raised several feet from the ground; they do not look so hopelessly crooked as the Egyptian mud houses. In the space underneath huge black pigs, like great boars, wander, and there are black goats too, and skinny hens and pariah dogs. Do you see that mother-dog lying in the roadway, too lazy to move, with six yellow puppies sprawling over her? Poor brute, she is a mass of mange and so skinny that her ribs stick out! The people here are taught by their religion not to take life of any kind; some of the priests strain their water through a sieve lest they should inadvertently swallow an insect! So no one kills, even in mercy. All these miserable puppies are

allowed to grow up to a starved wretched existence, a misery to themselves and everyone else.

Look at those two elephants stalking down the road; they move majestically, and when they reach the pariah dog the driver, or *oozie*, seated on the first one's neck, pricks him with a point to make him look where he is going, so that he avoids the dog. You will see plenty of elephants here, for elephants are to Burma what camels are to Egypt, the regular beasts of burden. They carry the kit and camp paraphernalia for the men who go into the jungle sometimes for months. They move the logs and trunks of the timber which is cut in the forests in large quantities. You remember the dark wood of the Circuit House and the poongyi chong? That is all teak, the best known wood in the country, corresponding to our oak. There are forests of it, and large companies exist simply for getting it out. There are still herds of wild elephants in the little disturbed parts of Burma, and every now and again Government catches them in *keddahs* in great quantities. I wish we had the luck to go with a hunting-party.

The family which owns that hut is seated on the edge of the platform and are watching us with as much interest as we watch them. Two bright-eyed little girls in jackets play beside a smiling woman. You will notice here the girls and women have quite as good a time as the boys and men; no veiling of faces or hiding away for them. The Burman knows better, and he would get on badly without the active help and advice of his comrade and wife.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# ON A CARGO BOAT

Did you ever see anything like it in your life? I never did.

We are on a steamer coming down the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay, and it is our first evening on board. We are not the only passengers, there are also a widow lady and her daughter, a girl a few years older than you, but still in pigtailed, whose name is Joyce. We were all four sitting very comfortably after dinner on the deck, which is roofed in, making a fine open room like a verandah, when a few large, light-coloured moths appeared; then, as if by magic, the whole deck was suddenly alive with them. They banged against the glass of the lights, thumped into our faces, and whirled around exactly like a thick snowstorm with very large flakes.

"It's one of the plagues of Egypt," you yell.

Joyce screams, pulls her long plaits round her face to prevent the moths catching in them, and dives for her cabin. Everyone follows suit, and soon anxious voices can be heard asking, "How many got in with you?"

It is impossible to shut the port-hole, and in less time than I can tear off my clothes my tiny room is as bad as the deck.

Luckily there are mosquito-curtains, and glad of them we are, as we can hear the loathsome soft-bodied creatures blundering

about outside them.

Lo! in the morning they are all gone, and when I get on deck, and ask the captain, a stern soul from Aberdeen, where they have disappeared to, he points to the river. "Where would they be? Overboard, of course. Dead, every one of them. They live but a day."

Leaning over the vessel's side I see some of the gummy bodies, mere hollow shells now, transparent and fragile, sticking on to the black paint about the bows. The creatures are white ants who come out of holes in the ground at this time of year. Our lights attracted a new-born swarm. At least that must have been it, because we weren't plagued with them again in the same way, though the captain says that in the wet season it is impossible to sit on the deck at all in the evenings because of the multitude of winged things.

"But then you haven't got any hair," I hear Joyce's cheerful voice saying on the deck. You evidently reply something, for she rejoins at once, "Oh yes, it's in plaits, but they might stick in them! I've always had a creepy horror of crawly things sticking in my hair."

"Cut it off," you suggest brutally.

This is a cargo boat. We had much to see at Mandalay; we visited the Aracan Pagoda and Golden Temple, we went up to the hill-station, Maymyo, and on to the Gokteik Gorge, spanned by one of the highest trestle bridges in the world, and when we arrived back at Mandalay we found that the passenger boat



had just left, so we came on by this one, the *China*, which is really just as comfortable and not so crowded. She is fitted with bathrooms and comfortable cabins with little beds in them, and on the spacious upper deck are two immense mirrors so placed that all the sights on the shore are reflected in them. You can sit in a lounge-chair and watch them flash past like a continuous cinematograph.

The Irrawaddy flows right through Burma, cutting it in half, as the Nile does Egypt; and it is rather like the Nile, but, of course, not nearly so long, not so long even as the Ganges, though steamers can go up it for nine hundred miles, equal to the length of England and Scotland put together! The river is wide and shallow in places, sometimes as much as two miles across, and at these places great care has to be taken not to run on sandbanks; there is much poling and shouting out of soundings, and when we do stick, a boat rows out with an anchor and drops it, and after a while we ride up to the anchor and there we are!

There is far more vegetation to be seen on the banks than in Egypt, and the life in the villages is much more attractive. The houses are perfectly beautiful – at a distance. They are built of dark wood, and stand on posts, with wide verandahs and thatched roofs, are nearly always embowered in great trees, and have a luxuriant growth of plantains and trees around. The spires of the pagodas and the pinnacles and roofs of the choungs generally rise up somewhere in the picture, and in the evening, when the whole village comes down to the water, the scene is charming.

The cattle stand knee-deep and the people bathe and wash their clothes and drink heartily of the muddy stream, and then slip on dry garments, after which the women and girls stream up the steep banks, carrying red chatties of water on their heads. All are lively, full of play and chaff. Their life is a happy one, because perfectly simple and natural; no one need starve and no one wants to be rich.

All day the steamer floats along, generally winding slowly across and across the river wherever a little red flag stuck up on the banks tells that there are a few cases or barrels or packets to be taken down to the market. At one place it is *let-pet*, or pickled tea, though the plant from which the stuff is made is not really a tea-plant. Burmans love it, and no feast is complete without it, indeed a packet of *let-pet* is an invitation to something festive.

It is early afternoon and quite hot and still as we circle toward the shore where the red flag hangs drooping; people in gay clothes are dabbed about like little splashes of colour on the whity-yellow sand. Suddenly there is a splash, and from our bows, which are high up in the air, one of the Lascars, dressed in blue dungaree trousers, drops feet first into the water like a stone; while he is in the air another follows and another, until there are half a dozen of them in the water, and they go across to the shore, paddling with each hand alternately as a dog does with his paws. They are carrying a line ashore. They always jump off like this at every landing-place. They shake themselves like dogs as they land, and the sun soon dries their one and only garment. But it

takes a good while before the line is fixed up to the captain's liking!

Then the people swarm across the plank into the great barge, or flat, tied alongside of us, and a shouting sing-song begins as men and girls alike hurry up and down carrying on board sacks of monkey-nuts. They work hard and untiringly and always good-humouredly; the popular notion that the Burman is a lazy fellow is based on the fact that he won't work if he can help it, but when he has to he does it with goodwill. A funny little incident occurs. The captain, walking down his own gangway, is run into by a coolie who is heading up the plank with a sack on his shoulders; wrathfully the captain sends him and his sack flying, and they both land in deep water. That is nothing, however, for every Burman can swim, and no one bears any ill-feeling about it.

Crowds of little boys and girls are dancing and splashing about on the edge of the water with infinite glee. A mother comes down with her baby and goes into deep water with the tiny thing clinging to her; suddenly she lets it go, and swimming with one hand holds it up with the other while it kicks spasmodically like a little frog. The babies learn to swim before they can walk.

Joyce is seized with a brilliant idea. "Mother," she cries, "those toys we bought in the bazaar! Mayn't I give them to the children?"

Taking leave for granted she flies into her cabin and returns with two gaily painted wooden animals whose legs move on strings; there is a yellow tiger with a red mouth, and a purple monkey. Joyce stands as high as she can on the rail and makes

the tiger jump its legs up and down. A yell of delight from the children on the shore shows that she is understood. They plunge into the water like porpoises, and after a minute Joyce drops the tiger straight down. It is a good distance to swim, some fifty yards, perhaps, and the little black heads bob up and down frantically as the youngsters make desperate attempts to get through the water.

Good! Go it! Two little boys about equal size are well ahead of the others and rapidly nearing the prize. It is just a toss-up which gets it; they grab simultaneously, but their fingers close on empty water. The tiger has disappeared, sucked down by something into the depths! Has it been eaten by a fish?

No, there it is, having risen to the surface again some yards distant, grasped by a thin little arm. The owner of the arm emerges the next instant, shaking back her long black hair. It is a small girl, who actually dived under the boys and snatched the prize away! She deserves it, and holding it on high lies on her back and kicks her way back to land with her legs. She is a magnificent swimmer. They all follow her and crowd around her on the shore while she dangles the treasure in the sun, but no one attempts to take it from her.

At the moment everyone has forgotten that there may be more forthcoming, and when Joyce holds up the purple monkey only one tiny podgy fellow sees it, and slipping silently into the water exerts himself tremendously to get well out before the others discover him. He swims slowly, for he is very small, and when he

is half-way across the others are after him like a pack of hounds; but he gets the monkey, and turns his bright eager face up to us radiant with delight. One of the elder boys carries his treasure back for him, and by the way the little fellow yields it up readily it is quite evident that he is not in the least afraid of its being taken from him. His faith is justified, for he gets it back directly he lands, and then the children dance round the two lucky ones, singing and making such a noise that a troop of anxious parents hurry down to find out what is the matter. Those toys will be treasures for many a long day.

The steamer screeches and we are off once more. Soon we see a great sugar-loaf hill in the distance, also a perfect forest of pagodas of all shapes and sizes along the river bank. This is Pagahn, a celebrated place, now deserted and melancholy. Imagine a strip of ground eight miles long and two broad, covered by hundreds of pagodas; it is said there are nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, but no one could count them, for half of them are mere heaps of stones, so possibly there may be one more to make a round number! Pagahn was once a capital city, and the then Burman king pulled down some of the pagodas to build up the defences of his walls when he heard that a Chinese king was coming to attack him; but of course he got the worst of it after such an impious act, as anyone would guess, and since then the place has been deserted. Some of the largest pagodas have been restored, which is rather a wonder in Burma as restoration does not make for "merit." You can see the snow-

white outlines rising gracefully in the middle of the rough line of uneven buildings. Unluckily, instead of stopping here we go across the river and anchor at Yenangyaung, where there is a very strong smell of something. "I know," Joyce declares, wrinkling up her smooth little nose. "It's lamp oil."

She is right, it is petroleum; there are here wells of it, from which it bursts up with great force sometimes, like a geyser.

If we had been on a tourist steamer we should have visited Pagahn, but then we should have missed seeing much human life.

An evening later the captain comes up to say that there is a pwé, or play, going on in the village near which we have anchored for the night, and wouldn't we like to go to see it? This is a grand chance, because Burmese pwés are very funny things indeed. The people have them at every chance, – births, weddings, deaths, and festivals, none are ever complete without a play!

We dine early, and, accompanied by the captain, set out afterwards, all four of us, for the village. The moon is getting up but is not bright yet, and we can see the trees standing up against a deep blue night sky, with the big bright stars winking at us through the palm fronds. The village street is deserted, and long before we reach the end of it where the pwé is going on we hear an exciting clash of cymbals and bang of drums which sets you and Joyce dancing.

At last, right in the roadway, between the thatched houses, we see a big crowd, and coming up to it find every man, woman, child, and baby belonging to the village seated on the ground or

lying in front of a small platform. The platform is simply a few loose boards standing on some boxes, and when anyone walks across it the boards jump up and down. In front are the footlights, a row of earthenware bowls filled with oil, with a lighted wick floating in each one.

The Burman who is giving the pwé and has sent us the message about it comes forward and leads us to the front courteously. He is a portly man with a dress of rich silk so stiff it would stand by itself, and a large fur cape, like those worn by coachmen in England, over his shoulders, for the evenings are sharp. In following him through the crowd we find great difficulty in avoiding stepping on arms and legs which seem to be strewn haphazard on the bare earth, the owners being partly covered up with mats or rugs. Most of the men are squatting gravely with bath-towels over their shoulders – they make convenient wraps. Men and women alike are smoking either huge green cheroots or small brown ones. Our seats are right in front of the stage and consist of a row of soap-boxes. Joyce's mother clutches me in horror. "I can't sit down there," she says with a gasp; "I shall fall over." The captain misunderstands her and gallantly tries one himself, saying, "It holds me, Madam." As he is at least sixteen stone in weight this sends Joyce off into fits of irrepressible giggles, luckily drowned by the band, which is making an ear-splitting noise – "La-la-la, la-la-la!" One man bangs an instrument like those called harmonicons, with slats of metal set across it all the way up. Another is seated inside

a tub, the rim of which is entirely composed of small drums; another cracks bamboo clappers together in an agonising way, while clarionets do their best, and a pipe fills in all the intervals it can find.

A girl with a very coquettish gold-embroidered jacket, which stands out behind like two pert wings in the same way as those worn by the princesses at the garden-party, is rouging her face close to us; she gets it to her liking by leaning over the footlights and gazing in a little hand-mirror, then she takes up an enormous cigar which lies smoking beside her and puffs away contentedly till her turn comes.

Two clowns are taking their part; we can't understand a word they say, but their humorous faces and comic gestures are irresistibly funny. Suddenly Golden-Jacket puts down her cigar, springs to her feet, and gets across the shaking boards with marvellous serpentine movements in a skirt tighter even than a modern one, literally a tube wound around her legs. Then, waving her long thin hands and arms so that ripples seem to run up and down them, she sings in a thin shrill voice a long song, while one of the clowns breaks in with "Yes, yes" and "Come on," meant for us and greatly appreciated by the audience. As the song wends toward its end, Golden-Jacket looks behind her more than once, and at last stops and says something out loud.

"She's telling the villain to hurry up or she won't wait for him," explains the captain, who understands Burmese. "She is in a forest. You see the branch of a tree stuck between the boards



there? That's the forest. She went to meet her lover, the prince, for she is a princess, of course, but the villain has done his job, and now he's going to catch her."

The princess trills out some more lines, and the villain, who has apparently been having great difficulties with his costume at the back of the stage, in full view of the audience, steps heavily forward, making the boards bounce right up. When she sees him she shrieks and faints in his arms. He makes a long speech holding her. The clowns appear again. The heroine shakes herself free, and with great self-possession squats down once more on the edge of the stage and resumes her cigar until her turn comes again. The branch of the tree is pulled up, and in its place is put a box with a piece of pink muslin over it, while three men in long robes come in and sit down, one on the box and the other two on the boards beside him, and they all talk interminably. The band, which has only stopped impatiently while the actual speaking was going on, clashes in wildly at every possible interval and now drowns the voices altogether for a few minutes, just to remind us it is there. The men on the stage continue repeating their parts, whether it plays or not, and apparently they are so long winded that the plot does not suffer at all from the sentences which are lost in the noise.

"That's her father, the king," explains the captain. "He is taking counsel from his ministers how to recover his daughter and punish the villain. She's a boy, of course – they all are."

We can hardly believe it! The slender form, the graceful

movements, the long thin fingers, the wonderful management of that terrible skirt, the coquettish movements! You can hardly imagine any British boy doing it, can you?

We are beginning to have about enough of it after a couple of hours, though the Burmans themselves comfortably settle down all night, and there are pwés that go on for days. What with the clashing music, the thick smoke in the air, the strange language, and a kind of dreaminess over everything, it is too much for Joyce, and she suddenly flops her head down on my shoulder in a profound slumber, hugely to your delight.

Her mother's cry of "Joyce!" brings her to herself with a crimson face, and I see you get a surreptitious kick for giggling, which you richly deserve!

We make a move, thank the Burmese entertainer, explain we have to be off early in the morning, and try to get out without setting our feet on anyone's head!

"Why, it has been snowing!" you cry in amazement as we get clear. It does look like it. The moon is full and white, high in the heavens, and shows up the dust which lies thickly over the village in a mantle of white.

I think Joyce is asleep most of the way back. "I feel as if I were drugged," she says as we haul her up the gangway.

Next day at sunrise we are off.

After golden hours of placid slipping down the shining waterway we pull up at about five for the night, and having finished tea we four sally forth for a walk, little dreaming what

is going to happen.

Joyce's mother is a most attractive woman. She is well read, very keenly alive, and has travelled a great deal. She and I have much in common, and, I must say, as I help her across the paddy fields I forget all about you two.

It is not until we turn to go home that I miss you.

"They can't be far," I say reassuringly, and give a loud cooe, but there is no response.

"They can't possibly come to harm here," I say. "There is nothing to hurt them," and I shout again.

"Perhaps they have circled round and gone back to the ship another way," Joyce's mother suggests, and we turn. Darkness falls very quickly here, and it is dark before we get on board, but in answer to our anxious questions we find no one has seen anything of you.

Joyce's mother is very brave and sensible, but I can see that her heart is torn with anxiety. I try to comfort her by telling her that you are as good as a man, and have been brought up to look after yourself, but it makes little difference. She agrees, however, to remain on the steamer while the captain and I and a couple of Lascars with lanterns go forth again.

What a night we have of it! We wander far and wide, calling and waving the lights with no result, and when we come back in the grey dawn, with troubled hearts, there is still no news.

"Someone has taken them in," says the captain. "They're queer fellows, these Burmans; they daren't go out at nights for fear of

spooks. You'll see they'll bring them safely back in the morning."

And he is right, for, as the sky flashes rosy red, we see you afar off coming across the fields. A sight you are, indeed, as you come nearer, with your torn clothes and scratched faces! But Joyce's mother gives a cry of joy and precipitates herself across the flat and along the gangway, hatless, and clasps her daughter in her arms as if she would never let her go again. You and I are not so emotional, but I'm jolly glad to see you again!

You shall tell your story in your own words. I wrote it down exactly as you told it to me, so that your people might have it.

# CHAPTER XXV

## JIM'S STORY

Joyce's a brick. She can do most things boys can, and we soon began racing each other along those little raised bits of earth between the beds in the paddy fields. I splashed right in once or twice and we shrieked with laughter. By and by we found ourselves through that and out on a flat place covered with thorns. They weren't very high mostly, and we didn't feel them through our shoes, but now and again one caught us on the ankles and then didn't we hop! By the time we had reached the road I suppose we had lost sight of you altogether. I didn't think about it. I just had a feeling we must scramble on in that fizzing red sunset light, and then when we got tired turn plump round and go straight back to the ship the same way. I didn't really think about it, though.

The road? Yes, it was a sort of a road, at least it was a clear space marked all over with deep ruts and lined by little trees, and it ran ever so far both ways, as Euclid says a line does. The first thing we saw were two huge elephants, striding along with a wooden thing on the neck of one, banging and rattling as his head went up and down. A man was sitting on his neck and he took no notice of us at all, but they – the elephants, I mean – just loped along in that swinging way they do; I think it must make anyone sea-sick to be on their backs. We stared at them till they got far

away. Then I discovered that the little trees were mimosa, which shrivel up when you touch them. They had dropped seeds on the ground, I suppose, for under them were tiny little mimosas, not trees but scrub stuff. Joyce had never seen any, and when I rubbed my hand across them and she saw them wither up, she cried out, "What a shame! Dear little things, don't be afraid of me!" and plumped herself down beside them to cuddle them, but they withered more than ever. How we laughed! The ones I had withered first were just beginning to come right again, and I was going to make them shut up once more, and she had caught my hand to stop me, when we heard a noise and looked up, and there was a great buffalo coming right at us with his nose stuck up straight in the air as if he smelt something nasty. You never saw anything so comic! Joyce cried out, "Oh, what a darling!" But into my head, quick as lightning, came what you told me about buffaloes, who hate Europeans savagely, though a Burmese child of four can drive them with a twig. I grabbed Joyce's hand and pulled her up, and then I saw he was coming for us and no mistake, with his nose up in that absurd fashion, and his great horns sticking out. We made a bolt for the nearest tree just as the buffalo plunged across the place we had been, like a runaway motor-car. Then he stopped and looked funny. All at once he caught sight of my topee, which had fallen off and rolled away a bit, and up went his nose again, and when he reached it down went his head and into it like a battering-ram; and didn't he make the clods fly as he spiked his horns into it. The trees were not very

high, and had smooth stems so far up, and then a lot of branches. If we could get up there we'd be all right.

"Get up the tree, Joyce," I whispered. "I'll boost you."

So I did, shoving her up for all I was worth, and she hung on as high as she could reach, and there she stuck; even the best girls aren't quite like boys.

"Swarm up it," I urged.

"I can't," she said in an agonised voice, and I saw it was true, her petticoats were to blame, of course; any boy would have been up before you could say "knife."

Down she came again with a thud, and old Mr. Buffalo heard it and made for us like a fiend. We ran for the next tree and dodged him round it; it was a bit too exciting! He made rushes at us dead straight, and we tried always to keep the trunk of the tree between us and him as if it were the leader in Fox and Geese. When he came past like a bolt we ran the other side, but once or twice he nearly spiked us, and if he had knocked one of us down, or we had stumbled, it would have been all up with us. It was exhausting too. I was fearfully out of breath myself; being on a steamer a fellow can't keep in training, and as for Joyce, she was panting so that she couldn't speak.

Then I noticed that across the road was a jungly thicket; it was not open ground, as it was on the side we had come from, and I thought if we could reach that we might perhaps lose the gentleman, or he would lose us.

So I explained to Joyce in gasps that the next time he charged

we must run behind his back and bolt across the road; she nodded and clutched my hand tighter than ever.

So we did it and were half-way over the road – it was very wide – before he found it out.

All the time, I must tell you, he had been making a funny little noise, a bit between a grunt and squeak, quite ridiculous for a huge black hairy beast like him; if I had had any breath to waste it would have made me laugh.

Now we heard that funny little noise – Uweekuweekuweek – just like that, coming over the road; we hadn't time to look. Never did any road I ever crossed seem so long; it was like a bad dream. We slipped and stumbled and didn't seem to make any headway, and every moment I expected to feel that great head in the flat of my back sending me sprawling ready to be spiked. At last we reached the line of bushes, and I gave Joyce a great pull with all my strength to pitch her to one side, for he was close on us then, and she went headlong and fell full length into the bushes, and I dropped on the top of her just as his majesty thundered past.

We lay there quiet as mice, though it was awfully uncomfortable; I was squashing Joyce to bits, and great thorns seemed running into me all over. Then a dreadful thought occurred to me – there were probably snakes there! Which was worst, snakes or the buffalo? And I asked cautiously —

"Have you been stung, Joyce?" and she answered so gravely, "Not yet," that I exploded, and, would you believe it, that old animal that had been rootling about in the bushes to find us,



heard it and came at us again. We scrambled up and ran, tripping and tearing and crashing on into that wood, and I think he found some difficulty in following us, for after a while we couldn't hear him any more.

We stopped and listened with all our ears, but it seemed as if we were safe, for he wasn't a crafty animal and didn't know enough to come along quietly and surprise us. It was very dark there in that jungle, and for the first time I thought of you and how anxious you and Joyce's mother would be. So I said, "Come along home now," and pulled hold of Joyce. But she resisted and said, "It's not that way, silly; it's just the opposite."

I was positive and so was she.

I tried to think of all the things one tells by: the stars, but there weren't any, and I couldn't have done much with them if there had been; the moss on the north side of the trees, but there didn't seem to be any. I guess it's different in Burma. However, there was just a yellowish glow still, and I knew that must be in the west, and as the river runs north and south, and we were on the left bank, I guessed the way I wanted to go was about right. When I had proved it to Joyce she gave in and said she had said it all the time, just as women always do!

So we walked and walked, but we never came to that old road again. Once I thought I'd found it, but it was only some open, flat, thorny ground. It was very dark then, the dark comes on so fast here. Suddenly we both began to run as hard as we could, hand in hand; I don't know why, something set us off and

I felt just as if I must, and I suppose Joyce did too, and then – crash! – before we knew where we were – smash! – we were flying, slipping, tobogganing down through some bushes, with our feet shooting out under us, and at last we reached the bottom. It was a steep gully, a kind of nullah. When we did get down we arrived separately, for we had had to let go to save ourselves. I was awfully sore, I know, and I wondered what had happened to her, being a girl and so much softer. But she didn't seem to mind much, for when I sang out, she answered quite cheerfully, "I'm sitting in the middle of a bramble bush like a bumble-bee. Do they sit in bushes, though? I think I'm getting a little mixed!"

A girl like that is a jolly good pal, I can tell you!

It was a snaky place and that is what I was afraid of. We trod carefully along the bottom and made noises to scare them off. Then I had a happy thought; I had a box of matches with me, and I kept on striking them till we found a handful of dry twigs which burnt up finely. It was so still there that they blazed straight and steady, and I used them as a torch and flourished them about low down as we walked.

I don't know if we really did see any snakes. Joyce is quite positive she counted fourteen, sliding away in front of the light at different times; but then she sees things much quicker than I do.

It took us a long time to get out of that nullah, and we tried all sorts of different ways, but the sides were too steep. Often we had to stop to get more twigs, and once, just as I had got a handful, Joyce said, "Why, there are little plums growing on them." We

ate quite a lot, and they were refreshing and bitter, but it didn't mean much, for they were all skin and stone.

The nullah sloped up at the end, and after a good deal of hard work I hauled her up. It was jolly cold, I can tell you, and when we saw a light moving about ahead we made a bee-line for it. Joyce thought it was a will-o'-the-wisp; she had never seen one, but she had read of them, and she said they moved up and down just like that. We had to plunge through a lot of very marshy ground before we got to it, and sometimes we lost sight of it altogether; but it came again, and then it went out for good. We arrived at a high thorny hedge and I shouted, and then there was such a noise you would have thought the world was coming to an end, – dogs barking, cocks crowing, people chattering, and at last a man with a lantern crept out from the hedge – it must have been his light we had seen – and he was followed by heaps of others, all Burmans, and they waved the light about; and when they saw who we were, and that we were alone, they were very kind and took us in through an opening in the hedge, and kicked the dogs away. We couldn't see much inside, for the moon wasn't up then, but they led us to a house, and made us go up a ladder on to a verandah and into a nice wooden room, where there was a civilised oil lamp on a bracket, and several women and children sitting and lying about on mats on the floor.

Joyce looked at me and I at her and we both knew what sights we were, all scratched and torn and muddy. Her dress had been white when we started, but you could hardly tell that now. I don't

know how she felt, but I was glad to drop down on to a mat they gave us. We tried to explain who we were, but no one understood any English. Then they brought us some water from a great jar in the corner; they handed it to us in half a coco-nut, but it smelt so that we couldn't touch it, though we were awfully thirsty. So one of the men who had followed us in took up a round green thing with a smooth shell outside (I never knew coco-nuts looked like that before), and with his great knife made four cuts across the top in a neat square, and took out the piece as if it were a lid, and offered us the nut, making signs we were to drink it. Joyce tried first and nodded with pleasure. "It's good," she said, and it was! A sort of sickly sweet stuff came out like sugary water, and when you drank a lot of it it made you feel very full inside suddenly. When I read about coco-nut milk in *Swiss Family Robinson* I always thought it was really like milk.

Then they opened a great tubful of cooked rice and put some on two plates and gave it to us, and they put beside us two little bowls filled with smashed-up sardines, at least I thought it was that, but oh – You would have known it was there a mile off! I would have stood it, because I didn't want to hurt their feelings, as they meant to be polite, but Joyce stuffed her skirt into her mouth and held her nose, and they all laughed and took it away quite easily. There were no forks or spoons, but we were very hungry, so we just fell to with our fingers on the rice and it wasn't at all bad, I can tell you. When we had done they gave us some very good bananas – I could have done with more of them – and

then they tried us with a lump of stuff that was simply a bit of wood; it came from the Jack-fruit tree. I saw one growing right out of the trunk on a little stalk by itself next day, but how anyone ever eats it I can't imagine.

When we had finished they poured water over our fingers to clean them, a very unsatisfactory sort of wash it was, and the water ran away between the boards, quite convenient that!

When we were satisfied we began to take more notice of what the house was like. The walls were made of very coarse mats, and there were no tables or chairs. There were a number of people; the father of the house, who had brought us in, had a kind shrewd face, so that you couldn't help liking him, and the mother was a very thin, plain, little old woman, with twinkling eyes. Joyce thought first she was the cook, for she had no jewellery on at all and no fine clothes, while the two girls, the daughters, were quite smart. They were all ready to laugh and smile, but the two girls were the most friendly; they sat down by Joyce and fingered her skirt and examined her very dilapidated shoes. "I wish they wouldn't, Jim," she said, trying to pull them up under her very short skirt, which was no use at all. At last she took them off because they were so wet, and one of the girls put her little brown toes into them, and then they all shrieked with laughter again. You couldn't help laughing too, they were so jolly nice.

I put my finger on Joyce and said "Joyce," then on me and said "Jim," and then pointed at the two girls; they understood at once and said Mah Kway Yoh (Miss Dog's Bone) and Mee Meht

(Miss Affection). Then they pointed to a young man at the back and said Moungh Poh Sin (Mr. Grandfather Elephant).

I tried to make them understand we wanted to get back to the ship, but nothing would do it. "Draw it," suggested Joyce. She had a wee gold pencil on her gold bangle, but we had no paper and there was none there – there wasn't anything, in fact, except a box. "On your cuff," Joyce suggested, but I hadn't any cuffs, only a soft shirt.

"On the floor," she said then.

I tried, but of course the lead broke. They all gathered round, much interested, pushing their shiny black heads close together. It's funny that they all have just the same sort of hair, isn't it? They followed everything I did with the deepest interest, and then went into fits of laughter, and so did we.

Just then a boy came in, not much older than me. He had on very few clothes, and his legs looked as if they were stained dark blue. When he came near to me and saw me looking at them with very much interest he showed them to us. They were tattooed all over like a pair of breeches, and the pictures on them were very well done; there were tigers and a kind of dragon, like those we saw at the pagoda steps, and many other animals, and each one was in a kind of scrollwork which made a little frame. He spoke a few words of English and pointed at the two men and said, "Them too," then, "All Burmans." It is odd they should go through all that pain; what's the use of it?

I tried to explain to him about the ship. I called it "ship,"

"steamer," "vessel," "craft," and everything else I could think of, but he shook his head. At last Joyce suggested "big boat," and then he understood, and got quite excited and told the others. Partly by gestures he made us understand that we were a very long way off, and that no one could take us back that night, but that we could go early in the morning. I wanted to know why not now, but he waved his arms and said, "Nats, beloos," and looked quickly over his shoulder.

"Nats are spirits," said Joyce. "I know all about it. The Burmese are frightened of them, and put little bits of rag at the top of the posts in the houses for them to live in, so that they won't come inside. Mother read that to me out of a book."

We looked for the little rags, but couldn't see them, though I expect they were there. Joyce knows a lot for a girl.

Well, we couldn't go home by ourselves, so presently we lay down on our mats and went fast asleep, and I suppose everyone else did too. Anyway, it was morning when I woke. Perfectly glorious it was! I shall never forget that morning. Joyce was out on the verandah already, and I went and stood beside her. The moon was there still, but every moment growing paler and paler. The air was full of that burnt-wood smell which is clean and rather nice. The sun seemed simply to rush up, and in five minutes from a world of black shadows and no colours it turned to a world of green and blue and yellow. The houses were all like ours, built on legs with thatched roofs, and there were great shady mango trees and plantains growing beside them. The dogs were everywhere,

and the people were squatting in the sun to warm their backs. We ate more rice and drank more coco-nut milk, and then we shook hands all round and thanked the people, and went away with the boy to guide us. His name was MOUNG OHN (Mr. Coco-Nut) he told us. We made him write down his own and his sisters' names on a piece of paper in Burmese on the ship afterwards, so that we could always keep them.

It was quite a long way, as he had said, but it was so beautiful we wanted to dance and jump all the time. MOUNG OHN scolded off the beastly pariah dogs and led us out of the hole in the great stockade and through a grove of palms. He pointed to two different sorts, one was the usual kind, feathery, and coco-nuts grew on that. He pointed to himself and grinned, but we didn't understand till afterwards that his name was "Coco-Nut." The other sort of palm had leaves like the great fans people sometimes have in drawing-rooms, at least JOYCE said they were. A man was walking down the long, straight stem of one, and I could see, as MOUNG OHN had said, that his legs were tattooed too. He just walked down. He had a band round his waist and round the tree, so he leaned against it and pressed the soles of his feet against the tree. I longed to try, but JOYCE was wanting to get back to her mother. When the man came down he had a little iron pot filled with juice, and he offered it to me to drink, but when I looked in and saw dead flies and insects by the dozen I declined politely. He had hung up other little pots on the tree near the stalks of the great leaves in which he had cut gashes, so the juice dripped out



into them. I found out this makes a strong drink called toddy.

We passed over rice fields, where many of the people were at work already, and then, after going a good distance, we got on to the road, but it was not the same part where we were the day before. I'm beginning now not to be quite so sure that my direction was right after all, but don't say so before Joyce.

Just then we heard a most awful noise like a hundred demons groaning and shrieking together.

"Nats!" exclaimed Joyce, standing stockstill. Moug Ohn laughed and shook his head. Then there came into sight a slow lumbering bullock-cart with the wheels screaming enough to give you toothache. Why on earth don't they grease them?

"Perhaps they prefer them like that," said Joyce, and I expect she is right.

It wasn't long before we reached the steamer, and then what a scene! When I saw how Joyce was smothered I was glad men don't kiss. You just shook hands with me and told me I was an object to scare crows with!

When we offered Moug Ohn some money for his trouble he refused to take it, and went away saying good-bye so gracefully, bowing and touching his forehead with his hand.

# CHAPTER XXVI

## THROUGH EASTERN STRAITS AND ISLANDS

In every long journey there comes a time when one feels a little dreary. So many new things have been seen that the mind and eye are tired. Then maybe there is just a touch of home-sickness mingled with it, and when one gets to a part less beautiful than what has gone before all at once there is a longing to turn and fly back to all that we are accustomed to. It seems to me that you and I are suffering from that now. We have left Burma behind, and for two days have ploughed down the Gulf of Martaban toward Penang in the Straits Settlements. We did not want to make friends with anyone on board, and were just a trifle grumpy even toward each other. We felt the parting from Joyce and her mother, who had made Burma so enjoyable, and we weren't ready to begin making new friends all at once.

Burma forms the western part of a great peninsula, and stretching out southward from it is a long arm, the shape of an Indian club, narrower in the neck and broadening out, to run up finally to a point. Alongside of the broadest part is the great island of Sumatra, belonging to the Dutch, who are our principal rivals in this region of the world.

"The captain's compliments, and we're going to set off some

rockets to scare the sea-birds," says one of the officers, suddenly appearing beside us. "We're passing close by that little island there – Pulo Pera."

Now there is something to see we wake up at once. Sure enough there it is ahead, a little island rising like a cliff out of the water. It is evidently deep close in, for we go quite near to it. Just as we are abreast off goes rocket after rocket, and in a moment the scene is transformed as if by magic. A dense mass of shrieking, screaming birds springs to life. The moment before the sun was shining in a clear sky, now in an instant it is obscured as by a thick cloud. You never saw anything like it! The birds on the Bass Rock are fairly thick, but here – day is turned to night and the commotion and uproar are wildly exciting, like the clash of legions in the sky.

Long after we are past we can see them thinning down gradually as some keep dropping back on to their island home, while the more restless, nervous spirits still circle and swoop in loops and curves.

A marvellous sight!

Penang itself is an island, and as we swing round to the capital town, Georgetown, on the inner or land side, we see an astonishing mass of green, with a great hill clothed almost to the summit rising behind the town. We can go up there to-morrow if you like, as we have a day to spend here owing to a change of steamers.

As we come to anchor in the bay a perfect swarm of small

boats, called sampans, dance round the ship, and the owners offer their wares with astonishing noise. Looking down you can see the yellow faces of the men who have narrow eyes and pigtailed coiled round their heads under enormous hats. It looks as if we had tumbled into China by mistake, for these are nearly all Chinamen, and yet the inhabitants of this country are Malays. The Malay, however, is like the Burman in that he does not care to exert himself if he can help it, so he lets the Chink, as the Chinamen are familiarly called, do all the business. The rich earth yields a hundredfold, and the Malay has only to scratch a very little of it very gently, and plant or sow a small quantity of something, and he is provided for for a year! The Chinaman is an industrious soul and an uncommonly good market-gardener, so he grows vegetables for sale and makes a good thing out of it; half these boats are full of vegetables grown by the very men who are selling them.

Soon we are in a sampan, being rapidly rowed shore-wards. The man works the boat standing up and faces the way he is going; he does it very easily, with the ends of his long oars crossed over and worked almost entirely by wrist play. We are right under a high, old-fashioned-looking trading ship now; do you see that great eye painted on the bows? There is another on the other side. That shows it is a Chinese ship; the men have a superstition that the ship cannot see without these eyes. They say, "No got eye, no can see; no can see, no can savee."

Great rocks stick out from the foliage on the hillside, and

nearer is the town, with its pretty thatched houses and palatial mansions and avenues of greenery. It is all slightly different from the countries we have seen already, and yet it is difficult to say quite where the difference lies. Here is our old friend the rickshaw man, only he is a Chinaman, of course, and some of these rickshaws are two-seated, so we can both get into one; the man who pulls starts off gently as if it were no trouble. He wears nothing above the waist, and we can see the well-developed muscles moving under his sun-browned skin. On the road we meet many Chinese women dressed in trousers; you must have seen some in Hyde Park, I think, for people often bring them over to England as nurses for their children, they are so clean and reliable. They all wear trousers like that, just plain, straight down, shapeless trousers, with a tunic falling over them; it is a neat and effective dress.

Whew! It's hot! I don't feel inclined to move a limb; this steamy heat is so much more trying than the heat we had in the dry zone of Burma, where you and Joyce got lost; there the nights were always cool, almost sharp sometimes. That building you are pointing at, with the dragons over the doorway, is a Chinese temple, and I don't suppose they would mind our going in at all. It looks nice and cool, anyway. We stop the rickshaw man and pass through several courtyards enclosed by high walls. In one is an open upper storey like a first-floor room with a wall knocked out; this is a stage. You may well ask how anyone in the courtyard can see the play – they can't! Only the favoured few who sit in

the galleries get a good view!

In all the courts a few Chinamen lounge about on the steps; they are probably half-stupid with opium, for they are not naturally lazy. Passing on to the inner shrine we see a much-decorated screen, behind which an image is hidden, but we are not allowed to pull it aside. The room in which it stands is crowded with hideous figures, squat devils, grinning dragons, and other disagreeable forms. Before them are empty tin biscuit-boxes full of sand, in which are stuck messy little tapers. There is a funny smell of incense mixed with tallow in the air. It is a creepy, uncomfortable place, and the Chinese religion is not one that would attract a stranger; I expect you would have to be brought up in it to understand it!

Unfortunately next day our expedition to the mountain is spoilt by torrents of rain which stream down unceasingly, and time hangs heavy on our hands.

"It always rains here, all the year round, more or less," says a friendly Englishman in the hotel. "If you like I'll take you to see a well-to-do Chinaman who is a friend of mine. The Chinamen are all rich here, lots of them keep motors." We gladly accept and go off under borrowed umbrellas to the outskirts of the town. The house stands by itself in a clump of trees and is very imposing with its great white marble pillars; as we get near we see huge gold letters in weird characters all across the front. Then before we have time to notice any more we are in the hall looking at a great bowl of gold-fish, and in another minute our host is bowing

before us. He is wearing a very magnificent embroidered coat of red silk with great wing-like sleeves; the embroidery is a marvel, dragons in blue and gold, and fishes of rainbow hues disport themselves all over it. Under it is a short black satin petticoat, rather like a kilt, and black boots with thick white felt soles. The gentleman is tall and well made, a fine figure of a man, and on his head is a little round black cap, from which escapes his pigtail. He stands bowing before us and shaking hands with himself, which, as a method of greeting, is perhaps better than our own way. He takes us into a dark gloomy room full of cabinets of black lacquer richly decorated with gold and mother-of-pearl. There are sombre carved wood chairs set back against the wall. It is all very costly, but to us it seems uncomfortable and funereal. The chief things that attract us are rows of little red pieces of paper of odd lengths hanging over strings from the ceiling, as if they were drying after a washing-day. The Englishman explains that the Chinaman is very proud of these, for they are all New Year's greetings from his friends, and the number of them shows what a popular man he must be. As the Chinese New Year's Day is on April the first, and that was only a week ago, these are all new; but if we had arrived at any time of the year we should have seen them just the same, for they are left hanging all the year round till the next lot arrives.

On the whole we are not sorry to leave Penang; we have felt limp all the time, worse even than we did in the Red Sea. The steamer we board this time is the *Khyber* of the P. & O.

Company. She belongs to the Intermediate Line, which comes right out to Japan from England, taking about six weeks on the way. For anyone who wants change and rest and no worry that's a fine voyage, as the boats stop at many places. We shall go on with her to Japan. As we are starting on the steamer we hear various cracks and snaps from the boats near, where crackers are being exploded. The captain happens to pass on the way to the bridge and smiles as he hears them. "They're not firing salvos in our honour," he says; "they think the ship is full of devils, and in case a few have escaped and might land in their blameless boats, they're frightening them back again before it is too late." It makes a great difference to have a captain who takes an interest in his passengers and bothers to tell them incidents as they happen, though to him they may be dull as ditch water, as he has been through them all dozens of times already. The next time we meet the captain it is growing dusk, and he points ahead to what looks like a black rock looming up sheer from the sea. "Curious thing that," he says meditatively; "it's an island, Pulo Jarrak, – islands are all Pulo here, – and owing to the quantity of rain which falls here the vegetation grows so thickly it makes the island stand right out; even on a dark night you can see it ten to twenty miles off. It looks quite black."

We have only one stop on the way to Singapore, exactly midway between it and Penang, at Port Swettenham.

As we pass southward the Straits narrow and we can see the hills of Sumatra on one side, and sometimes funny little villages



built on piles out over the water on the other. Pretty good sport to be able to drop a fishing-line out of one's front door, isn't it?

When the land gets very close on both sides we swing round suddenly, and behold! we are at Singapore, which, like Penang, is an island, and stands at the extreme south point of the long peninsula. It guards this useful passage where all the traffic between China and Japan on the one side comes to India on the other, just as Aden guards the Red Sea and Gibraltar the Mediterranean. Great Britain manages somehow to pick up all the lucky bits, and it is not by design either, it just happens that way. I can tell how this one happened; it was because there chanced to be a Man out here – a Man with a capital letter!

We go ashore and get into rickshaws and start for the town, which is a long three miles off. We shan't have time to do more than look round. The road runs by the docks at Singapore, which are enormous and extend all along the coast up to the town. On the way we pass men of all nations. There are natives of India, companies of Sikhs, Madrasses like Ramaswamy, – who is well on his way back to his master now, – Cingalese, Tamils with frizzy heads, little Japanese ladies in rickshaws, plenty of Chinese, and many Malays. The Malays are yellow rather than brown; they have just that slight narrowing of the eyes which tells they are akin to the Chinese, and they are, as a rule, well-made neat men, wearing loose blue skirts, with orange or red sashes, and large hats; some of them have short white jackets which are the universal top garments out here, when there are any at all.

The town itself is astonishingly well built; electric trams run everywhere, and there are splendid public buildings. As we trot along in our rickshaws we enter a large square. Do you see the name up there? Raffles Square. Sir Stamford Raffles was the man who made Singapore. In his time, the first part of the nineteenth century, Great Britain was very anxious to give away everything she had in the East to the first person who asked for it, as she did not want to fight about it, and could not see what use it could be, for the idea of Imperialism and Empire had not been developed. The Dutch asked largely and always got what they asked for, whether they had a right to it or not; this enraged Raffles, who happened to be out here, and so he looked around and noticed that the island of Singapore was placed in a wonderful position for trade, that it commanded the Straits, and that no one as yet had made any claim on it. He settled down here and put up the British flag. It was years before his country finally decided to acknowledge him and not give his territory up to the Dutch, who immediately asked for it; but in the end they did, and now here stands Singapore, a mighty city with miles of docks, a colossal trade, and a teeming population. There is a statue to Sir Stamford Raffles, as it is right there should be. The Botanical Gardens are worth seeing, and we can get tiffin in one of the palatial hotels, and then we must go back to the ship.

The scene in the bay as we depart is most lovely; ships of every nation are at anchor there, and as we pass out slowly we see island after island all covered with that rich green growth which is the

result of the constant rain and warmth. Blue and green and gold is the world, and the little brown boys play about their water-built villages, tumbling in and out of the water, and living in the warm sea as much as on land day by day. Shoals of them come round us in their catamarans and dive for money, catching the silver bit as it twinkles down through the water, even though they make their spring from many yards off. As we get farther out we feel the difference in temperature at once, for now we are heading north, and the night is cold and rough – it is like passing into another climate.

These are wonderful seas, and dearly should I like some day to bring you on a cruise in and about this group of great islands to the south, which is like nothing else in the world! There is Borneo, that gigantic island, twice as large as the British Isles, which belongs partly to the British and partly to the Dutch. The story of Sir Stamford Raffles is outdone by the story of the Rajah of Sarawak, which shows that even in our own times the blood of Drake and Cook runs in the veins of Englishmen.

Hong-Kong is another island and also belongs to the British; it was given to them by treaty in 1841. As we sail in under the lee of the island by the narrow entrance to the bay between it and the mainland, we see what a splendid natural harbour this is. High above on the island rises what is called the Peak, and up and up and up it, in rows and terraces, are the houses of the people who live here. We can go up the Peak by a tram-line if we have time. The city is called Victoria, and is actually built on the rock or,

rather, on terraces cut out of the face of it, one above the other. It is strange to find this little British colony isolated here on a bit of China, separated from the real China by half a mile of sea. As the steamer comes to rest on the mainland side at Kowloon Wharf we must take a ferry over to the city.

Once we are there we find a well-built town with wide roads, tree lined and very clean; there are many quite English-looking buildings of stone, and in the shops a strange mixture of wares, European and Eastern. Some of the shops are piled with the rich Eastern silk embroideries, ivory and lacquer work, carvings and fans, silver and metal work, paintings and furniture.

We have time to run up to the top by the tramway, and higher and higher as we go, houses still, houses all the way, and even at the very top there are some houses where the governor and other important people live in summer. It has been gloomy and cloudy all day, threatening rain, but just as we reach the summit the sun comes out in yellow glory, dropping to the West, and all the innumerable inlets and bays are turned to gold. The land between stands up in capes and cliffs and headlands, rather dim and misty, with the golden water flashing between.

We are off once more and up the coast to Shanghai, the last Chinese port we touch before going over to Japan.

Next morning we come up on deck to find a wet, clammy fog – we might be back in England again – how astonishing!

Now and again appearing out of the folds of swathing mist we see little islands and gaily painted fishing-boats, the owners of

which seem bent on committing suicide. The boats sometimes are junks, with the square brown sails that we have by this time seen so often, or they are tiny little boats; whichever it is, they seem as if they deliberately tried to get under our bows, as you have seen village children run across in front of motor-cars. Again and again we feel the steamer sheer off a little to clear them, and sometimes she just succeeds in doing so. I expect the captain's temper is being pretty severely tried up there on the bridge. He stays there while the fog lasts, but when it clears a little in the evening he comes down for a hasty dinner.

Then we get at him and make fresh demands on his patience by questions. He seems to have a stock left, for he laughs good-humouredly when I speak of the native boats. "They *do* do it on purpose," he says; "they think it's good joss, as they say, – good luck that is, just to cross our bows. It means a never-ending look-out all along this coast, and nothing cures them. All the same they're some use when one gets fogged here, for you can generally tell where you are, to some extent, by the fishing-boats; they run in different colours and patterns at places along the coast, each part has its own special fashions in paint and rig."

He has hardly time to swallow his dinner before he is back on the bridge. It's a ticklish bit of navigation here.

We still thread our way close inshore through innumerable islands. One of them stands up stiff and straight, pointing like an obelisk to the sky. It is called the Finger Rock. We notice, too, very frequently, the white lighthouses, kept very clean. Then we

go through a pass, two miles wide, called "Steep Island Pass," and are into the mouth of the Yangtsekiang River. Up this we go for a hundred miles before reaching Woosung, the Gravesend of Shanghai, which is still twelve or thirteen miles farther on. Then a turn and we are in sight of Shanghai with its factories and chimneys and great sheds called "godowns" with galvanised iron roofs. It is a disappointing place, but as we go farther on we see a public promenade and some clean, well-built stone houses. The Europeanised part of the city is, however, uninteresting, and we don't care to go into the native part by ourselves, so our chief amusement is watching the Chinese coolies loading and unloading the ship. Notice, they never push things on trollies, as our men do; they always carry everything slung on a bamboo. Even that great lump of iron, which must be part of some machinery, there it is, surrounded by a shouting horde of men, all slinging it up by their own little ropes, all giving a hand to carry the great mass along.

We have gathered very little of China in our short time at the ports, but we shall be able to get a better idea of Japan. Our first idea of it is when we stop at the island of Rokwren two days later and take on the pilot who is going to run us through the far-famed Inland Sea. At the same time two or three smart little Japanese doctors in European dress come on board to inquire into the health of passengers and crew, and give us a permit, for the Japs are most particular about not letting any foreign germs be landed on their shores, and at every port doctors come on

board to make quite sure everyone is free from illness.

The next thing we know about Japan is her coal, for 1500 tons of it are brought on board, in little baskets, handed from one to another of long rows of men, women, and children, all working equally hard.

The narrow strait that leads into the Inland Sea is only a quarter of a mile wide, and after passing through it we steam along quietly amid the most beautiful scenery we have passed since leaving England. Everywhere are little islands, well cultivated, woody, and rocky. Rocks and hills and capes break up the vistas, and every time we turn a corner we see something better than before. The ship stops at Kobé, but, unluckily, you have got a touch of the sun and the doctor strictly forbids you to go on shore. Never mind, we'll soon be at Yokohama, which is far better.

By that time you are quite yourself again, and when the captain calls us up on deck you are eager to go. He points to a solid triangle of rock, sticking up out of the sea not very far distant, and as we look at it a flash of red flame spurts out into the air and something red-hot rolls swiftly down the scored sides. What does it remind you of? It is another Stromboli, of course!

"That," says the captain solemnly, "is the safety-valve of Japan. If it were blocked up there's no knowing what might happen." Then he swings round and points in another direction. Clear against the soft blue of the sky we see a sharp-pointed white cloud of a very curious shape, like an opened fan upside

down. It seems quite detached from everything else, merely a curious snowy fan hanging in mid-air. "Why, it's Fujiyama, of course."

So it is! The famous Japanese mountain seen in thousands of the country's drawings and paintings; in fact, it has come to be a sort of national signboard. Now that we know where to look we see that the white fan part is merely the snow-cap running in large streaks downward, and that this rests upon a base as blue as the sky. Henceforward we shall see Fujiyama at many hours of the day – never a wide-spreading view but Fujiyama will be there, never a long road but Fujiyama at the end of it, never a flat plain without it. So odd is the great mountain, and so much character has it, that we feel inclined to nod good-night or good-morning to it when it greets us.

Then we enter the magnificent harbour of Yokohama with its hundreds of sampans, junks, tugs, ships, steamers, and every other craft. The smaller craft surround us clamorously, and looking down upon them we see that in almost every case there is a cat on board the junks, many of them tabby or tortoise-shell.

"'Cat good joss,' as the Chinamen would say," remarks a man standing near us, "specially three-coloured cats. They wouldn't give a fig for our lucky black ones without a white hair."

Hundreds of coolies are now clamouring for jobs all round. They are almost all dressed in blue, and those that wear upper garments have huge hieroglyphics of gay colours on their backs – these are the signs of their trades, or trades unions, as we might



say, and each man wears his with pride.

So, with a fleet of attendant boats, gaily-dressed coolies, and complacent cats surrounding us, we come to our anchorage, say good-bye to the captain with great regret, and make our plunge into this new land.

# CHAPTER XXVII

## THE LAND OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE

We are standing in front of a mysterious gate which is yet not a gate. You must have seen pictures of Japan many a time, and in some of them there must have been one of these curious erections. Yet how can one describe it? The Greek letter  $\Pi$  is most like it. Imagine a giant  $\Pi$  with a second cross-bar below the top one. In Japan this is called a Torii. The one in front of us, rising like a great scaffolding far above our heads, is made of wood, but they are often of stone or metal too. They are always to be found before the entrance to a Shinto temple. There must have been some meaning in them once upon a time, but it is lost now, and they remain decorative but useless.

We have left our rickshaw and are climbing up a long, long flight of steps to a Shinto temple not far from Tokyo, the capital town of Japan. Very many of the Japs are Buddhists, but it is a strange sort of Buddhism, not pure like that of the Burmans, and is mixed up with another religion called Shinto, and many of the people are Shintoists altogether. This religion is vague and mystical, with much worship of spirits, especially the spirits of the elements – earth, air, fire, and water. Everyone who is dead becomes in some degree an object of worship, and the Jap thinks

more of his parents and ancestors than his children – his dead ancestors especially being much venerated.

When we reach the top of the steps we find ourselves suddenly in a blaze of loveliness. To the right, to the left, and all around are cherry trees, covered thickly with blossom which hangs in wreaths and rosettes and festoons as if moulded in snow. The time for the best of the blossom is a little past, and the ground at our feet is as white as the trees, indeed whiter; for just here and there the fairy display on the trees is slightly browned. The scent is very sweet, and hangs in the air like delicate perfume. In the time of blossom there are many outings and festivities in Japan; people make up parties to go to the orchards, and thoroughly enjoy their beauty. Come right underneath the trees and look up, we can see the thick, heavily laden branches against the soft rich blue of a cloudless sky, and in our ears is the hum of a myriad bees. It is as if the freshness of early spring and the richness of full summer were mingled together.

As we wander on over the scented ground we notice, a little way off, a rather pathetic-looking Japanese in the national costume, with a flat board or book in his hand. He is looking at us earnestly, and follows on at a respectful distance behind us.

Next we come upon a quaint little garden on the lines of what we should call a landscape garden in England, but it is all on a tiny scale, as if made for dolls to walk in. There is a pond as big as a tea-tray, walks the breadth of one's foot, wee trees, gnarled with age and twisted and fully grown, but no higher than your

knee. It is all so delicate and dainty and tiny that we are afraid to walk in it for fear we should spoil it; we feel thoroughly big and clumsy as Gulliver must have felt among the Lilliputians, and we expect every minute to see the rightful owners, wee men and women the size of a man's fingers, rushing out from the little summer-house with the curved roof at the end, and crying shrilly to us to go away!

Treading carefully, a foot at a time, along the miniature paths, we pass through this and go on toward the temple which now appears amid a grove of deep dark pines. The steps are worn and hollowed, and on each side of them is an astonishing red figure of a man-monster in a very ferocious attitude, like that of the lions rampant seen on crests. These figures are a dark hot red and are dotted all over with white dabs; as we draw nearer to them we see that these dabs are doubled up bits of white paper sticking irregularly here and there without any arrangement. We cannot imagine what they are for, but as we stare we hear a foot crunch the gravel gently, and the little Jap with the board creeps up and salaams deeply, making at the same time a curious hissing noise as if he sucked in his breath. He must be very nervous.

"If the honourable sirs will allow this humble servant to explain," he begins in fluent and perfect English.

We are only too glad of his help, and not to be outdone in politeness we simultaneously raise our hats to him. He then tells us that all these paper pellets are prayers or wishes. People write down what they want on them and then moisten them in their

mouths and spit them out against the images; if the paper sticks it shows the wish will be granted, if it falls to the ground then fate is against it. It is not a very beautiful custom, but perhaps not quite so bad as betel-nut chewing!

Then the Jap coughs nervously, and with an overwhelming apology for daring to presume so far, explains that we ought to remove our "honourable shoes" before entering the temple. Of course we do it at once, though English shoes are not meant to take off and on at every turn, and while we struggle with our laces he knocks on the woodwork of the temple, and the sliding doors slip back along grooves, showing a very aged priest who smiles and beckons us in; so we pass on, feeling all the while conscious of the mystery of a country so utterly unlike our own. Inside, the floor is covered with thick mats, so we do not miss our shoes, though we step cautiously at first. It is very dim, but gradually our eyes grow accustomed to the want of light and we see lacquered screens, and little recesses, and bronze lamps, and curious images. Though it is spotlessly clean, very different from the Hindu temple, there is a strong smell of incense or burnt flowers or something rather odd. Our friendly Jap has gone down on his knees and is bowing his forehead to the ground, but we are not expected to do that evidently.

Two weird figures in peaked caps, fastened under their chins by tapes, have drifted out silently from somewhere and follow us as the priest leads us round. There does not seem to be any one special shrine with a central figure for us to see; perhaps there is

one, but it is not shown to foreigners. It is all vague and rather meaningless, and the carving and decoration are unsatisfying. After a while, as there does not seem to be anything more forthcoming, we drop a few coins into a bowl held out to us and prepare to go. Just as we reach the door another strange being in a peaked cap appears with tiny cups of clear amber-coloured tea on a tray, and holds them out to us. The little cups have no handles, and there is no milk in the tea, but on the tray are several rather nice-looking little cakes, only, unfortunately, they are all the colours of the rainbow – violet and green and scarlet. I utterly refuse to touch them, but the English-speaking Jap assures me they are "nice," so you, declaring that you are "jolly hungry," eat several and pronounce them "jolly good." We sip the tea, which tastes utterly different from that we have at home, and bowing all round again we put on our shoes and descend the steps. I'm sure if I lived here long I should be quite fit to take a position at court, my "honourable" manners would be so much improved. There is nothing brusque or rough or rude about these people, you couldn't imagine them scrambling or pushing to get in front of others even at a big show.

A voice behind us says timidly, "Will the honourable sirs be pleased to employ this humble servant as interpreter?"

We stop and look at him. It is not a bad idea. We have felt already this morning, even in coming straight from our very Western hotel here, how helpless we are in this land where the chair-men do not speak a word of English, and where even the

street names are in Chinese characters. This little man is quite unassuming, he would certainly be no trouble and might be very useful. When we stop he deprecatingly opens his flat book and shows us drawings in freehand of scrolls and animals that he has made. He explains that he tries to get a living by offering such designs to the shops, but that he would like better to be interpreter to us, as he wishes to perfect his English. The terms he asks are absurdly moderate. Yes, we will have him.

We engage him then and there, and he enters our service at once; there is no need for delay, for he is apparently not encumbered with anything beyond his drawing-book. He brightens up wonderfully when we say "yes." Poor little chap, I expect he is half starved. In most countries it would be rash indeed to engage a man at sight without any sort of written "character," but there is a simplicity and honesty about this one which gives us confidence in him. I am sure he would never cheat us deliberately, anyway, I am quite ready to risk it.

We tell him that what we want is to see something of Tokyo to-day, and then to go off into the country and try to get a glimpse of the real Japanese life, un-Europeanised, in some small village where we could stay at a little country inn for a day or two. He enters into the scheme at once and says that he will have the plans all ready to suggest to us this evening. Meantime he takes command, and after seeing us into our waiting rickshaws, calls up another for himself, gives the three men directions, and off we go.

As we run back to the town we notice the houses standing by themselves in the suburbs, quite good, large houses, some of them, surrounded by their own gardens, shut in by high walls so that only the sloping red-tiled roofs, curved up at the end, are visible. Some of these are two storeys high, but when we get into the town we see at first only rows and rows of one-storey houses. There are frequent earthquakes in Japan, and to build many-storeyed blocks would mean frightful disaster and loss of life. As it is, the people can rush quickly out of their little homes into the streets at the first signs of a shaking.

What do you notice about the streets that strikes you most particularly? To me it is the colouring – blue. You remember that in Burma there was practically no blue; the people wore red and pink and magenta and orange, but they seemed one and all to avoid blue. I used to think it was because they knew that blue would not suit their sallow, yellowish complexions; but the Japanese are just as yellow, in fact more so, for the Burmese yellow is a kind of coffee colour, and theirs real saffron, and yet the Japs are very fond of blue. The coolies and work-men all dress in it, with those astonishing signs on their backs that we noticed first at Yokohama, and the shops have blue banners hanging out beside them. These are for their names – they are signboards, in fact. Instead of running across horizontally, as our writing does, the Japanese writing – which is the same as the Chinese, though the spoken language is different – runs vertically. A Jap does many things exactly the opposite way from



what we do. He begins to read a book from what we should consider the end, backwards, and instead of going along, he goes up and down a line; and the long thin strips, with those mysterious cabalistic signs on them, are the shopkeepers' names and businesses. The shops are all open to the street, without glass, in this quarter; they are just what we should call stalls; most of them seem to be greengrocers' or fruiterers'. And in the first there are always prominently in front huge vegetables like gigantic radishes or elongated turnips; the people eat them largely, though to a European both the flavour and the smell are nasty. In the fish shops the funniest things to be seen are great black devil-fish, or octopuses, with their lumpy round bodies and black tentacles stretching out on all sides. They are loathsome to look at, but the Japs are not the only people who use them for food; in parts of Italy the peasants eat them as a staple dish whenever they can catch them.

There are no pavements here, and the streets are very muddy after last night's heavy rain, but it doesn't seem to matter a bit to the numerous inhabitants. All those who can afford it go in rickshaws, which pass us every minute, and the others wear clogs which lift them high out of the dirt. These clogs are called *geta*, and they are the funniest footwear to be found anywhere. You would find it more difficult to get about on them than on roller-skates, but the Japs are so much used to them that they trip along morning, noon, and night in them without being the least tired. They are simply little stools of wood, one flat piece being

supported by two smaller ones at the toe and heel, and they are held on by straps across the foot. Men, women, and children are thus raised inches out of the mud, and patter about, ting-tang, ting-tang, all day long. Some of the women have coarse white stockings made with a separate stall for the big toe, on the model of a baby's glove, so that the geta strap can go through.

We have now got into the middle of the town where the more populous streets are. You ought to notice how the colours of the clothes differ for the different ages of the people: the grandmothers and grandfathers wear dark purples and sombre hues; the middle-aged people have soft colouring, grey greens and palish shades; and the children are very gay, in every imaginable colour and often all mixed together. The girls have all a broad sash called an *obi*, humped up in a funny way behind their bodies; in the children this becomes a great bow like the wings of a butterfly. The people are small, and were it not for the clogs they would look smaller still; their country is not little, for Japan is larger than the United Kingdom, but the people are rarely tall, and they are slenderly built, with small bones, so that being among them makes an ordinary fair-sized Englishman feel clumsy and long-limbed. Now we are in the main street of all. Here comes a tram filled with Japanese, all smiling and chattering and looking happy; they take life with a smile. The houses here are larger than those we have passed, and some are just European buildings of stone, and the shop-windows are filled with glass, and show as fine a display as in the best London

shops. There are many entirely for the sale of Western things, and others for the things of the country – the beautiful embroideries and silks, and silver-work and lacquer-work and carving, which you know so well by sight at home, for it is sent over in large quantities now, and anyone can buy it in London as cheaply as here.

As we near our hotel we tell the interpreter, whose "honourable name" we have learned is Yosoji, – everything belonging to other people is "honourable" here, – that we would like to see the palace where the Emperor lives; so he gives an order to the rickshaw man, and we set out once more.

On the way we see many open spaces and pass through a park, but when we get to the palace we find that no one is allowed to go in, and we can only drive round by the walls and moat. The Mikado, or Emperor, is worshipped by most of his people; he is in the position of a god, and it is no mere expression of speech to say that every schoolboy would be proud and glad to die for him. There is no country in the world whose people are more passionately devoted to their fatherland than the Japs. The idea of prominent Japanese going about in foreign countries trying to belittle their own, or undermine her power in the countries she has won by the sword, is unthinkable.

Later in the afternoon, coming out again from our hotel, we find Yosoji waiting for us, and we tell him we want to walk about on foot to look at some of the shops. He protests, and we can see he thinks us almost out of our minds to suggest going

on foot. He pleads earnestly that rickshaws are very cheap. We have to explain that it is not the money we are thinking of, but that we really prefer to go on foot. He doesn't believe it – he can't, because no Japanese would prefer to go on foot when he could ride. So we take no further notice of him and just walk away, leaving him to follow humbly and despairingly. We have not taken many steps when a whole flight of rickshaw men swoop across the road and are on our heels, crying out, "Rickshaw, rickshaw, shaw, shaw, r'sha," like our old friends the pests of Egypt. We pretend not to hear, and walk on with what dignity we can, but they follow persistently, almost trampling on our heels, and reiterating their cries all the time. They can only imagine we must be deaf and blind. The crowd grows greater, the street is getting blocked. We pass a Japanese policeman in a stiff and badly made uniform, and are seized with sudden hope that he will send the offenders flying, but he does nothing of the sort; he fumbles in his pocket, brings out a little text-book Of English, and laboriously reads out, "Please secure me a good rickshaw," and looks at us triumphantly as if he had solved the difficulty!

I have no moral courage; I don't know if you have more, anyway, let us take two and then they can follow us if they like, and the others will go away. Accordingly we give orders to Yosoji, who bows, only half-satisfied, and interprets our orders. The plan works, the other men slink off, and the two selected ones follow us limply at a foot's pace.

What I am really making for is a little print shop I saw as

we passed along here this morning, with a number of Japanese drawings in the window. They are so queer, so well done, and yet so conventional that they have a charm of their own. Here it is! Look at that extraordinary picture of the great fish breaking through a hole in the blocks of ice! The ice *looks* cold, it is very well done, but the little bits of spray loop up round the fish in a stiff frill of a regular pattern. Then there is that one of the sea. It gives one a tremendous idea of a heavy lowering storm with the great indigo waves curling over that doomed boat, yet the edge of every wave has a sort of lace frill on it exactly alike! I must have those to take home; they won't take up any room.

As we enter the Jap lady who is selling the prints gives a long hiss. She bows profoundly, and so do we. They won't know us when we get home!

"But why did she hiss?" you ask Yosoji. He says it is a sign of respect. Oh! I thought they were nervous! How funny! As long as they don't expect me to do it back again – I can manage the bowing when there is no one there but you to see, but if I tried to hiss I should break down in the middle! I take out my purse to pay for the print. The money here is confusing, because there are yen and sen. A yen is equal to two shillings and a halfpenny, and a sen is only the hundredth part of a yen, or about a farthing. In order to reckon the change the old lady takes up a frame with beads strung across it on wires; I believe it's called an abacus, and they use them in kindergarten schools to teach children to count. She must be an ignorant old dame, and yet she looks wholly respectable. I

wonder what Yosoji thinks of it. When we look at him he is quite demure and solemn and doesn't seem to notice anything odd.

Coming out of the shop we find the dearest trio of children gazing at us. Of all the sights in Japan the children are the most fascinating. They are so funnily dressed, like the odd little Jap dolls English children buy. These three are clad very magnificently in kimonos of silk crape, very soft, and brilliantly coloured, with huge coloured sashes. Their little heads, with straight all-round fringes of black hair sticking out like brushes, are deliciously comic. They regard us gravely and without any fear or shyness.

It is getting dark; suddenly someone lights a Chinese lantern across the street, and almost as if it were a given signal another pops out and another and another. Chinese lanterns with us are used for decoration, and it is impossible to help feeling as if it were a festival when we see them gleaming along the street among the coloured streamers.

Altogether the lanterns, the gay dresses, the smiling faces, the funny shops, the clear deep blue of a perfect evening sky seen overhead, make a glorious picture. Shut your eyes and "think back" a moment. Think of Oxford Street on a wet night when the shops are shut and the high arc-lights shine down coldly on rigid lines and bleak grey walls!

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### IN A JAPANESE INN

If we received a slight shock when we saw the woman in the shop adding up by the help of beads, what about the booking-clerk at the station? He seems unable to give the simplest change without this sort of reckoning. Comic, isn't it? Picture the clerks at Euston fumbling away at their beads while an impatient throng elbowed one another before the pigeon-hole!

The station is quite small, merely a shed with a wooden roof set on posts. We are going second-class and taking Yosoji with us, so that we shall see some of the native life.

The trains are corridor, with the seats lengthwise and across the ends. Many of the Japs are sitting sideways on them with their feet tucked under them, – they are not used to have them hanging down, – but one grand gentleman, directly opposite to us, is quite European in his top hat and long coat, and his feet are on the floor as to the manner born.

We have not been long started before he begins to fidget and shuffle, and presently he hauls up a wicker basket beside him, undoes it, and fishes out a very nice dark purple kimono. His top hat goes into the rack. His collar, tie, and stud disappear. His coat comes off and is carefully folded on the seat. We watch the gradual unpeeling with an absorbed interest, wondering how far

it will go. Luckily there are no ladies present! We can stare as much as we like without being rude, because everyone else in the carriage has their eyes fixed with a straight unwinking stare upon us. It is difficult to realise that we are more entertaining to them than the gentleman who is disrobing himself with ineffable dignity in public, is to us.

He has now slipped on the kimono over his remaining garments, there is a little twist, and a slight, a very slight struggle, and in some miraculous way the rest of his European outfit glides off underneath the kimono, neatly folded. It is like a conjuring trick! Last of all come off the boots also, and with his stockinged feet tucked up under him he sits transformed into the Complete Jap. Judging from the lack of interest taken in the performance by his fellow-countrymen, it must be quite a usual thing to undress in trains.

Having finished his task the gentleman on the seat turns to us and asks innumerable questions. Where have we come from? Where are we going to? How do we like Japan? Is it not a very poor, mean country compared with the glorious and august land we belong to? All this is interpreted by Yosoji, who no doubt puts our answers into the flowery language Japanese courtesy demands; for instance, when I say that I like Japan very much, I am sure, from the breathless sentence that follows, that he is saying that the strangers think the honourable country of Japan far more beautiful and wonderful than their own poor land. The man opposite does not for a moment think really that England



is to be compared with Japan, but in Japan people are taught to talk like that, and must often think us very rude and abrupt.

It is not a long journey, and after an hour or so of passing through pretty, hilly country, with many bushy pine trees dotted about, we stop at a station which Yosoji says is our destination. It is a good thing we have Yosoji with us, for certainly we could never have discovered the name of the station for ourselves. We see a long scroll covered with Chinese characters, and other smaller scrolls ornamented in the same way, these are, of course, the name of the station and the inscriptions on various waiting-rooms, but they leave us none the wiser. I ask Yosoji how any European travelling alone could discover where he had got to, and he smilingly points out a board at the extreme end of the station with some of our own lettering on it. No one could possibly see it from the incoming train.

We still feel absurdly big as we get out of the little train on its little narrow gauge line and wait while Yosoji captures our luggage from the van. It is packed in great baskets which fit into each other like two lids; we see them in England often, but there they are rather looked down upon, here they are quite the correct thing. Indeed, among all the luggage in the van there is no trunk or wooden or tin box at all, only a great pile of such baskets of all sizes, mingled with a few bundles simply tied up. When our belongings are rescued and identified they are stowed away in a rickshaw by themselves, while we three mount in three others and set off for far the most interesting part of the journey. At first

the road is quite good, and the men trot away contentedly, the big hats bobbing up and down before us. What do these hats remind you of? To me they are exactly like the lids of those galvanised dustbins you see put out in streets for the dustmen at home.

The air is brilliantly fresh and sweet; we pass along by pine trees of many sorts, and between them see the fresh green of the feathery bamboos; these two colours, the dark blue-green of the pines and the brilliant yellow-green of the bamboo, are seen everywhere in Japan. Then there are avenues of red-stemmed trees called cryptomeria, we should say cedars, with dark heads spreading out at the top of their immense branchless stems. We see squirrels leaping about and scuttering up the trunks. Then we go across open spaces, which are like an emerald sea, for they are the brightest green you can imagine, the green of the growing paddy, which is cultivated here as in Burma. There are men dressed in garments of glorious blue, like those we saw in Egypt, hoeing and watching the important crops. Then we plunge into cool woods and follow little paths up and down, and when we want to get out and walk, feeling lazy brutes to sit still and let a fellow-creature haul us uphill, Yosoji says no, it would hurt the feelings of our men, who would imagine we thought them poor weak things and scorned them.

We twist down to a wooden bridge, dark maroon in colour, and built in one single span across a raging, leaping stream that dashes and splashes merrily far below. At the other end is one of the picturesque roofed arches or gates that the Japanese are so

fond of, with its rich red tiles curved up at the corners. Not far on we catch a glimpse of a waving sheet of blue, a mass of flowers growing wild on a hillside, and in sight of it, but still in the shade of the trees, we sit down for lunch and to give the coolies a rest.

Several times during the run we have noticed shrines with images of little foxes before them, some clean and new, but some weather-worn and grown over with lichen. As Yosoji unpacks the lunch he tells us these are Shinto shrines put up in honour of the god of rice. It seems very appropriate to hear this now, just as we are going to fare merrily on hard-boiled eggs, a tiny chicken, and plenty of rice, finishing up with those astonishing bright-coloured cakes, which we have learnt to eat without fear. We rest a long time, and all except you smoke contentedly, watching the blue films curl upward under the still foliage; and then up and on once more.

It is nearly five o'clock before we reach our destination, a little village, with a rather famous inn, not very far from the sea. In fact, as we approach we can see the blue water shining out only about a mile away across a flat expanse broken by hummocky sandhills. The village is one long straggling street of thatched huts, rather like huge beehives, with broad eaves. Our rickshaw men, who have been showing signs of exhaustion, make a gallant effort at the last, and run us up to the door of the inn in fine style. The inn stands on legs raised a foot or two from the ground, and is well built, with solid wooden posts and a tiled roof. It is two storeys high and has verandahs round both floors.

As our men let down the shafts of the chairs for us to alight, two women and a man in native dress come out on to the verandah, and immediately fall down on their faces before us, with their foreheads on the ground. I don't know how you feel about it, but not having been born in the purple this sort of thing is embarrassing to me, and I wish they wouldn't! I have a vague idea that I ought to rise to the occasion by taking their hands and saying, "Rise, friend, I also am mortal," or something like that!

Yosoji, of course, does all the talking, and with a great deal of bowing and volumes of flowing language, arranges for us to stay here the night, requesting us to pass on into the house. In the porch it is evidently expected that we should take off our boots, so we do, and they are stowed away in a little pigeon-hole, while we are offered instead large and awkward pairs of slippers like those we had at the mosques. You reject them, preferring stocking feet, and you have the best of me, for the next move is to go up a very slippery ascent like a ladder that is trying to grow into a staircase. While you hop along gaily I leave one slipper behind on the last rung, and in trying to recover it slip and bark my shin! However, when it is retrieved, I take off the other and, carrying them both in my hand, mount quite easily.

The room we go into is specklessly clean, and through the wide sliding panels, which are open on to the verandah, we see a glimpse of the blue sea. The floor is made of mattresses in wooden frames neatly fitted together, and is quite soft and comfortable to the feet; boots with heels would certainly be out

of place here. In a little alcove on one side is a miniature tree such as those you sometimes see offered for sale in England now, and behind it a quite beautiful sketch of Fujiyama on a scroll. There is no other furniture at all, but when our luggage is brought up we can sit on the baskets. We explain to Yosoji that we would greatly like – first, a hot bath, after the heat and dust of the journey, and next some food. Presently in comes the little Japanese maid whom we saw on her face at the door in company with her master and mistress. She prostrates herself at once, and with her forehead against the floor says something, indrawing her breath in a most accomplished hiss. Do you think we ought to do it back again?

Yosoji interprets that with great good luck the hot water is ready, and if we go down now we can have a bath. Our things have been brought up, so selecting a few clean garments we go once more along the polished passage and down that dangerous ladder, then through a room, presumably the kitchen, which is quite full of people, on to a covered-in verandah on one side of the house, where two large shining brass basins stand on a sink, and an iron tub stands on the floor, with its own fire beneath it like a copper; clouds of steam arise from it. But what catches our attention most quickly is an amiable Japanese man, who, clad in a very slight garment, has evidently just had a bath. We can see he has been pouring the contents of the basins over himself, and letting the water run away between the wooden slats of the floor, so we wait for them to be refilled for us. All the people

who were in the kitchen have by this time drifted in here, and stand in interested contemplation of our proceedings. "Which is the bath?" I ask Yosoji. He motions toward the tub of boiling water. "But that's too hot; we shall be boiled sitting on the top of a fire," I explain. Thereupon a great commotion ensues, embers are raked out, and there is much running about and chattering. The Japs themselves take their baths at a temperature which would peel the skin off our bodies. As the water is still too hot, even when the fire has been removed, we wait for it to cool, and meantime I ask where is the other bath, as there are two of us? This produces great consternation in Yosoji; who ever heard of each person having a bath to himself? The notion is absurd. He knows the ridiculous prejudice of the English, who do not like to use the same water as the Japanese, but, as it happens, this water is perfectly clean, for even the gentleman who has just gone out did not use it. Is it possible we can't use it, one after the other? I ask him what state the water gets into when half a dozen people have been boiled in it, one after another, and he tells me that it is in no state at all, for, of course, etiquette does not allow them to use soap actually in the bath! Well, we must manage somehow; when they clear out we can tip some of the hot water into that second basin and use it afterwards. Meantime they all stand, gaily expectant, smiling affably. I explain to Yosoji that we can't undress before the crowd, and he seems to think my ideas most extraordinary. In Japan people always bathe in a garment and have not the least objection to doing it in full view

of the street.

With considerable difficulty our absurd scruples are made clear to the assembled company, who reluctantly depart, defrauded of their fun, and draw close the sliding screen.

Then – yah – it *is* hot! We manage to tip out two good basins full and fill up with cold water from a tin pail which stands near. Well, we both find it very refreshing. You go first, and while I am revelling in the hot water I hear a dismayed exclamation, "Oh, the towels!" and see you holding up a tiny thing no bigger than a table-napkin, embroidered in a wandering blue pattern. There are two for each, and though they are little more than pocket-handkerchiefs we must make them do.

When we get back to our rooms in a more or less steamy condition, we find that the screens, which are made of paper framed in wood, have been drawn, and outside them wooden shutters have been fastened. The room is very close, and there isn't an inch open for ventilation. After a long expostulation with Yosoji we are allowed to have the outer shutters open an inch or two, though he explains they must be shut and bolted before we go to bed at night or the police will be down upon us. There are two loose, flowing Jap gowns lying ready for our use, and very delightful they are. As they are quite clean we slip into them instead of coats and laugh across at each other. In comes the little maid, once more prostrating herself, then she goes out and returns with a lacquered tray on tiny legs a few inches high. This she sets on the floor, and after a considerable interval,

during which she has brought up many tiny dishes and bowls, she suddenly seats herself on one side of the tray and motions to us to begin.

We wriggle across the floor inelegantly and squat opposite to her. The first thing we see are two steaming bowls of soup, we make short work of these, drinking from the bowl, and find at the bottom some tough-looking bits of something. Then we discover all at once there are no knives, forks, or spoons, only chopsticks, like forks with one prong. We try to fish out the bits of something, but even when we have caught them the result is not satisfactory; it is like eating leather. Next comes bowls of rice, and if it was difficult before, it is doubly so now. I should certainly never be able to pick up grains of rice with a chopstick while that solemn little maid sits opposite; it would take a Cinquevalli to do it! I make a desperate attempt and explode suddenly, the maid giggles, you roar, and even Yosoji, who is somewhere in the background, begins tittering. After this the ice is broken; we entreat Yosoji to get the maid away without hurting her feelings, and when she has departed we finish the rice with our fingers. There are various other things – beans which can be skewered on the chopsticks, and funny little bits of stuff like mixed pickles, but even when we have eaten everything we are as hungry as when we began. Just as we are realising it our little friend appears again with a decent-sized fish on a dish, decorated with onions, and we quickly fall to, using a funny kind of bean-paste made up like a cake, instead of bread. By the time we have finished we



are rather fishy but very much more satisfied.

The meal taken away, our handmaiden slides back a panel in the more substantial side of the room, which is of wood, and produces various stuffed rugs which she spreads on the ground – these are called *futon*, and are very like our useful friend the *rezai*; we have some of our own to add to them, and altogether the beds look so comfortable that we are quite ready to get into them at an early hour. Having lit a Chinese lantern at one end of the room before the little picture recess, a sacred place in every Japanese household, the maid retires for the night, and so does Yosoji. Only then do we discover that for pillows they have given us tiny wooden stools, not unlike the national clogs, only slightly larger! These we are supposed to place in the crick of the neck; having tried it you declare that if you slept at all that way you would certainly dream you were lying on the block to be beheaded, so instead you choose the lid of one of the baskets, which, being yielding, makes not half a bad pillow.

Good-night!

After a profound sleep I am awakened by a flood of light, and sit up with a start, to find myself in bed before an admiring crowd. The sliding panels opening on to the verandah have been pushed back, and there stand my landlord and landlady, and the little maid-servant, and several other persons, bowing and prostrating themselves and asking innumerable questions, to which, as there is no Yosoji, I can give no answers. Everyone in Japan asks questions, I find; it is supposed to show a polite

interest in you. I feel rather awkward sitting up there among my futon and making a series of little jerks meant to be bows, and I am glad when you wake up too and help me a little. You are not so shy, it seems, for you hop out of your rugs and dance to the verandah, revelling in the light and sunshine.

An hour later we have had a sluice down with cold water from the brass basins, eaten a most unsatisfying and unsubstantial breakfast, much like the dinner the night before, minus the fish, and are out to visit the village schools, at the suggestion of Yosoji, before going on.

They are worth visiting! I never saw anything quite so quaintly pretty as these rows of little dolls in their brilliantly gay garments, tied up with their big sashes. They are sitting on the floor and laboriously making strokes with a paint-brush. That is to say, they are learning to write. The Chinese writing is not an alphabet like ours, but each complicated symbol stands for an idea, and there are thousands and thousands of them. It takes a child seven years even to learn fairly what will be necessary in after life.

These little mites are not making complete signs, but just doing one stroke again and again, all over a large sheet of paper, and when they have learnt that they will go on to another, until one complete symbol is mastered. The writing is done by brush-work instead of with a pen, and is more like artistic painting than stiff writing. Suddenly the teacher gives a signal, and the tiny tots rush out into the air, and dance and play and run and twiddle each other round and round like little kittens; they are so gay and so

bright it is quite evident that Japanese children are not ill-treated.

It is with great reluctance we pick up our luggage, pay our very moderate bill, and leave this dear little village. Whatever else fades out of our minds as time goes on I am sure the picture of those gay children will never be forgotten.

# CHAPTER XXIX

## THOUSANDS OF SALMON

We dawdled so long in the quaint and charming country of Japan that it was full summer when we left. As the inverted fan of Fujiyama faded gradually into nothingness against the illimitable spaces of the sky, we said again and again *sayonara*, which is the musical Japanese word meaning good-bye, for we felt we were taking leave of an old friend. Japan is on the other side of the world from England; shall we ever get there again?

Then came the voyage across the Pacific and the landing at Victoria, the chief town on the great island of Vancouver, which lies off the west coast of Canada. It is always a little confusing to people who have not visited this part, because there are two Vancouvers: one the great island which blocks the western coast of Canada, and the other the town lying on the eastern side of the narrow straits, on the mainland.

Well, here we are in Victoria, and the astonishing homeliness of it gives us both a warm feeling of delight. It seems as if we really had got almost in touch with our own country again. As we wandered through the town to-day we saw in the outskirts red-brick creeper-covered houses that might have been in an English market town. In spite of all its trams and docks and general go-aheadness Victoria is old world. We visited a place called

Esquimault, by tram-car, and saw there British ships of war and many other kinds of craft. Now we are back in the hotel, and in our cosy bedroom there is little to remind us we have still a continent and ocean between us and our beloved little island.

What are you doing? Putting your boots out to be cleaned? Well, that is one thing you won't get done here, it is not the custom; you will have to go down to the basement and have them cleaned on your feet, and tip the man who does them then and there. I'll come too, because we have to make a very early start to-morrow. I wish we hadn't, for some things. There is capital shooting and fishing here, though a great deal of the island, which, by the way, is more than twice the size of Wales, is covered with impenetrable forests. It is difficult to get about at all in the interior, but we could have gone around by the coast and explored the inlets, and with luck we might have seen something of the moose and the bear, to say nothing of wild fowl and salmon and trout, but we can't manage it this time. A friend of mine, who is in charge of a salmon-cannery on the coast of British Columbia, is going to put us up for a day or two, and he has arranged that we shall cross over on the cannery steamer, the *Transfer*, which leaves so early that we'll have to be up at half-past four in the morning.

Ugh, I'm sleepy! But I see the sun is already up and shining in a cloudless sky. It is a trifle cold when we get out at first in the morning, but as we walk briskly down to the steamer we feel warmed up. The wharf shows a busy scene; there are numbers

of blue-clad Chinamen rushing backwards and forwards loading boxes on to our little steamer, which floats by the wharf, and what a comic steamer she is! She is like nothing so much as a great fan-tail pigeon sitting on the water! That is because her immense paddle-wheel is tucked away at the back. There is a very good reason for this too! The steamer gives an agonised scream from her siren, the Chinamen on board chatter and gesticulate frantically to their comrades left behind, there is a terrific commotion, and for the moment no one could help believing that something has gone wrong; but no, this is only the way the Celestials say good-bye, for when we are fairly off all the noise stops and a great calm falls on board.

The view from the deck is glorious; in this brilliant light we can see the mountains rearing up behind the town. While we are admiring them a voice says, "One piecy eat breakfast, Master," and turning we see a Chinaman in spotless white bowing before us. We gladly accept and go below, where we find other Chinamen gliding about in felt slippers serving hot baked buckwheat cakes and maple syrup; the cakes are beautifully flaky and about the size of a saucer; we soon dispose of them and some decent coffee too, and return to the deck quickly not to miss anything.

It seems no time before we are gliding along close to the land on the other side, startling myriads of water-fowl, who fly up in front of us in an endless cloud, or dive just as we get near enough to see them well. Then a tall white lighthouse heaves into sight

and we round a corner into that famous salmon river, the Fraser. There are red houses peeping out between the trees, and boats begin to pop up here and there, but we don't seem to be getting on very fast, for we are zigzagging this way and that across the water, almost more crookedly than we did on the Nile or Irrawaddy to avoid sandbanks.

"See the nets?" asks one of the ship's officers, coming to a halt beside us and pointing to a line of corks on the surface of the water; "we've got to keep clear of them, and that's no job for a sleepy-head, I can tell you." He goes on to explain that the nets are sixty feet long and weighted with lead on the low side in the usual fashion. At this time of year the salmon are all trying to get up the river. Salmon have queer ways. They are born far up, in the head waters of the Fraser, or any other great river, and come down as quite little fellows to the sea, where they live a free bachelor life, enjoying themselves in the open for three years; but at the end of that time an irresistible desire to return to the fresh water seizes them, and in thousands and thousands they press up the wide mouth of the river, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to get there; this is the time they are caught. The nets are made with wide meshes, and the fish in their struggle to get forward run their blunt heads through, but when they try to withdraw them they are held by the gills and remain fixed until they are hauled out to meet their fate. But from six in the morning on Saturdays till six in the evening on Sundays the law forbids netting, so a certain number always escape and get up the river to

lay their eggs, after which they return to the sea and leave their families to hatch out; but their life-work is finished, and they either die on the way or soon afterwards. All this the officer tells us as we meander across the smooth water.

We stop once or twice where the flag calls, just as we did on the Irrawaddy, to take up or put down some freight, and then we sight Lulu Island, where we are to stay as the guests of Mr. Clay for a day or two. Hullo! there he is! That tall fellow in a flannel shirt and blue trousers. Oh no, it isn't – it's another Englishman; but among the multitude of Chinese one Englishman looks very like another! This man greets us as we get off at the pier, and says that Mr. Clay is expecting us, and he pilots us into a great shed at the end of the pier. My word, what a sight! There are thousands and thousands of salmon lying on every square foot of floor, and not only covering it, but covering it knee-deep, as they are piled one on the other. There are Chinamen wading about among them, and every minute fresh boats arrive at the wharf with their cargoes, and the men in them throw up the fish to the other men on the wharf. The salmon we see here, our new acquaintance tells us, are called "sock-eye," and weigh about ten pounds each. The great rush comes every fourth year, one of which was 1913, when about thirteen million fish were caught in the season. The men in the boats are Japs; we feel quite friendly toward them. Mixed with them are some others with rather Eastern faces too, but quite different from anything we have seen yet. Notice their greasy straight hair, their flat, broad, good-humoured faces and little



stocky figures; what race do you think they are? Esquimaux? That is not a bad shot; they are very like the pictures one sees of Esquimaux, but these fellows are Siwash Indians, who live along the coast hereabouts. Here is Mr. Clay, who has been watching the reckoning of the caught fish. He is dressed exactly like the man who met us, and a useful working dress it is too. He greets us with the greatest hospitality and says he'll take us right up to his house for breakfast first, as we must be starved, and we can see all we want to afterwards. When we are clear of the sheds we see a long, low, wooden building standing by itself; to reach it we have to pass over several wooden platforms raised on legs. These, Mr. Clay explains, are necessary, because in winter the whole island is pretty well under water. As we cross the verandah we are warmly welcomed by Mrs. Clay, and taken into a charming wooden room in the middle of the house, on to which all the other rooms open. Here is laid out a splendid home breakfast of bacon and eggs and porridge, and after a wash it doesn't take us very long to fall to! How long is it since we had bacon and eggs for breakfast? It seems to me to be so far back I can't remember! We are both rather thin after living on Jap diet so long, and are quite ready to wind up with more buckwheat cakes when we have finished the other things. All the servants are Chinamen you notice, and very well they wait too.

While we eat, Mr. Clay tells us much about his kingdom. He and his wife have another house which is in New Westminster, not far off up the river, and they go there for the winter, only

staying here in the summer when the work is in full swing. He is the manager of only one cannery here, and there are several others all working amicably together.

Then we stroll out, feeling blissfully satisfied, a condition we have long been strangers to, and as we smoke Mr. Clay points out the other houses round. There is the house for the white men who assist him, the houses for the Japs, and the Chinese house. At the back of his own premises are sheds where he keeps a couple of horses and some cows for his own use. Then there is the Stores, a big building full of tinned meats, sacks of rice, tobacco and tea, and all sorts of underclothing, as well as the other little things men are likely to want.

Afterwards we stroll through the Chinamen's house. It is a queer-looking place, with bunks ranged along the walls and a huge wooden table down the middle, where just now numbers of complacent Chinamen are sitting down to a midday meal of rice with cooked fish. As we pass along we see that each man keeps his little treasures beside his bunk, for, though so impassive, the Chinaman is a home-loving creature; there are little images of carved ivory and other small treasures. Do you see that white rat with pink eyes restlessly doing sentry-go in his cage?

Behind the house, and some distance off, is the Indian village, where we see great barn-like buildings; here the Siwash Indians live, and several of their flat-faced, broad-nosed children are tumbling about and playing; as we come up one sturdy youngster raises a heavy stick and flings it with all his force at a wretched

little seal tied up by a flapper. Mr. Clay goes quickly forward and catches hold of the little Indian boy, and the women all rush out and talk at a tremendous rate; it ends in the manager giving a trifle for the seal and making a signal to his men, who take up the poor little beast and carry it off to put an end to it mercifully. He does not put it back in the water, because seals do much mischief in breaking the nets. The Indian children don't mean to be cruel, but they have no imagination.

Then we go on a voyage of inspection all round the place. We saw the fish when they were first landed from the nets, and the next proceeding is when they are slit open by the Indian women, who cut off their heads and tails and throw them into vats of salt and water. After this they are fished out and chopped into round pieces to fit the tins. This is done by Chinamen, who get so clever at it that they can judge exactly how much to put into each tin to make just one pound weight; the tins are weighed as they pass on, and all those not right are sent back to be done again. The tins which pass the test roll down an inclined shute. Look at them, one after the other, exactly as if they were alive! As they run they roll in soldering stuff, so that their lids are sealed on the way. But they have many other processes to go through before they can be shipped off. Immense care is taken to get all the air out of the tin, because if any were left in the fish would go bad. They are tried and tested time after time at every stage. The salmon is cooked when already in the tin, and the heating is so severe that all the bone becomes soft too. You know this

well in tinned salmon, don't you? You know, too, the look of the tins, with their gaudy-coloured labels, as they are sold in shops in England? These labels are stuck on after they leave the cannery, which deals with the insides, not the outsides, of the tins. There is a sarcastic saying at the canneries, "Eat what you can and can what you cannot," but this is not fair, for the very greatest trouble is taken to ensure the fish being quite good. When all is ready, sailing ships come and are loaded up and carry off the season's catch to all parts of the world. And this is going on all along the coast at many and many a cannery, day after day, week after week, during the fishing season.

There is so much to see that when we leave the last shed the day is almost gone. At that moment two Chinamen pass us carrying a pig suspended from a pole by its four feet tied together. The poor little beast is going to be killed, for the Chinese are very fond of pork.

When we sit on the verandah after dinner, trying vainly to keep off the mosquitoes by smoking strong tobacco, we are joined by one of the assistant managers, a man named Jones, who has fiery red hair and, I should judge, a peppery temper. He is very angry about something, and several times Mr. Clay tries to argue with him and calm him down; it seems that he has had a row with a Chinaman. This morning he spoke sharply to the man, who went stolidly on with his work without seeming to notice it, but later on, meeting Mr. Jones outside, the Chinaman drew the knife which they all carry in their belts, and muttered something

threatening to his superior. This evening Mr. Jones keeps saying again and again in an excited way, "Leave him to me, I'll settle his hash," and Mr. Clay repeatedly tells him that he can report the man, who can be fined, but that it would be rash to tackle anything of that sort single-handed, as the Chinamen all stand together and are like an enraged swarm of hornets if any one of their number is touched.

However, next day we hear nothing more and spend a lazy morning wandering about a little and sitting on the verandah until Mr. Clay turns up about midday and says, "Come and see all the men leaving work for dinner; you missed that yesterday, and it is quite a sight."

So we go across with him to the big shed. Just as we reach it we hear a furious noise like the buzz of hornets, and coming quickly round a corner we run into an angry and excited crowd of Chinamen rushing this way and that, and stabbing at random in the air with their knives.

"That fool!" ejaculates Clay. "He's done something!" and before we realise what he intends to do, he is right in among the mob of Chinamen, knives and all, without a sign of fear. You and I are too much interested to go away, but we keep well on the outskirts of the crowd. The roar redoubles as Clay is seen, but after a while it dies away a little, and then a small party emerge from among the rest, carrying one of their number, unconscious, between them, and as they pass on down to the house where they live, the others hurry after them, still chattering and brandishing

their knives.

Clay is much upset. "That fool!" he says again, and there is a deep fold of anxiety on his forehead. "This morning he took down with him to the sheds a piece of lead-piping, and stood by the door there, and as the men came out one by one, he marked the one who threatened him yesterday and dropped him with a stunning blow on the back of the neck. I don't think he's killed the fellow. Luckily it takes a lot to kill a Chinaman, but we'll have no end of a shindy over this; they'll lose days of work, and the worst is, Jones has disappeared – no one knows where he is."

All the afternoon the place is in a blaze of excitement, and, as Mr. Clay foresaw, no work is done. Every now and then we can see, from where we are sitting on the verandah, a band of Chinamen burst out of their house flourishing knives and shouting and rushing about and then quieting down and slinking back. If Jones shows himself now his life won't be worth an instant's purchase! I try to get out of Clay what he means to do, but he won't tell me, yet I am sure, from something he let fall, that he has discovered the whereabouts of his junior, and I should not be surprised if the man was in this house.

When we turn in at last to our beds nothing more has happened, and Jones has not appeared. I have been asleep for a little while when I hear a subdued whispering on the verandah outside my window, and jumping up I put my head out. There stands Clay in his pyjamas with a man I recognise as the night-watchman, a European. Clay sees me and waves his hand, and

as the watchman disappears he comes over to me. "Strang has just been up to tell me that the Chinamen have carried the poor beggar out of the house and laid him on the bank of the river," he says in a low voice; "that means to say they think he's dying, and they wouldn't have him in their house, or his spirit would settle down there. That's a good job for us, or by the morning he'll be spirited away! There's the little tug ready, and it will soon run him up to New Westminster hospital. I'm just going down to see the poor chap aboard."

"What about Jones? Aren't you going to send him off too?" I asked.

"No fear! He'll have to swallow his gruel. We can't spare him. Where would I get another man from at this time of the season? Besides, that would look as if he were afraid of them. We've lost hours of precious time with his foolery already," he adds savagely, and I can guess the headstrong Jones has "caught it" from his chief!

Next morning still no Jones, and all seems as usual; work is resumed, the Chinamen ask no questions as to their wounded comrade, and peace reigns. About eleven o'clock Clay comes up from the works hurriedly and gives a whistle, and from one of the bedroom doors emerges Jones, looking rather like a schoolboy who has been in disgrace and means to carry it off with swagger.

When we get out on the verandah we find the rest of the white men belonging to the place all gathered together with revolvers in their hands, and with one consent they move off toward the

big shed. For the life of me I can't keep out of it, and it would be rather hard to stop your going. I wouldn't miss seeing Jones reintroduced to his friends the Chinamen for anything. Come on, but let us keep behind where we shan't be noticed, or Mr. Clay would send us back at once.

There is a busy hum surging out of the factory as we approach, and the noise of it rings out on the still air; then, as the white men appear in a little knot in the doorway, there is a dead pause, a silence so sudden and dramatic that it seems as if one's heart must stop beating. The half-dozen white men stroll up the gangway carelessly, but you note they all keep together, until Jones, who doubtless has got his orders, separates himself from the others and walks briskly ahead. His face is very white as he bends over a Chinaman and glances at his work in as natural a manner as he can command, then he looks sharply at another and tells him to go ahead and not waste time. Hands grow busy, the noise recommences, and in a few minutes the buzz rises again to concert pitch. The critical moment has been safely passed. We follow the others into the building and walk the whole length of it and back, and by the time we get to the doorway again no one could tell that anything unusual had happened.

However, I shouldn't care to be Mr. Jones on Lulu Island, and if I were he I should apply for a job elsewhere at the end of the season!



# CHAPTER XXX

## THE GREAT DIVIDE

We are now in the train running toward the great ridge of mountains which rises like a backbone through the country from north to south, cutting off the territory of British Columbia from Alberta, though both are provinces of Canada. The Rockies! What ideas of grizzly bears and Indians and scalps and trails the name brings up before me! I don't suppose you have anything like the same feeling about them, because you weren't brought up on Fenimore Cooper and Ballantyne and all those other writers who are old-fashioned nowadays. Perhaps you have never even read *The Wild Man of the West*, or *Nick o' the Woods*? It makes me sorry for you!

The Clays were good to the last; they brought us up on the little launch by river to New Westminster, and then we went by electric cable-car to the mighty town of Vancouver on the Pacific Coast. What a town! Wide streets, huge buildings, tram-cars, and much bustle and life. But what struck us most was the splendid playground of Stanley Park which covers all the ground at the end of the peninsula stretching out into the sea. This is not an Englishman's idea of a park at all, for we think of the rather stiff green expanses, with a few trees scattered here and there, that we are used to at home. Stanley Park is just a bit of primeval forest

with roads running through it. There are immense trees rearing their crowns on stems twelve feet in diameter. There are thickets and wild creatures and rich undergrowth. The inhabitants of Vancouver are lucky indeed, and they have another park on the other side of the town too. Stanley Park overlooks the harbour, where lie ships of all nations, from the liners of China and Japan to the tiny tugs of the Cannery Companies. The amount of trade coming here is immense. The ships carry cargoes of tea, rice, and silk and oranges, with skins from Siberia, and take away grain, timber, fish, machinery, cattle, and manufactured goods. There are some sailing ships, you still see them in this part of the world, and these are loading masses of timber baulks from the great pine woods inland. Lumbering and logging are the two great occupations of the Western Canadian winter, and what you see here is the fruit of that work. Terribly hard work it is too. Swinging an axe all day among the great giants of the forest requires knack as well as strength, and when a man first starts that game he quickly finds he is as weak as a baby till his muscles get hardened to it. When cut down the trunks are dragged to any stream, or creek, as they call them here, to be drifted down to the coast. It is a wonderful sight to see a river about half a mile wide literally covered with tree trunks wedged against one another from bank to bank. When the logs get jammed, and have to be released, it requires a great deal of courage to go right into the middle of the stream and find the key-log, the one which holds the whole together, like the keystone of an arch; most exciting

work this is, many a man loses his life or his limbs over it. In Burma, where the teak companies run their business on the same lines, elephants are taught to do this; they feel around with their trunks and draw out the right log, and then make for the banks at full speed, to get out of the way before the whole mass of tons' weight breaks loose and comes down upon them. But here there are no elephants; dogs are the beasts of burden, and fine work they do in teams, drawing laden sleighs over the frozen snow, – but dogs can't pull out timber when it is jammed. A lumber man has to be a bit of an engineer too, and learn how to dam up the stream to make enough water to float his logs; he is a jack of many trades, and generally a fine fellow too.

If we had come straight on from Victoria in the Empress steamer from Japan we should have landed at Vancouver. The Empress Line belongs to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, which has its terminus there. This is one of the most miraculous railways in the world. We are on it now. When first it ran out to the Western end, after surmounting indescribable difficulties in crossing the mountain country, it stopped at that little place we passed through when we came to Vancouver from New Westminster. You remember we saw a deserted town, solitary and silent, on the inner curve of the bay? It is called Port Moody, and the name suits it to a T. It has a right to be moody, for when it was known the railway was going to end here the town sprang up in a week or two, in the way Canadian towns do; but the very first winter was so terribly severe that ice was driven up

into the bay and blocked it completely, preventing vessels from getting to the terminus at all, and so the directors saw they must carry their line on farther round the bay to the northern point, and here Vancouver arose; but the irony of it was that no such winter has ever been known again! It only came that once, just to blot out Port Moody's chances. So the place lies mouldering away, with the lumber houses falling to pieces and the wharves rotting, and only a few wooden crosses and headstones on the hill to mark the graves of those who stayed behind when the others went.

This is a very fine train, the cars are open all the way down, so we can walk from end to end, the seats face in the direction we are going, and the backs can be swung over to the other side in the same way as on a tram-car. I know you have already noticed the very spruce negro attendants, because I saw you staring at the first one who appeared with all your eyes! There is an observation car with huge plate-glass windows at the end of the train, and we will go there to-morrow when we get into the mountains. I saw that there was a placard saying the negro attendant will answer *all* questions! I hope he gets a very high salary!

It was eight o'clock at night before we left Vancouver, and as there is a capital dining-car on the train, we had better get dinner at once. But the fun begins when we go to bed. I send you along first and say I'll turn in after a last smoke, but I have hardly settled down to an interesting conversation with a man in the smoking-car before I see you standing beside me looking very troubled.

Well, what is it? In a low whisper you say —

"I can't go to bed there; there's a lady in the same car."

"Never mind! She has her own bunk, I suppose?"

"Yes, but —" a long pause — "she drops her hairpins on to me!"

My laugh makes the man beside us very inquisitive. Never mind, old man! Pick them up and return them to her in a neat little packet to-morrow, but whatever you do don't go to sleep with your mouth open!

It certainly is funny. When I join you I find that the lady is in the upper bunk above that which you and I are going to occupy together. The curtains hang straight down and it is a very tight fit indeed to wriggle into my place without pulling open the top part, and a still more difficult job to get out of my clothes lying in a space like a ship's berth.

In the morning I take care to get up early and rouse you, and as we vanish out of the compartment we hear a little giggle, and looking back I see a long lock of brown hair hanging down over the edge of an upper bunk. I hope you gave her back her hairpins!

We are surprised that the train is standing still, and want to find out why. We saunter along to the observation car and breathe the glorious freshness of the air, chilled by the great white peaks which rise shining up against a clear sky. Seeing that several of the men passengers have climbed down on to the track and are wandering along it we follow, and round the next corner come upon a cattle-train off the lines and blocking the way. She was just turning on to a siding to wait for our coming when the

disaster occurred, and now she lies helpless, with twenty cars filled with cattle who are lowing in a disconsolate questioning way. Just look at the poor beasts, they are packed tighter than ever we see them in England, simply jammed up against each other like sardines in a tin. One of them has fallen, and the others bulging out over the space thus made are trampling on him. A fine-looking fellow, six feet high, in a blue shirt and cowboy hat, with a red handkerchief twisted round his throat, comes along with a pole, and skewering it under the fallen ox very cleverly levers it on to its feet again, holding it up until it forces its way upward itself. He jabs at it once or twice to make it move, but not unkindly. He looks a rough specimen and has a two days' growth of beard, but we go up to him, as I want to ask questions about the cattle. To our astonishment the moment he speaks we know him for an educated Englishman. "Oh, they're not badly looked after," he says; "they've all been out at Kamloops for twelve hours to get rest and food and water. They were only put on the cars an hour since."

Looking at him keenly I find something very familiar in his face. "Are you a Winchester man?" I ask.

"By Jove!" he says, "Mitton!" and simultaneously I cry "Wharton!" and our hands are locked.

"Got a rough job?" I ask.

He laughs. "It's all in the day's work," he says. "I've done worse things. It's a man's job, anyhow."

"Are you going to live out here permanently?"

"No; not good enough. I've been knocking about now two years, and unless you've got capital you can't make a start; a man can always keep himself, of course, and you see something of life too, but for a permanency, no, it's not good enough! I wrote to my people only last week I'd be turning up next fall to settle down again."

He has to go to help the men who are raising the wheels of the truck on to the line again with jacks. It has been a queer accident altogether. The train was running down in the early hours of this morning when a huge boulder, which had been loosened by the vibration of its passing, fell with terrific force against this particular car, and knocked it off the rails; the coupling-pin connecting it with the next one in front broke, and the engine and first few trucks ran on a little. Luckily the derailed truck ploughed the ground and stopped within a foot or two of the awful gulf yawning below, though those following, which had kept on the track, gave it a shunt forward.

It is not long before all is shipshape again, and we draw slowly past, waving to Wharton, who stands up in his caboose, or van, a handsome, healthy figure of a man. He was one of the best short-slips Winchester ever had. For some time after this we pass waiting trains at every siding, for all the traffic has been held up by the accident.

For the rest of that day it is difficult to spare thoughts for anything but the scenery. It is grander than anything I have ever seen in my life. Very few people in England realise that there

is not one but three ranges of mountains to be crossed from the coast. We are through the first now and into the Selkirks, and we have to climb right up these and down again before starting on the heights of the Rockies, which is the only range most people know by name. The peaks, which rise majestically round, are often tree-clad far up; we see huge pines, centuries old, towering out of a tangle of undergrowth that has probably never been trodden by any human foot, not even those of the Indians. There is a great deal of dead wood to be seen, and this hangs out in banners of brown among the sombre green, and here and there are long strips of brilliant emerald, which stand out like streaks. We apply to the long-suffering attendant, who tells us that they are the new growth on some great gash, cut possibly by a fall or landslide in the winter, and as we go along he shows us some of these bare patches, yet unhealed, torn by an avalanche of stones and mud and snow.

We pass on long trestle bridges over foaming torrents far below, and it makes us shudder to think what would happen if the train went over. That man in the smoking-car last night told me a story of what happened to himself on this line, some twenty years ago, when he was crossing over the barrier. The train he was in was trying to get up a tremendously steep incline on a dark and stormy night. The worst of these inclines are not used now, for the way has been engineered round them. The wheels were slipping on the greasy rails, and the engine was snorting and sending up showers of sparks, and inch by inch, foot by foot, the



driver manœuvred her up, till he reached one of these bridges. There is a man stationed on duty at each of them. There, notice his hut as we pass – they have to guard the road and see to the safety of it and signal to the train if anything happens to the bridge. The driver communicated with the man on the bridge he had reached, and asked him to wire for an engine to meet him at the next bridge and help him up. Engines are kept in certain places ready for an emergency like this; so the wire was sent and the train struggled on, but when they got to the next bridge there was no engine. The message had gone through all right, and the man in charge there had received a reply that the relief engine had started, and it ought to have arrived by then, but there was no sign of it. The line is a single one you notice, all the way, except at certain places, where there are loops to allow trains to pass each other in the same way as on some tram-lines. After waiting some time the engine-driver steamed slowly ahead. He climbed on and up, and went very slowly, expecting at every turn to meet the relief engine, or find it waiting for him, held up at a bridge. But no, there was no sign of it, and yet every bridge-keeper gave him the same message – it had been sent out and should have been here by now. At last he reached the depôt itself, but there was no engine! What had happened to it? It had been dispatched on the single line, full steam up, into that stormy night, and it had vanished completely! A search-party was sent out in the morning, and found at one of the loops a slight fracture in the line; close to it the ground had been ploughed up, and there,

far below, lay a shattered mass of iron and steel in the narrow valley, with the torrent plunging over it. For some unexplained reason the engine had left the rails and pitched straight over the precipice, carrying with her the two men in charge, who were, of course, killed outright.

Beside the bridges there are tunnels and snow-sheds frequently on this line. Our puny tunnels in England are nothing to these; a new one which is just being bored through the Selkirks and fitted with electric light, is five miles in length! The snow-sheds are very peculiar; they are built out over the line with sloping roofs, so that when the avalanches of snow and stones and ice come flying down as the grip of winter relaxes, they are carried off right over any train that may happen to be passing, and thunder on into the valley below. For the line is for the most part laid on a mere shelf hewn out of the rock, with a precipice on the one side and the towering wall of the mountain on the other. We are not likely to get avalanches or snow-slides now, but in the spring it is an extraordinary experience to be in the train and hear the roar and rattle, as of big guns, followed by a hail of bullets, as tons of stuff come down, and most of it goes shooting into space, though a good deal is left on the sheds.

These deep narrow valleys through which the rivers foam are called cañons, and the narrowest point we pass through is called Hell's Gate. Here the rigid walls of the cliffs come so near together that you could easily throw a stone across, and the tossing, foaming water careers along hundreds of feet below.

The marvel is how any engineer could have made a line here at all. Think of the blasting and of the machinery which had to be used; how did they ever manage it? For before the track was cut there was nothing to rest on. The engineers must have rigged up some sort of scaffolding, I suppose, but it seems incredible. They had no choice but to do it, for there was no other way to get the line through, except by these narrow valleys, already occupied by a tempestuous river. The railway never would have been made at all but for that grand old man, Lord Strathcona, who died so recently. It was he who inspired people with his own enthusiasm and indomitable perseverance, and he at last who had the honour of driving in the spike which joined up the two ends of the line, that coming up from the Pacific slope, and that which had run across the plains from the Atlantic, and thus he bridged the continent. One of the finest peaks in the mountains is called after him. And the great "park" of 830 square miles, now being formed on Vancouver Island, is to be called Strathcona Park.

The loops which the line makes are another thing to notice. Far up we can see another train crawling about on the mountain-side, which seems impossible! How did it get there? The negro attendant sees us staring, and grins, showing his set of splendid white teeth, "Soon see him below," he says, and he is right; in a comparatively short time we have passed that train at a siding, and afterwards, on looking down, see it deep below us in the valley. The line makes the ascent in a series of great loops, and the sides of these, seen from above or below, appear to be straight

lines.

Revelstoke is one of the interesting places we pass; here a branch goes off to the Kootenay country, where there is splendid land and climate for fruit-growing alongside the great lakes.

You ought to be beginning to know something about Canada now. First the salmon-fishing, then the lumbering, next the cattle-export, and now the fruit-growing. It is a fine and prosperous country.

It is the wrong time of year for the fruit, or we might have made an excursion to the south to get a look at it, for we could go down the great lakes, through the Crow's Nest Pass, and back again to the main line in a loop. But the blossom will all be over, of course; in spring it is as great a sight as it is in Japan, with the flowers springing out all along the trunk and branches like the hackles of a cock! Cherries are one of the chief exports, and then there are peaches, pears, apples, and plums, with other things such as strawberries and potatoes to fill in. But many a man's heart must sink when he comes out first from the old country and sees the wilderness he has to start on, for even if it is "cleared" there may be stumps of huge trees sticking up all over, and stones everywhere; it is all much rougher than our neat, tidied-up country. But then, on the other hand, the land is far cheaper, the soil is much more fruitful, and consequently the yield greater. After Revelstoke we pass Glacier, where the line runs round in a kind of amphitheatre, showing a magnificent range of peaks in solemn grandeur rising above the fringe of fir

trees.

We have come down from the Selkirk range and now rise to the Rockies, where the track is even steeper and more twisted; here the snowy peaks lifted into the region of eternal snow are higher, but the scenery is not so easily seen, as we are more hemmed in by even narrower cañons. The main interest is in going through Kicking Horse Pass; but here even the negro attendant fails – he cannot tell us how the name arose! His spirits droop, but rise again when he comes eagerly to tell us we are approaching the "Great Divide." We have been running through many tunnels in and out of the "Cathedral Rocks," and now we reach the water-shed of the country, where sparkling streams fall away in opposite directions, one running down to the Pacific, and the other to Hudson's Bay in the north-west. At last we reach Banff, a well-known place, with a huge hotel of the most luxurious kind, belonging to the Canadian Pacific Company. Near Banff is the Canadian National Park, a park indeed, of 5732 square miles, including mountains and forests! You simply can't imagine it; it is a great tract of country, preserved in its natural state, and the haunt of wild things. Here are herds of the buffalo of the West, the bison, a very different fellow from the domesticated Eastern buffalo who so rudely chased you and Joyce. The bison are fine to look at, with their extraordinarily large chests and heads, out of all proportion to the rest of their bodies. Their great shaggy fronts and humped shoulders make a peculiar outline. In years past they were cruelly hunted

and killed, but are now protected and encouraged. Now the Government is doing its best to save the remnant.

The amount of land yet wholly untrodden in the heart of these great mountains is difficult to realise; even the Indians only pass through some of it, and no white man's foot has ever touched more than a tithe. Grizzly bears, cinnamon bears, deer, wild sheep, and goats live still in these fastnesses, quite undisturbed by the little line that threads through from sea to sea.

# CHAPTER XXXI

## ON A CATTLE RANCH

Do you remember your first sight of the sea? I've not forgotten mine, though it must have been many years before yours. I suppose I wasn't more than four, and kindly patronising elder brothers and sisters had tried to describe it to me beforehand, but the most I pictured was a very, very big pond, with water as flat and uninteresting as that of most ponds. No one can have any real notion of the sea before seeing it; and it is the same with the prairie. I have often imagined it, but now that we are actually on it, driving over it, I find that all my mind-pictures are lifeless compared with the reality. It gives one a feeling of freedom, as if one had been living always in rooms and suddenly got out. It is not flat like a table, but full of gentle curves and sweeps, as if it were always just going to reveal something unknown, and yet it reaches on for ever on all sides. It makes us feel quite insignificant as our conveyance crawls along the centre of a gigantic circle which appears to move with us. But the thing which is most surprising is the beauty of it. The grass is growing freely and is very fresh, and mingled with it, like poppies and cornflowers in a wheatfield, are innumerable flowers, red and blue and yellow, shining like jewels in the brilliant sunlight – some are like sunflowers, and others, growing singly, are tall red lilies. There are clumps of

trees, too, here and there, little round islands of them, bluffs, they are called. We have left the mountains now and descended into the great plains once only inhabited by wild tribes of the Redskins and mighty herds of buffalo, but now for the most part taken up by white men for grazing-ground.

When our engine ran into Calgary station, with a great clanging of the big bell, we found a sunburnt lean young man of twenty or so, in the shady hat, blue shirt, breeches, and leggings we have become accustomed to now. He greeted us very shortly: "For Mr. Humphrey's ranch?" and when we said "Yes," led the way outside to where an odd kind of waggonette, drawn by two horses, was waiting. We gather it is called a "democrat," for we heard the stationmaster say, "Put 'em in the democrat" as sundry square wooden boxes were gathered up from a storehouse. Our luggage was a mere trifle compared with the miscellaneous mass of sacks and boxes and bundles that were piled in behind. We were six hours late, as we were due at two this morning and it is now eight. I remark on it to our silent young driver when he gathers up the reins. He laughs shortly. "You never can tell, sometimes it's as much as a day – "

The trail out on to the boundless prairie, after getting clear of the town, is merely marked by two deep ruts. When we meet another "rig," as conveyances of any sort are called here, the driver usually goes off on to the grass to make way for us, as we have a heavy load, a courtesy our young driver acknowledges by raising his whip.



It is very, very hot, and as we jog along in silence it is difficult not to fall asleep. It seems a long, long time before the driver points with his whip to a distant herd of cattle.

"They belong to the Lone Pine Ranch," he volunteers. That's the ranch we are going to stay at. Then a group of log buildings, with a few trees near, rises out of the plain, and we draw nearer and nearer steadily and realise this is our destination.

The principal house is built entirely of logs and has a sort of verandah around. Mr. Humphrey himself is waiting outside, and at a shout from him a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked woman in a pretty pink cotton dress and sunbonnet joins him, followed by a tiny toddling child.

Their welcome is as warm as all the others we have received in Canada. To our surprise the young driver turns out to be the Humphreys' son!

His father and mother laugh heartily as he disappears round the corner of the house to unyoke the horses.

"Edmund is the best man at holding his tongue I ever came across," says Mr. Humphrey; "seems to have been born that way; he doesn't get it from either of us!"

Mrs. Humphrey is doing all the work of the house herself, for her husband, five children, and three hired men, with the help of an Indian woman for the rough scrubbing.

"You can't get servants here," she says; "and if you brought them out from England they'd get married in the first week."

Edmund reappears for dinner, followed by three other young

men dressed precisely alike. They sit down in a lump at one end of the wooden table and solidly consume immense helpings of boiled beef and dumpling, which Mrs. Humphrey carries in, disdaining any help. When we have finished she smilingly produces half a dozen jam tartlets from a cupboard.

"I made them for you," she says, looking at you. "I'm proud of my pastry, but I had to hide them, for Edmund and his father have an awful sweet tooth, and if I'd put them out there wouldn't have been one left."

There are gurgles and nudges from the lower end of the table, and I see you grow scarlet as the plate of tartlets is solemnly put in front of you. I'll help you out. I have a "sweet tooth" too, and the toddler will do his best, as he has one bestowed on him by his mother.

There is a crash in the little scullery opening off the room we are in, and as the mistress of the house jumps up with an exclamation the round moon-face of an Indian woman appears for a moment in the doorway.

It seems she has upset the coffee which she was going to bring in. Some of it is saved from the wreck, though the "boys" have to go without. As they file past, back to their work, Edmund follows last and snatches a tartlet while his mother's back is turned, winking at you as he does it. Mr. Humphrey immediately bolts another rather guiltily, so one, looking very small, is left alone in the plate.

I'm afraid Mrs. Humphrey thinks we have gobbled them up!

This room has nothing to hide the bare wooden walls except a few pictures from illustrated papers and a photo or two pinned up. The great stove is a very ugly thing, and its pipe goes out through the roof. Our room, which opens off on the same floor, is the merest slip of a place, with hardly room for the couple of camp-beds side by side. From the photos I guess it is Edmund's room, and that he has gone off to sleep with the men in their quarters near the barn meantime. We have the luxury of an enamel basin on a tripod, but, as Mr. Humphrey explains, it's much easier to get a wash down with a bucket outside.

While we sit on the verandah he explains that he has three other children now at school; they will be back presently, and almost as he speaks a waggonette with a roof over it appears in the distance, and soon three rosy-faced girls, aged about seven, nine, and eleven, tumble out, waving good-byes to a few friends who go on in the conveyance, before they run in to get their dinner.

"The authorities send the children from the outlying farms to school, and fetch them again free now," says Mr. Humphrey. "It's the latest thing, and a good thing too, or they would have to go without education when they live as far away as this."

"The marvel to me is how Mrs. Humphrey manages to do it all," I say.

"You haven't heard the half!" he ejaculates. "She does all the washing, looks after the pigs and poultry you see around here, milks the cows, and finds time to go to every dance within twenty

miles. She's a great deal keener on dancing than Edmund is, though she makes him go with her. That's not all, either; she'll show you herself her prizes – albums and things she has won – that very rocking-chair you are sitting in is one of them; those are for winning ladies' races, there isn't one that can beat her. The finest day she ever did was two years ago, when Harry, that's the little one, was only ten months old. She got up and did the family washing at five, milked the cows, drove into Edmonton with the kid – she hadn't anyone to leave it with you see; she did her shopping, turned up at Poplar Lake Fair in the afternoon, and got someone to hold Harry while she won the ladies' race there, giving a handicap to the field! She's the finest dancer in the country round and has won things for that too."

Yet she looks not much more than a girl now!

Next morning we are up early, as Mr. Humphrey has asked us if we would like to go with him to see some cattle "shipped" by rail at Red Deer, thirty miles away on a branch of the main line between Calgary and Edmonton.

The "boys" have been off with the beasts long before.

We reach Red Deer by half-past nine, and see from afar the great herd of cattle, standing lumped together, while the young men, including our silent friend, Edmund, sit motionless as statues on ponies surrounding them.

As we get nearer we see kraals, or enclosures, close to the railway line, and on a siding some empty cattle-trucks ready. We are left to sit in the buggy – another name for a conveyance –

while Mr. Humphrey gives orders and the boys begin to round the cattle up. It is a sight to see them, for they seem simply to flow round the herd in a continuous stream, they gallop so fast and handle their long-lashed whips so cleverly. The outer gate of one of the kraals has been unbarred, and the beasts are run through the opening into the kraal without the slightest hitch.

Mr. Humphrey walks across and seats himself on the high railing of the kraal near the trucks. Then a bar is taken out on this side, the first opening having been closed, and the cowboys send the cattle through this on to the slanting gangway leading to the first truck. The truck holds just nineteen beasts, and when nineteen are out of the kraal Mr. Humphrey drops the bar behind the last.

It is a difficult job to get the nineteen into the truck, for they are frightened and suspicious and there is only just room enough for them all to pack in. But at last it is done, the door is fastened, and the truck moved on so that the next one comes abreast of the gangway. When all the trucks but one have been loaded, we count and discover that there are twenty-two cattle left. Mr. Humphrey shouts out that a certain white steer must go in any case, and he indicates the three beasts which can be left.

But, of course, when the whole lot come through in a bunch the white steer remains till the last! They are sent back again and brought forward once more; the three unwanted ones press forward, and the white steer remains by himself in the kraal, refusing to come out at all. It is exactly as if the beasts had

understood what had been said and were determined to give as much trouble as possible.

The boys do their work admirably. This time they "cut out" the three unwanted ones and send them careering off across the prairie, to make their own way homeward. The remaining eighteen are fitted into the truck, and then they turn to tackle the steer, who stands in the middle of the kraal waiting.

Two or three of them, including Edmund, sidle up to him on their ponies and try to edge him toward the gangway. But he only paws the ground and throws his head up in the air. Just as Mr. Humphrey shouts out a warning, everything happens all together in a second.

The steer makes a mad rush. Edmund, who is nearest the gate, is through it like a flash. The second man gallops for the other gate leading out of the kraal on to the prairie, but the third, who is in the middle of the green space, hesitates for an instant and is lost. The great beast is at him, the pony wheels, slips, and falls, and his rider is shot off. Another minute and the steer is on to him, pommelling at him with its great horns. Edmund, however, has snatched up a lasso and is back into the kraal like a streak of light; without ever checking his gallop he flings the lasso round the enraged beast's head, and drags him away in a great semicircle through the now open gate on to the prairie. We see him with a sharp turn jerk the animal off its feet, and then a revolver shot rings out; there is a convulsive kick or two and the great steer lies dead.

Meantime the others have run to lift up the unconscious man in the kraal. Luckily he is not much the worse, for he has only a fractured collar-bone and a broken arm. He was stunned by his hard fall, but soon comes round. Nobody seems to think much of this, but they all congratulate him on having escaped with nothing worse. These accidents are daily risks in a cowboy's life.

It is late before we get back, and we have no time to wander round the homestead that day. Next morning you are up and out early to investigate something for yourself. I know quite well what it is, for you talked "gopher" in your sleep.

In coming across the prairie we saw here and there colonies of odd little beasts that looked a cross between a squirrel and a rat. They jumped up and sat on the tops of their holes to see us pass, and then disappeared like a Jack-in-the-box when we got near. When I go out a bit later I find you in fits of laughter at the inquisitive little creatures. They can't resist peeping, and when they have popped into their holes, back come the little heads and bright eyes to watch what you are doing. I am pretty tired, as I was kept awake most of the night by a bird in a tree near the window which kept saying, "Whip-poor-will" over and over again at intervals. I understand that's its name, and it is hated by the ranchers. No, it is not the bright little black and white bird like a small magpie which pecks around, that is a Whisky-Jack.

I spend a gloriously lazy morning watching you crawling around behind the holes and trying to grab the gophers! Needless to say you never get one!

At dinner-time Mr. Humphrey is much amused at your game. "They drive dogs just frantic," he says, "especially young ones that don't know them. Rabbits aren't in it!"

After dinner he suggests driving us round the ranch, and invites you to come and help him to yoke up. A minute or two later you both reappear without the horses.

"A brute of a skunk," says Mr. Humphrey tersely; "we'll have to wait a while."

It seems that one of these awful beasts has got into the shed among the harness, and till he chooses to move nothing can be done. Naturally I want to see him.

"You'll have to be as quiet as a mouse," you say, guiding me round on tiptoe. "Mr. Humphrey says that he has a store of acrid fluid that stinks like rotten eggs, and if he's disturbed he lets you know it. It's weeks and months before any place is free from the smell."

So we peep cautiously and see an animal about the size of a large cat, with bright black and white markings, lying harmlessly on a pile of harness. It has no sting, no formidable claws or beak, and yet it is able to keep any number of men from disturbing it while it chooses to lie on their possessions. No god could receive more respect from his believers. It is after tea-time when you, creeping to report, tell us the good news that at last Mr. Skunk has gone away!

A day or two later Mr. Humphrey says he will take us to see an Indian reserve, as he thinks we ought not to leave the country



without seeing one.

You know the Indians are now looked after by the Government. There are certain pieces of land kept for them, and no one else may live on them. As the white men have spread over the land, and used it for corn and cattle, the Indians have been driven farther back, and find more difficulty in getting a living, so now Government agents are appointed to manage these reserves; they know all the Indians in their charge, and deal out to them certain amounts of stores and look after them.

The settlement we are to visit is at Battle River, about forty miles south of Edmonton. The day chosen is the one when the Indians come in from the country to get their rations. They are a shabby-looking crowd as they gather up near the lumber houses where the agent lives and where the stores are kept.

These are men and women of the tribe of the Crees, a very quiet, peaceful tribe, not troublesome, like the Blood Indians. If you imagined we should see them with feathers sticking out round their heads and fringes of scalps on their leggings you will be terribly disappointed. All these men are in European clothes, with round black felt hats, soiled coats, and blue overalls for trousers. The only thing Indian about them are their moccasins, the soft leather foot-covering they wear instead of boots. They have broad faces, lanky hair, dark reddish skins, and rather a sullen expression mostly, and look dirty and untidy, like old tramps. The squaws, who wear old shawls and skirts, sit solemnly smoking all the time; they nearly all carry on their backs

papooses (babies) tied up tightly like little mummies. There are endless numbers of lean cur dogs, yapping and snarling at each other as they prowl for scraps.

The Indians go in single file past the counter in the store and get rice and tea and flour dealt out to them, and then each one receives a portion of meat. The agent speaks to each of them by name, calling them Jim, Dick, or Charlie. Such grand names as "Sitting-Bull" or "Swift-as-the-Moose" are mostly discarded now in favour of something more European, which is considered more fashionable. The Indians hardly speak and never smile, the expression on their faces does not alter in the slightest when the agent chaffs them. When they leave the store they carry their provisions over to where a lot of rough-looking ponies are grazing. Do you see what a simple arrangement these ponies drag? It is made merely of a couple of long sticks, which run on each side of the pony like shafts; at the back the ends are crossed and tied together and trail on the ground. The goods are fixed on to these sticks, and then, seating themselves on the top of the bundles, the Indians set off homeward, followed by their patient squaws, who trail along after them on foot, carrying the papooses.

## CHAPTER XXXII

# THE GREAT LAKES

If we found the prairie astonishing even when uncultivated, what of this? Corn, ripened in the sun, and spreading over mile after mile on both sides of the railway line! There are no neat little fences to cut it up into fields, and it does not grow unevenly, but all at one height, so the effect is a flat and boundless plain, yellow as the desert sand. Everyone has heard of the grain fields of Canada, the great stretch of land, about a thousand miles in width, from whence corn is shipped to the remotest ends of the earth.

We lingered on so long with the Humphreys that already the harvest is ready for cutting. On leaving Calgary we passed through some towns with astonishing names. The first we noticed was Medicine Hat, which Mr. Kipling has written about as "The Town that was Born Lucky," because gas was discovered in great quantities below the surface, and when holes are bored for it huge jets spring forth and can be used in countless ways; even the engines of the C.P.R. make use of it.

Then we came across Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Indian Head, and Portage La Prairie. I forget at which of these it was we saw Indians in all the gaudy finery of their ancestors, with feathers sticking up on their heads, buckskin shirts covered all over with

beads and decorated with tassels, in which coloured grasses were twisted. As the Indian may not take scalps now he has to find other trimmings! These men dress up like this to attract tourists, because they want to sell buffalo horns, bead-work moccasins and bags, and many other things.

Then we got to Regina, the headquarters of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and were lucky enough to catch sight of one or two of the force in their neat work-manlike khaki, with their round broad-brimmed hats which the Boy Scouts have imitated. These men are hard as nails and absolutely fearless; the story of the adventures of the force would make a thrilling book.

At every station we notice tall odd-looking buildings which form no part of an English station. These are grain-elevators. When the farmer has threshed his corn he can bring it here and receive a receipt for it, and have it stored; then it is run up to the top of one of these places by endless ropes, and thence can be easily poured down out of a funnel-like shaft into the waiting trucks for shipment.

At last there is a farm where the corn is being cut! I have been watching to see one. That row of machines following each other, in what seems from here to be a line, are cutting and binding the corn and turning it out in neat sheaves. The Canadian farmer is often very much ahead of us in the way of machinery. He has to be, for sometimes he has furrows four miles long and a farm the size of an English county. There is, for instance, a steam-plough which takes twelve fourteen-inch furrows at once! What would

an English yokel, meandering along at the tail of his two slow horses, say to that? His little job would be done before it was time for breakfast! Hullo! there is another field, all in stooks already – look across the boundless plain to the horizon. There is nothing to be seen but stooks and that thin telephone wire running like a line in the sky in the far distance. When you look at any map of Canada you can't help noticing how straight the boundaries of the provinces are, just as if ruled with a ruler; as a matter of fact they run usually on lines of longitude or latitude, and are thus very different from our county boundaries, which have grown up anyhow. This province we are now in, Manitoba, has recently been increased by an immense area of land in the north, so that it now has a seashore on Hudson Bay, but before that it was nearly square. The farms are measured out in the same exact way too; men have land given to them in sections a mile square, and a man can take more than one section, or he can have a part of one, but every bit of land granted is marked out evenly like the squares on a chess-board.

The days of our journey east seem to be just a succession of endless cornfields and grain-elevators, with glimpses of busy towns and small stations. And in the evening we see a yellow glow of sunset lighting up the uncut fields in a splendour of light that is worth coming far to see. There is a very striking difference about the twilight here and in the East. You remember there how night seemed to shut down close upon sunset, here the light remains on in the sky for many hours, even at nine o'clock we can see the

hands of our watches.

Every now and then we discover our watches are an hour slow, and we have to jump the pointers on. This is because Canada and the States are divided up into strips by north and south lines, which mark off the time to be kept in each. As I explained long ago – how very long ago it seems! – America is too vast a continent to keep one set time from shore to shore, as we do in our little country, so it was found convenient to make definite lines, each one hour apart, all the way across.

Then we arrive at Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba and the largest corn-market in the world. The town is almost exactly half-way across Canada. But we are not going to stop here, for towns do not interest us so much as nature, though if we could have had a peep into the wide main street, with its towering buildings, remembering it was a prairie trail thirty years ago, it would have been worth while.

The rest of that day we run through much prettier scenery than the cornland, which has become very monotonous, and at night-time arrive at a place called Port Arthur, where we are going to leave the train and explore the Great Lakes. Well may they be called "Great"! In Lake Superior, the largest of the five, you could put the whole of your native land, Scotland, and have nearly two thousand square miles left over! This is the largest fresh-water lake in the world. There are five lakes here lying together, and the three largest – Superior, Michigan, and Huron – spring from a common centre and stretch out just like the fingers of a

horse-chestnut leaf, but you will find out all this to-morrow.

It is a glorious afternoon the next day when we first catch sight of the steamer waiting to take us across Lake Superior. She is more like an ocean liner than anything else. She is called the *Hamonic*, and is indeed as large as many of the ships of well-known lines running out to the East from England, for she is five thousand tons, with accommodation for four hundred first-class passengers. On the upper deck is an observation room with windows along the whole length of each side. For all we can see, when once we are out of sight of the shore, we might have left Canada for ever and be taking our final plunge across the Atlantic homeward. And it is the same thing all the next day. We see no land and might as well be on the broad ocean, until, after luncheon, we come to the great lock, or canal, which joins the two lakes of Superior and Huron. It is nine hundred feet long, and had to be made because the levels of the two lakes are different, and no steamer could have come through the rapids which the Indians used to love to shoot in their canoes. When we are through the lock we stop at a large and flourishing place called Sault Ste Marie, and then get into far the prettiest part of the route among the islands, where we see fine trees already turning crimson and gold. Right across Lake Huron we go, passing the entrance to Lake Michigan, and reach Sarnia at one o'clock the next day. Sarnia stands on a narrow strait, and just opposite is part of the territory of the United States of America.

If Canadians are sons and daughters of Great Britain, the

Americans are first cousins, for there is no other country in the world, outside the British Empire, of nearer kin to us than the mighty nation which leads in the van of progress in all manufactures and enterprise.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

# OLD FRIENDS AGAIN

Supposing that some of our friends in Britain, who are expecting to greet us at home in a week, could see us now, suddenly, I wonder where they would think we had got to! Covered in borrowed oilskins, we stand in a mighty cavern, whose vast stone roof reaches up to a hundred feet or more, though in width it is comparatively narrow, like a long shelf. In front of us is a wall of water so thick and overwhelming that it resembles a curtain of giants; the roar of the falling water and the howl of the never-ceasing wind mingle in a great turmoil, and the air is thick with dashing spray. Fitting is the name of the Cave of the Winds! For we are standing in a cave right beneath one of the wonders of the world – the Falls of Niagara, on the American side. We have only had a glimpse of the gigantic waterfall so far, for we came straight here, and presently are going round outside on an electric tram.

These Falls lie between the two least of the Great Lakes, Erie and Ontario, and on one side of them is America, and the other Canada. We crossed on a bridge from the American side to an island in the middle called Goat Island, and then dived downward to this gigantic cave right below the American Fall. It gives one a mighty idea of power, doesn't it? The world can't afford to

waste power nowadays when it can be harnessed up for use in generating electricity and a hundred other ways, and not long before the end of the last century power stations were started on both sides of the Falls to use this force. People cried out at first, thinking that the stupendous sight might be spoiled, but not a bit of it. What man has used is but as a few spoonfuls compared with the vast energy of the tons of water flowing resistlessly and ceaselessly day and night down these precipices and onward to the sea. Put out your finger and thrust it into the wall of water; the force of it sends your arm down to your side like a railway signal. We are not alone in the cave; there are many other people from all parts of the world. We heard French and German talked as we came across, though there is no chance of hearing any conversation now. As we climb up again and put off the wet oilskins, kept for the use of visitors, the roar becomes less, and when suddenly someone takes hold of my arm in a friendly way, and calls out my name, I wheel round to face the "nice" American who saved us from starvation in the train in Egypt! He has recognised us at once and grips our hands heartily. When we emerge on to the bridge he is full of questions about our trip, and wants to know what we have seen and what we have done. He has with him a boy who looks several years older than you, and he tells us that this is his son, who is studying at Harvard, but off on the long vacation. So we all go together back to Prospect Park, on the American side, and get into an electric car, which swings over a bridge just below the Falls, where we can see the whole

grand panorama and both Falls. The Canadian one is called the Horseshoe Fall. Often you must have seen pictures of Niagara; but pictures do not convey much, and this is one of the few sights in the world that runs beyond expectation. As the torrent pouring over strikes the water below, the foam flies up in a vast frothy mass into the air; we, from our height, look down upon it and upon a tiny steamer in the basin just below. The reason why the steamer is able to sail so near the Falls without being swept down is because the falling water descends with such force that it goes right below the surface of the bay and does not agitate it at all. On the other side, away from the Falls, farther down the river, there is a high suspension bridge belonging to the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, with a place for carriages and foot-passengers below the lines. A carriage crawling over it looks like a small beetle. There was an awful scene here not so long ago in the winter-time, when the river was frozen from shore to shore. Some people were on the ice, which began to break up in large blocks, and in the very sight of hundreds of their fellow-creatures, who vainly tried to save them by throwing ropes, several were swept away, including a man and his wife, who were on a floating hummock. The man actually got hold of one of the ropes, but his wife had fainted, and in trying to support her the rope slipped through his fingers, and together the two black specks on the white ice-block were borne by the current to their doom. A never-to-be-forgotten tragedy!

After we have crossed the water we run along on the Canadian

side close to the edge of the cliff, high up, following the course of the current downward; we go round a great curve, where it boils in a whirlpool, we pass by a tall monument, and then, much farther down, we cross another bridge, and are brought back on the American side, where the line runs at first low down and gradually mounts till, after passing below the suspension bridge, we reach our starting-place. While we are close to the surface of the water we see the Rapids splendidly. This is where the swift water from the Falls has come again to the surface, and, hemmed in by the walls of the gorge, it tosses in fury; long sprays leap up from below like grabbing fingers clutching to drag men down; miniature whirlpools boil, and in the centre the water is forced up higher than at the sides.

All the time our American friend and his son, who seems quite a man of the world, and has been to the Falls several times before, are trying to persuade us to go home by New York and pay them a visit *en route*. Unfortunately we cannot. Our passages are booked by a steamer belonging to the Allan Line, which sails from Montreal the day after to-morrow. But I think perhaps sometime we may come back and make a tour of the States!

It is hard to say good-bye and tear ourselves away from our hospitable friends, but it must be done. The next day sees us at the fine city of Montreal, having come by way of Toronto, the capital of Ontario.

Montreal is a very bright city, with trees lining the streets and the mountains rising at the back, and all the inhabitants seem

cheerful and good-natured. The great liner waiting to carry us homeward can only get as far as this up the St. Lawrence in the summer; in winter she sets down her passengers at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, right out on the ocean.

As she steams slowly up the beautiful river we see the trees bursting out here and there into a perfect flame of colour. The maple is Canada's special tree, and it is the maples that make those crimson flame-like patches among the other foliage. We notice, too, what an unusual quantity of dead wood is left standing; this, in a small country like England, would be cleared out or cut away, but here the forests are so vast that it is left to rot.

Then we pass Quebec on its heights, where Wolfe won his great victory, and so made Canada British for ever. It is odd, however, to notice, especially during the last part of our journey, how very French the people are in their ways and customs. At one small station I remember hearing a man chatting away in French and gesticulating like a Frenchman, and as he turned to go another called after him, "Ha, MacDougall!" The truth is that the original settlers here were mostly French, but after a while many emigrants came over from Scotland and intermarried with them, and the children, who naturally bore their father's surnames, learned their mother's native tongue!

Once out of the St. Lawrence we begin to feel the roll of the great waves, but we need not at this time of year expect anything very bad, and we shall see no icebergs. The early summer is the worst time for them, for the warm currents have loosened them

from the icefields in the north, and they float southwards. The voyage is uneventful, and, seasoned sailors as we are, we never miss a meal during the week that it takes to cross before we sight the chimneys and wharves of grimy Liverpool.

As we step on to British soil once more, on the wharf we turn and look at each other.

Has it come up to expectation? You are not sorry you went with me?

As for me, I have never had a pleasanter companion and never wish for one. Hullo! here are your people, ready to carry you off, rejoiced to find you safe and sound after not having seen you for nearly a year, during which time you have spanned the world and travelled somewhere about twenty-five thousand miles.

Good-bye!

**THE END**