

On the Roof of the World



MOOBLIES (FEMLES DEDICATED TO GOD SHANDOBRA)

GROUP OF BHOOTAS DARJEELING

ALCUTTA was hot—steaming! The air was a white haze and dust clouds blinded the passers by. On the broad verandah of the Great Eastern hotel, when the sultry afternoon lay heavy as a pall on body and soul, the weary guests reclined on long chairs, the men taking frequent "pegs," the women languidly sipping tea.

Below, in the hot street, which so far as public buildings, shops and cafes, gardens and statues are concerned, might have been in Montreal or Toronto, so ultra-modern as they appear, passed in incessant throng the bare-headed, bare-footed Bengalis—a nervous, volatile and effeminate people—clad in white muslin and excitedly gesticulating. We watched vaguely and languidly the incongruous scenes: electric trams whirring past bullock carts of mediaeval form and fashion; English officers most correctly groomed, riding on big walters past sensuous and much-bejeweled nautch girls; civilian officers leaning back in their elegant carriages; hobbling beggars each with staff and bowl; half-naked coolies mending a road; crowds of toy-sellers, sweetmeat vendors, snake-charmers, touts; guides and tourists in white ducks and helmets staring at the eccentric commonplaces of Europe and Asia here placed cheek by jowl, as it were for their special amusement.

The Bengali is the pet aversion of the average Englishman, more especially the Anglo-Indian. He talks too much. He riots in a multiplicity of tedious details. He hates athletics, bodily exertion. He expounds political opinions—the Anglo-Indian most fervently detests politics—and holds and expresses views on the future of India. He is the most un-English person on the face of the earth, and therefore by every true sahib who believes in roast beef and violent exercise, cordially despised.

Calcutta is the headquarters of Indian discontent; the Bengali is the most bitter and the most verbose critic of the Government. Just then he was indulging in a Silent Strike and setting an example in tactics by which the discontented French telegraphists profited a few months later. That is, he went through the routine skilfully, and wilfully made many mistakes. Telegrams went to the wrong addresses or didn't go at all. Letters were sent far astray. Business was seriously impeded. It was a trying period.

"They're not men," growled a Post Office official from his deep chair; "the babu makes an admirable clerk, but as a rebel he is an utter failure. He would run from his own shadow. But he is nevertheless dangerous. His seditious schemes may incite the Punjabis to revolt. Recently two Sikh regiments had to be disbanded. We expect another Mutiny; it might break the monotony of things, and that would be something. What do they want? Nobody knows—the Bengalis least of all. England is too generous and too lenient. Great Scott! If an Englishman now looks the wrong way at a babu, much less strikes him, he is brought to court, and it is a fine of a hundred good rupees."

The Anglo-Indian waxed wroth at this great injustice. With the finger of scorn he pointed over the way to a big white building. "That's the Viceroy's kitchen," said he. "From there food is carried to the Residency. You see that beggar without a rag to his back and ashes and cowdung on his hair, sitting silent at the gates? Well, he would rather starve—rather die a dozen deaths—than touch a bite the Viceroy had so much as looked at. What can you do with people who will not eat with us or drink with us or have anything at all to do with us, except take our money, lose our letters, and talk at and worry us into an early grave?"

To the stranger nothing seemed more natural than a strike from all kinds of toil in this muggy, oppressive climate.

"This is the cold weather," continued the official, lifting a handkerchief to his moist brow. "Wait till the hot season commences! Then you will know the beauty of our India." The glory of Calcutta had vanished. The season was almost over. Tired of festivities—the endless parties and balls, the polo and the tennis tournaments, the brilliantly spectacular races—important officials both civil and military, worn out with work and amusements, and the fashionable English visitors who flit like butterflies from London's fog and gloom

to Calcutta during what is termed the cold weather, began talking of the fresh delights of Simla and Darjeeling.

Bengal was a hotbed of sedition. Everybody looked discontented, as if going on strike. Calcutta seemed to have formed a conspiracy of heat and native ill-feeling that made life a heavy burden for the true sahib for whom the universe was created.

It was quite time to go up to Darjeeling!

Train traveling in India is not always delightful. The journey to Darjeeling, the "Queen of the Hill Stations," takes twenty hours. It has none of the vaunted "luxuries of Oriental travel," but luckily it is broken and diversified and, in its utilitarian way, is almost a romance.

In the afternoon, from the Sealdah station, the train leaves Calcutta. There is much bustle on the platform. Native guards and porters get excited and lose their heads. They rush frantically to and fro; bow, politely to the wrong persons; wave their arms; shriek directions to subordinates; and hold peculiar and most original views as to what time the train starts.

Passengers grow hot and cross. "Jow!" (be off) they reiterate at frequent intervals and with increasing irritability to newsboys and fruit and sweatmeat sellers crowding round the windows. The train at last moves out, and soon is gliding past the Calcutta suburbs. There are graceful clumps of palms; ponds choked with yellow and scarlet leaves; dusty villages with their mud huts, within mud walls, peeping out from under the broad-leaved trees—soon giving place in turn to the open country, the rich rice fields of fertile and exuberant Bengal.

A fat Babu dressed in High Holborn coat and hat, but with bare brown legs showing under his immaculate white muslin skirt, puts on his gold spectacles and solemnly reads the mining and stock exchange reports. Three young Eurasian bloods, Indians in appearance, English in manners, with the weaknesses of both races amalgamated, their hats cocked at the back of narrow, receding foreheads—light cigarettes and chatter loudly as to their drinking exploits. They are blasé men of the world, clerks in the dry goods shop, who boast that they are seeing life, and endeavor to foster the impression that they are very gay dogs indeed. Their weak, mirthless laughter shocks the old babu. A gallant but very stolid Major, entrenched behind a barricade of luggage, sits scowling in a corner, enraged at having been placed in the same carriage with "natives."

At eight o'clock we come to the Damukden ghat, 116 miles from Calcutta, where a steamer is ready to convey all passengers across the ancient Ganges. Dinner is served on deck. Keen-witted Parsees attend to the catering, as to most of the money-making concerns of India. Once followers of Zoroaster, their worship of fire has long since changed to the worship of gold. A ferry steamer, crowded with Philistine tourists and carrying prosaic mails, seems a desecration of the sacred river, but the kindly night cloaks daring incongruities, until even to the unimpassioned Anglo-Saxon only the mystery and the majesty remain.

A train is waiting at the further shore of the Sava Ghat. "Boys" stagger under heavy boxes, and in reserved compartments spread out the bedding that is an essential of railway travel in India. For night journeying everyone supplies his or her own bedding. The more baggage the greater the sahib, so the Indian concludes.

Carriages are speedily stuffed with rugs and sheets and pillows. Bearers rush to and fro in order that the Major may not be soapless in the morning. The carriage becomes unbearably stuffy. The adipose babu lifts his thin legs, hidden in pajamas, into a top berth, and immediately snores happily. Tommy Atkins is to the fore. The night sounds with his husky voice. His cheerful accordion breaks forth in the latest hits of the Tivoli. You can tell to a nicety when he left England by the vintage of his song.

Some people manage to sleep; some snore; many growl at them and at the heat, and curse India from Tuticorin even to the Pass; others suffer in silence the long night through.

With worn-out and feverish passengers Siliguri is reached shortly after six in the morning.



A PHIL WOMAN AND CHILD

At this little station the Darjeeling-Himalayan railway commences. This line, with a gauge of only two feet, is regarded as one of the greatest engineering feats in the world.

After the close, wearisome night, the morning air fills one with exhilaration. At last we are leaving the Plains! Weary people regain their spirits, and, taking their seats in the little open cars, talk of the mountains and the snows.

This journey is entrancing. The great plains of Bengal, the most fertile in India, quiver in the sunlight and stretch, vague as a dream, to the horizon. Within a few miles we pass through part of the Terai, at the foot of the Himalayas, the most famous jungle in India, dense with all the luxuriance of tropic vegetation; violent with the generative life of tropic rains and sun; an impenetrable wilderness of bamboos that grow enormous trunks; great creepers which cling and twine from tree to tree like living things; cane that rises sixty feet, and grass that sends up blades fifteen feet in height; immense tree ferns, jungle grasses and strange flowering plants born of the terrific heat and great humidity; a wild, primeval world through which still roam the tiger and the elephant, the buffalo, the sambar and the rhinoceros, but so swampy, so malaria-infested, that in summer it is deserted even by the wild beasts.

As the train ascends the first slopes, the forest replaces the jungle; at two or three thousand feet, oaks, acacias, groves of graceful bamboo, indiarubber, fig and mulberry trees make their appearance; at five thousand feet grow the Himalaya tree ferns, twenty feet high. Only on the hillside may be seen the strange union of tropic and temperate flora; the pine embraces the palm, Heine's lovers united; the orchid clings to the oak; the tall bamboo wows the dark-veined ivy.

From five thousand to eight thousand feet, oaks and rhododendrons compose the mass of the forest—the latter not shrubs but trees bearing purple flowers. Still higher are seen pines, maples and the splendid deodars. To a height of eight thousand feet—the first range of the Himalayas—the forest follows the mountains to their summits, but in the higher ranges only a few brave trees and sturdy shrubs struggle to over 15,000 feet. Soon after all this vegetable life ceases, and nothing is left to the mighty mountains save the clouds and the sun and the eternal snows.

At Kurseong, where the train stops to take breath before running into Darjeeling, we seem to stand on the borders of two worlds—the Aryan and the Mongol. Ruddy hillfolk appear, yellow-skinned, flat-faced, slant-eyed, a stocky and a happy folk, Mongols who belong to an entirely different order of the human family from the Aryan.

At this little station of the Himalayas China has already made manifest its influence, conquering even the barrier of the great mountains. The Indian is slender, effeminate, over-refined, given to meditation and abstruse speculation, subtle-minded but servile; the Mongol of the Hills—the Lepcha or the Gurkha—is thick-set and robust, unintellectual but independent, a free mountaineer, healthy in body and in mind. The Indian retains but a slight hold on the things of the world; the stronger Mongol exults in the joy of life, breathes the happy content of the good earth, and at all times and in all seasons his big frame shakes with laughter.

Red-checked children in rags sell orchids they have just gathered on the hillsides. Old men and women, wrinkled by the winds and tanned by the sun, offer little knick-knacks and break into peals of laughter at the surprises of the tourist. One notes caste symbols marked on the brows of flat, yellow faces, the Hindu turban worn with the Chinese queue, influences of custom and of costume derived from both India and China curiously blended.

At Ghoom, where tea plantations spread their low bushes in the clearing of a hillside



jungle, the famous Ghoom dwarf, a serious little man, passes slowly along the platform from carriage to carriage, holding out his cap for backsheesh. He scorns to beg—simply holds out his cap, glances without a smile at the coins tossed into it, and passes on. He has taken the place of the late Ghoom witch, an old lady who plied the same trade of begging, and left a fortune for the assistance of less fortunate members of the craft.

An hour's run takes one past tea plantations, by valley and stream, villa and garden, down the slope to Darjeeling, the "Queen of Hill Stations"—the end of every Calcutta resident's heart's desire.

Darjeeling, from a Tibetan word meaning "ice-abounding place," glitters with brilliant sunshine; the air from the snowy mountains is pure champagne. After the heat and discontent of Calcutta, stolid people caper like little children and shout for very joy.

Darjeeling is beautiful. Across the tree-clothed valley rises the great snowy range, inaccessible, majestic, peak overtopping sun-riamed peak. Twelve peaks can be counted that rise over 20,000 feet and none sink below 15,000 feet. The nearest point with perpetual snow is Nursing, 35 miles distant, and the farthest Duki, 73 miles away. Below in the valley of the Ramjit, are rich wooded hills, villas and gardens, tea plantations, villages of the hill folk; while straight in front, apparently within hand's reach, although 45 miles away, towering high above the other, picturesque peaks of the range, rises in solitary majesty Kangchenjunga, its vast rugged masses clear-cut against the cloudless blue sky, 28,000 feet high—that is 21,000 feet above Darjeeling. Upon it rest continually 11,000 feet of eternal snow.

One delights in everything—every walk, every view, the sunshine and the snow, the picturesque Thibetans, the keen, sparkling mountain air, even the huge logs burning bright in the dingy room fireplace.

Into the bazaar crowd a variety of interesting hill folk, speaking many languages—Lepcha, Bhoota, Nepalese, as well as Hindi and Bengali—buying and selling, carrying enormous loads on their backs, begging from astonished tourists, and laughing at everything.

From Nepal, an independent state between Thibet and British territory which contains Mount Everest, come various peoples of Tartar or Chinese origin, the most famous of which are the Gurkhas. The Gurkhas are small men, thick-set as bulls, agile as monkeys, far from being handsome or intelligent, but brave and reckless soldiers and hunters. They are still semi-barbaric and live only for fighting and the chase. In peace or war the Gurkha carries his big, heavy knife, rudely carved on hilt and blade, with which he will attack a tiger, kill his enemy, or slice vegetables with equal neatness and despatch. Through the bazaars of Calcutta these little men will swagger, with the borrowed airs of the Scottish Highlander, ready at a glance to attack a score of unwelcome Bengalis. The Gurkhas are petted by the English, for they despise the Hindus, are incapable of any mental exertion, which in the mind of the sahib suggests nothing but sedition, and love fighting for fighting's sake—a careless, happy mountain folk.

From Sikkim come the Lepchas, also short and stocky, with flat Mongolian faces and yellow skins, their hair plaited in the queue, clad in their cotton cloaks striped blue and worked with white and red, loosely thrown round the body so as to leave the arms free, and broad-brimmed straw or bamboo hats. As well as skirt and petticoat, the women wear a sleeveless woolen cloak covered with crosses and fastened with a silver girdle. Unlike the Gurkhas they are mild and peaceful.

Some hundreds of Thibetans have come to Darjeeling, filling the bazaars with their laughter and their curios.

The erst Forbidden Land, which lies to the north of India, with the Kuen-lun chain on the north and the Himalayas on the south, forms an immense tableland, the very "roof of the world," its mean height above sea-level being approximately three miles. The people are mainly pastoral, ruddy and picturesque mountaineers, with magnificent physique and great, broad foreheads, suggesting much natural intelligence. They have long, sharp noses, Mongol eyes, a tanned yellow skin, and straight black hair twisted into a pigtail. They wear trousers and kilts, loose, heavily-padded jackets with flowing sleeves, open boots and stockings made of one piece of cloth, dark woolen leggings, round cloth hats turned up at the brow, and make a big display of ornaments, big brass beads, curious charms and idols, earrings of turquoise-like copper plates, and necklaces of silver or coral or solid gold. They have the manner and carriage of the freedom-loving mountaineer; and, unlike the Indians, they are a people who have learned how to laugh. Laughter seems, indeed, their chief business in life. Men, women and children all have the same exuberant sense of fun. They laugh all day long, with lusty, side-shaking peals; there is no laugh to compare with the Thibetan's. They are an uneducated, childish people, but they possess all the elements of a powerful race: robust physique, mother wit, strength of character. They are a big people and should stand for big ideas. Pettiness and gloom seem to have no place in these great mountains.

In an eating house, at rude wooden tables, sit a party of the mountaineers devouring a kind of soup and vastly amused at everything. Thibetan girls, ungraceful owing to their thick garments, but glowing with health and strength, smoking big cigars, stand around the doors and laugh at the men.

Outside her little shop an old Nepalese woman, red and wrinkled as a winter apple, humming to herself, spins white wool on an old-fashioned wooden spindle. Coolie women, their strength suggesting that of Hercules, carry heavily loaded baskets on their backs, with straps tied about their foreheads. In this manner, says an old resident, one Thibetan woman can carry a piano up a steep hill. The roads are so steep that driving is impossible and coolies, mainly women, take the place of ponies and carry almost as much. Three of these big women, unbent or dispirited by labor, sleep beneath their great baskets. A strapping child carries a smaller child strapped to her back, and at a corner of the bazaar square watches four small boys playing marbles. These children form a strange group; one a Chinese boy, with his comical loose blue trousers; the sec-

ond a long-nosed Thibetan; a third a yellow-faced Nepali; the last a little quaint round hat.

A German antiquarian, a Thibetan language, which master, makes a fine display of the earth in his little or rather museum. Every curiously made, is stamped with a mark. There is no mistake in anything.

The old German has just the Hamburg Museum. He points out the sacred trumpets, censers and incense burners, both large and small, and nose rings of silver; a Snow Devil dagger; a Thibetan winter is but to frighten away the bad spirits of the earth; devils, male and female, and Light; skulls and human curios and treasured as relics of Buddhist rewards and punishment of Buddhas of all size yellow ivory idols, dragons, lamps, old arms, helmets, many red books!

As he fixes up the case of the Museum he tells a few visits into the Forbidden Land through the Jelap Pass, the range that divides Sikkim from Yalung Valley, the Armo Chumbi Valley, now Garrison force, but where formerly a turned back all European visitors to pass into Thibet. He saw castles and palaces, pagodas; at one place the who is regarded as an incarnate in his silken tent; an immense turned day and night by a st-

Ideas of

People never tire of dream day in the far future when will be established between the tians. Sometimes rude shocks ed to their fond hopes when s who has been puzzling the scientific point of view, publishes his investigations: Professor one of those who thus seek to popular delusions. He scours idea that the inhabitants of planet are anything like our planet. A man suddenly transplants declares) would probably live fish out of water, on account of the Martian air. If a breath could be supplied him' his would doubtless be that he w sun-baked desert. Not a sign anywhere, nor a wisp of cloud would even look in vain for a tree to break the bald monotonous baked rock and sand.

If he landed in a Martian of the canals or locks or other ing works, he would be so fit as not to notice the flat land.

The man's first attempt produce amazing results. He him to expend three or four energy as the proceeding call of taking a few leisurely steps himself making a succession bounds. Should he wish to t an approaching Martian, he light in his hand as a sponge-pound lump of iron or lead w piece of metal would sail abie before it struck the grou the man would be certain to because inevitably his earthl make him throw it over the o

Curiosities of Temp

Looking upward, the m small blue and very bright s sky by day. If by chance h stormy weather, the storm w carrying huge clouds of dus lightning and thunder that strange feeble sound in the l midsummer quite likely the the early afternoons, would anybody could stand on our Mars the absolute dryness temperature quite bearable. there would be a sudden fall and the visitor would be luck catch a cold.

The dryness of the air w man's skin, which would so cracked unless attended to v something of the kind. In w bitter cold pervades, blanket is with such a thin atmosp away from the great central sun. But here again the would moderate the effects.

The Martian hosts would take their guest inside their c he would spend the winter u houses, and in crystal-covered spring the man would of cot behold the most important Martian year—the melting of where each season the scanty locked up and the vast en dumping it all over the plan