

class of the people, but as a general thing they are honest. Their routes, like our post-roads, are fixed by the government, and at proper distances there are collectors or officers who receive the letters which the tappal runners bring.

The tappal runners are exposed to many dangers. During the rainy seasons the travelling is heavy and dangerous. They have not only to encounter swollen streams, but venomous serpents and the ferocious wild beasts that inhabit the jungles.

Armed with a long pole, at one end of which are suspended the sealed bags, while the other is encircled with a number of brass rings, which, tinkling together, serve to intimidate serpents and other unwelcome neighbours, these tappal runners, usually two or three in number, set out at all hours of the night, and face sometimes the most appalling hurricanes. This, in a dense jungle, is anything but an enviable position; for, although they are invariably accompanied by torch-bearers, one preceding and the other following them, and although the whole company assist in raising a continued string of most appalling and unearthly yells, which are intended to terrify the fierce denizens of the forest, it not unfrequently happens that some sudden winding among the mountain-gorges brings these poor tappal runners upon scenes quite sufficient to freeze the blood within their veins. Only fancy coming along the verge of a precipice, somewhere about two hours after midnight, not a star to be seen in the heavens, and a tempest sweeping with fury through the dense and gigantic trees of an impenetrable forest. Ever and anon there is a fearfully vivid flash of lightning, succeeded by deafening peals of thunder. Then come torrents of rain, sweeping everything before them,—the torches, of course, meanwhile burning dimly; while, louder than the thunder itself, is echoed from hill to hill the funeral knell of some huge giant of the forest that has been prostrated by the gale! To this succeeds the terrified roaring of frightened tigers, the trumpeting of elephants, the bellowing of half-rabid bisons, and, amid all, the dismal screaming of the peacock. While hurrying on as rapidly as our legs will carry us, the torch-bearer who is ahead of us is suddenly brought to a stand-still by the hideous appearance of a huge cobra de capelle, that has raised its envenomed head right in the centre of the pathway, too fearful of the bright blaze of the torch to advance, and yet apparently unwilling to retreat.