

FLOODS IN RIVERS.

Overland Monthly.

It has been noticed that the mountain rivers of the highest latitudes are especially liable to inundation; but there is no doubt that the destructiveness of such floods is enormously increased by the disappearance of arboreal vegetation. In the densely wooded uplands of eastern South America, the rainy season hardly discolors the waters of the hill rivers—the network of roots and moss acting as a filter in absorbing the surplus of moisture, and retaining its impurities. The sediment of our swollen streams mostly comes from treeless mountain slopes, and there is abundant evidence that many of the worst flood rivers of the eastern continent were once noted for the placid regularity of their current, like the river Po (the ancient Padanus), which now threatens its lower valley with the perils of a yearly deluge. The Emperor Julian, who passed several years in northern Gaul, mentions that the depth of the Seine varied only a few feet, and seemed almost unaffected by any but the most violent rains. The difference of minimum and maximum water marks of the same river now amounts to more than forty feet. The horrors of the Johnstown disaster have more than once been paralleled in the valley of the Ardèche, not more than a hundred years ago one of the most productive regions of Southern France, but now almost worthless for agricultural purposes on account of the frequency of devastating floods. In 1846 the waters of that little highland stream rose sixty feet in a few hours, and some women who were busy washing at the brink of the lower river had no time to save their linen and barely escaped with their lives, though they fled instantly on hearing the roar of the approaching torrent. Whenever that torrent descended in the night, the delfe of the Pont d'Arc was choked with corpses and debris, and the geologist Defontaine estimates that on two different occasions the Ardèche discharged more water than the river Nile does at the end of the rainy season. The floods of the Adige in northern Austria, and of the Maritza in the eastern Balkans, have almost depopulated certain districts of their lower valleys; but the worst flood river on earth is the Yang-tse-Kiang, "the curse of China," as it is justly been called. The loss of life during its last inundation has been moderately estimated at 750,000—even after deducting several hundred thousand victims of the subsequent famine and the thousands slain by marauders and hunger-crazed cannibals. There is no doubt but its floods have done to the Chinese nation more harm than all their wars, rebellions, and epidemics taken together.

HAVE MEN A RIGHT TO LIBERTY?

The anarchists of to-day have pushed the old dogma of natural liberty to the extreme form of abstract deduction, and they propose to make it a programme of action. They therefore make of it a principle of endless revolution. If, however, the basis on which it once rested is gone, it is impossible that we should hold and use it any more. With our present knowledge of history, we know that no men on earth ever have had liberty in the sense of unrestrictedness of action. The very conception is elusive. It is impossible to reduce it to such form that it could be verified, for the reason that it is non-human, non-earthly. It never could exist on this earth and among these men. The notion of liberty and of the things to which it pertains has changed from age to age in modern history.

Never in the history of the world has military service weighed on large bodies of men as it does now on the men of the European continent. It is doubtful if it would ever have been endured. Yet the present victims of it do not appear to consider it inconsistent with liberty. Sumptuary laws about dress would raise a riot in any American state; a prohibitory law would have raised a riot among people who did not directly resist sumptuary laws. A civil officer in France, before the revolution, who had bought or inherited his office, had a degree of independence and liberty in it which the Nineteenth century official never dreams of. On the contrary, the more this Nineteenth century civil and political liberty is perfected, the more it appears that under it an official has freedom of opinion and independence of action only at the peril of his livelihood.—Professor W. G. Sumner.

ELECTRICITY has often been applied to designing, and the possibilities of the incandescent light for decorative art are well understood. One of the latest and most successful accomplishments in this line is that of the freezing of the "glow" light in ice, which was exhibited by an Indianapolis electric company at the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, and which attracted so much attention as an ingenious novelty. During the process of freezing various colored aniline dyes were inwrought, the result of which was some strikingly brilliant effects and formations in connection with the familiar glass bulb and its threadlike wire, these flash in and glowing with the electric current, at the operator's will. The possibilities of this beautiful present a fertile field for study and experiment.

NO PRAYER TO-NIGHT.

No prayer to-night! No golden head
To lie in my lap with glittering light;
But a broken heart, and a sigh instead—
Ah me! ah me! no prayer to-night.

No lisping tongue, no dimpled hands,
No singing and strike in keen delight;
No hair to plait in glistening strands—
Ah me! ah me! no prayer to-night.

No prayer to-night, no bright eyes shine;
No cradled head to catch my sigh;
No rosy lips pressed close to mine—
Ah me! ah me! no prayer to-night.

No trusting love; no pearly tears;
No smile; no laughter loud and bright;
No little voice to tell its fear—
Ah me! ah me! no prayer to-night.

No prayer to-night; an aching heart,
A life that is full of care and blight,
A life that has sorrow in every part—
Ah me! ah me! no prayer to-night.

—Chambers's.

MY ESCAPE FROM THE JHANSI MASSACRE.

Chambers's Journal.

Many as were the 'hairbreadth escapes' from massacre during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, there are few which surpass the closeness of the shave I then had for my life. I had been a sergeant in the Bengal Horse Artillery, than which, I believe, a better corps never existed. I was then an overseer of Public Works at Jhansi, in Central India. I rode like a centaur, and if there was a thing I loved, it was driving a horse that was a good jumper. Such a one I luckily had then, or I should not be alive to tell this tale.

Though the first outbreak of the Mutiny at Meerut came like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky, so utterly unexpected was it by the Europeans, yet, after that first explosion, all who had eyes to see perceived that other local outbreaks were only a matter of time and detail. So it was at Jhansi, which was garrisoned by a regiment of native infantry. All, except the infuriated officers of that regiment, knew that the soldiers were only awaiting news of some further success to their cause to join their brothers-in-arms. The officers persuaded themselves that their regiment at least was loyal, and lived in misplaced confidence. I was a young bachelor, and therefore less anxious than I should have been if I had had a family to look after and save. I could not, of course, go away, because my duty required my presence in Jhansi; and day by day, as rumors of more and more extensive defections reached our ears, I saw more clearly that when mutiny broke out at Jhansi, it would be difficult indeed for the few Europeans to escape to any of those strongholds, few and far between, where the presence of European troops gave Europeans a chance of present safety, and a base for future struggles for supremacy with the mutinous natives. Jhansi was surrounded with disaffection and far from help.

It was a bright morning in June. After finishing a few eggs and toast, which with coffee makes the Indian *chota hazree* (small breakfast), I started on horseback on my daily tour of inspecting the buildings under construction or repair. I had a hunting-whip in my hand, and a few rupees in my pocket. It was very early. I just barely noticed that my servants (in India they are all men) were grouped together as I left the gate, instead of being at work, and that unusual silence and quiet reigned in the bazaar or line of shops through which I passed. The bugles had sounded for morning parade before I started from home; and the native infantry regiment was already at its drill as I passed the parade ground. I soon met my superior officer, the executive engineer, received his orders for the day, and went about my work. Very few of the workmen had put in an appearance, and even those were not at work, but seemed evidently to be expecting some event. On my urging them to work, they grinned in silence, and then began handling their tools, but very listlessly. My duty had taken me far away from the parade ground, and, luckily for myself, into quite the opposite part of the Station, as we call the garrison towns in India.

I heard a roll of musketry firing; but that was no unusual sound in a military station, nor alarming to a military man; it did not at all attract my attention. But that roll was followed up by a succession of solitary shots at irregular intervals; and these, I knew, formed no possible part of the evolutions of a regiment at drill. My heart stood still for a moment. The long anticipated time had come: the men had mutinied; and were shooting their European officers. Just then, a mounted officer rushed by me, urging his horse to racing speed; and as he passed, he called on me to flee for my life. A way we went; and he told me nearly every officer had been killed, some by the first volley, and others by the dropping fire. We galloped on along the road, not recking

whither. Suddenly, some soldiers appeared at a distance and pointed their muskets at us. To pass them was impossible. We turned sharply to one side, and put our horses to the low wall and fence that edged the road. My horse rose and cleared it in splendid style; but the officer's heavier charger fell with him. I dismounted to help him; but he lay stunned and unconscious. The bullets of the soldiers were falling around us. I could do him no good, and to linger was but to lose my own life too. I mounted again, and continued my flight, clearing every hedge, fence, and ditch on my way across country. Many a shot was fired at me; but luckily neither I nor my horse was hit. In a few minutes I was out of sight of my pursuers, and safe for the moment.

I checked my horse, to gain him time to breathe, and myself to reflect on what I should do. I found that I was near the road that led to Gwalior, and I not far from some brick fields that was under my supervision. Of course I knew the men engaged there. It was a question whether they would or would not turn against me. But I trusted to my popularity with them for one thing; and for another, to the swiftness of my horse. It was indeed necessary for me to seek some shelter for the day; for a summer sun in India very rapidly becomes too hot for European comfort or safety. My only chance was to continue my flight at night; I therefore rode into the brick-fields. I found but five men at work; they had all heard the firing, had guessed what it meant, and the others had gone to hear and see what had resulted. My men expressed their joy to see me unhurt, and urged me to take refuge with them for a while and to continue my flight afterwards. I dismounted, therefore, and was taken into one of their huts. Then we all sat down and discussed the situation.

No one, they said, will come to look for Europeans in our huts, for we are too poor and miserable to be thought of, or suspected of harbouring you. But your horse will betray us; for if he is seen about here, they will, of course, search the huts.

Besides, said another, you cannot expect to escape on horseback, for, under existing circumstances, that would be too conspicuous a mode of travelling, especially with English saddle and bridle.

Your only chance, sir, said a third, is to travel by night and on foot, in order to get to Gwalior unobserved.

I told them that I was entirely in their hands, and that I trusted to their goodness for my chance of escape. Even with the sense of the imminent danger in which I was placed I had time to observe with satisfaction their simple gratitude for the little kindness of manner and word—that I had done for them.

You have been good to us, they said; you have been our father and our mother (*mai-bap*); and we will do all we can for you.

And they did a great deal. For five days I lay hid in their huts; for the native soldiers or sepoy had scattered themselves over the country, pursuing the few Europeans who had escaped the massacre at Jhansi. Every one of them except myself fell into their hands during this savage hunt, and was ruthlessly murdered in cold blood. The hunters returned to Jhansi; but many were still about, patrolling the countryside, to pick up any straggling European wending his way from some scene of massacre towards the few stations where European life was still safe.

The bricklayers first gave a smear here and there, with clay to my horse and his saddle, trailed his bridle on the ground, and turning his face homeward, gave him a good cut of the whip. He went off; and I never saw him again. They left me alone in the hut and went about their own affairs, as if nothing unusual had occurred. Uncavened cakes (the well-known *chapatties*, or wheat-cakes) and milk was all that they could get for me—their own food; because to have sought for better fare would have excited suspicion. On the evening of the fifth day they told me that I had better start, as the sepoys had returned from their hunt. They got some berries, and with their juice they rubbed my face and body and hair, and changed my rather florid complexion into one of genuine dusky India hue. A suit of rough workman's clothes—trousers and short shirt—were put on me; a turban was tied on my head; a *chuddar* (sheet of mantle) of cotton was thrown over my shoulders; and my stockings and boots were replaced by a pair of old native shoes. They refused my offer of the few rupees I had about me; but tying them in a rag, they tucked them into my waistband. After dusk they conducted me a couple of miles on the Gwalior road and bade me farewell.

I have often heard Europeans say that there is no word in the Indian language for gratitude. I do not know. These poor bricklayers at any rate showed me that the thing itself is not altogether absent from Indian hearts.

How can I express the sense of utter loneliness