

AN INDIAN RECOLLECTION AND ADVENTURE.

[T was the evening of one of the hottest days of our first hot season in Madras, and only a short time before we were to go off for the long leave, to the Shevaroy Hills. We had been driving along the San Thomé Road, and on our return we stopped at that curve in the beach, near Fort St. George, which is frequently called "Cupid's Bow," where the band stand is, and where one meets "everybody" at that hour. Fewer carriages and riders were here that evening than usual, and very few people were walking up and down, as the heat was too great for even that slight exertion. Those few were chiefly gentlemen, who strolled languidly about or stood by the carriages talking to their occupants. The cooling breeze from the sea had grown stronger and more refreshing as the darkness fell. Presently some friends came up to greet us, among them Captain A., of my husband's regiment, whose lady-love was on her way from England to be married to him. He had been in very good spirits about it, but on that day the ship in which she sailed had been telegraphed from Galle, and he might now expect her within a few hours. He had evidently begun to feel nervous, and consequently a little irritable, and not inclined to take the good natured "chaff" he received from his brother officers, quite in good part. I had been suffering from earache all day, caused by the punkahs, and the sea breeze increased it so much that I took off my hat, and tied its long, grey veil round my head so as to cover my ear. Captain A. said impatiently: "Oh, do take that thing off; I hate to see a woman with her head tied up." "Not so," said I, "my feelings must be considered before yours, in this case—perhaps you may yet see the future Mrs. A. with her head tied up; if so, remember me and be sorry you spoke so unkindly." He did remember, and that before very long. A few days later he was quietly married (none of us having seen the bride) and left for the Shevaroy Hills, where we expected to meet them and several others of the regiment in a short time. We reached Jolarapet en route for the hills, melted with heat and smothered with dust. There I saw a rather amusing scene between the wives of a native gentleman. These ladies, closely veiled, were with their respective children, in the ladies' waiting room, apparently quite friendly, awaiting their train. Suddenly a quarrel began (I could not understand the cause), big, dark eyes flashed, small, brown fists were shaken, and shrill voices uplifted in most unmelodious tones. The native gentleman appeared, and his wives all rushed towards him, talking, or rather screaming together. A very few words from him quieted them, and they were hurried into one carriage, he himself taking another, and were gone. I felt sorry for the poor things.

There was some difficulty about obtaining the bullock bandy, which was to convey us to the foot of the Ghaut, up which my husband was to ride, and I was to be carried in a ton-jon (a sort of palanquin); so it was later than it ought to have been before we began the ascent. The brightness of the afternoon was past; heavy clouds rose; evidently a storm was gathering. Greatly fearing a wetting for my husband, who had lately had fever, I urged him earnestly to leave me and ride on as fast as possible, assuring him, not, I fear, quite truthfully, that I should not be at all afraid. At last he consented and went on, taking our butler as guide. The other servants had gone on with the baggage long before, and I was left in my ton-jon (very like the pictures I have seen of Sedan chairs), with only the native bearers. The exquisite beauty of the Ghaut—the lovely views opening with each sudden turn, the novelty of the mode of conveyance (hitherto untried by me)—kept me from feeling lonely. But soon the first low growl of the thunder was heard; purple clouds, with vivid flashes of lightning breaking from them, seemed to be almost coming down upon us. In a few moments in the narrow Ghaut it became dark as night, between the flashes; then the rain descended in sheets, the thunder roared incessantly and by-and-by the wind came raging down the mountain side, making any progress nearly impossible. It seemed to me to be cruel to sit there and let the poor drenched bearers try to toil up the now slippery pathway through the darkness and storm. I could not understand one word they said, nor could they understand me. I fancied from their excited voices that they were angry (I afterwards found I was quite mistaken), and I confess that I felt horribly frightened and lonely. The ton-jon was a very "fair-weather" one; the top was as ill-fitting as the door; the rain came in in all directions and soon I was sitting in water up to my ankles, my clothes and hat literally soaking. To add to my woes and terror, the bearers suddenly placed the ton-jon on the ground and began to chatter together with frantic energy; then they caught it up, and I felt myself lifted over some high obstacle and thumped, and grated, and toppled about. It was too dark to see; I concluded that they must have decided to rid themselves of me by throwing me, ton-jon and all, down the precipice along which the Ghaut winds, and I abandoned myself in despair! However, it righted again, and they went on at a great pace. At last a light appeared not far off, and I was again dumped down. A confusion of voices ensued; out of it came the welcome sound of a familiar English voice exclaiming: "Why Mrs. H., can this be you!" and I found myself rapturously grasping the hand of one of the officers of our own regiment. I soon found that my poor misjudged bearers had only brought me by a short cut to the wrong hotel; this

was "The Retreat," and my husband was at the "Fair-lawn." Captain B. offered to come with me, but it was not a night for a dog to be out in, unnecessarily; so with thanks I declined his offer, and with renewed courage set off once more, and this time safely reached the "Fairlawn." At the foot of the Ghaut I had flattered myself that my travelling dress was quite "the thing"—at the top all that was changed. With hat reduced to pulp, with sodden, draggled garments clinging round me, with water pouring down my face from my soaked hair, I dragged my cramped limbs out of the ton-jon on the lighted verandah, and found, to my dismay, that the only way to my room was through the dining room, where all the guests were assembled in *demi-toilette* for dinner. I felt all eyes upon me as I shuffled through (to walk seemed impossible with my heavy clothes and weary, stiffened limbs), and thankfully gained the shelter of my room. I found my husband had escaped the worst of the storm, which greatly relieved my mind. Half an hour later I once more presented myself in the dining room, in more "seemly guise," and found a cheerful company, among them several familiar faces. They received me most cordially and friendly.

Nearly opposite to me was seated a girl—a stranger to me—with one large, dark eye, soft and pretty, a part of a fair, pale cheek, and well-shaped chin, and a quantity of dark, brown hair; the rest of the face, enormously swollen and distorted, was swathed in a broad band of flannel, the expression of the mouth being rendered ludicrous beyond expression—yet she seemed very merry and talkative in spite of her infirmities. As it was so late, I preferred merely having some tea, and when we shortly after left the table, Captain A. came to me and said: "Mrs. H., I should like to introduce you to my wife," and took me to the one-eyed girl! Yes! she was the bride.

I greeted her warmly, then turning to him I said, softly: "Do you remember that night on Cupid's Bow?" "Yes," he replied, meekly; so I forgave him, and that bride has been ever since one of my best and most faithful friends.

The second Sunday after my arrival had come I had recovered from the hideous cold consequent upon my wetting; Mrs. A.'s face had returned to its original prettiness. We had had time to discuss how many very pleasant people were at the hotel, and that our visit was likely to be very charming, and "great fun." The scenery is very lovely, though on a small scale; and anyone who knows the Shevaroy will remember the beauty of the orange, lemon and lime trees, and the Loquots. I could say a great deal about the Shevaroy (though they are not so well known as the Neigherries, but yet very charming). On this Sunday we all went to church, except Captain A., who had gone to the foot of the Ghaut, the night before, to get hunting knives from the far-famed "Arnachellum," and did not return in time. My husband had to leave after the first lesson as his fever came on; but he whispered to me "not to hurry," and indeed I did not, for the sermon was three-quarters of an hour long, and it so happened that at the end of the full service Mrs. A. and I found ourselves on the way home alone. She was beautifully dressed, all in bridal-looking cloudy white. I wore a pale blue costume, cool and delicate; it was the day of long trains, to be carried over the arm in walking. We took the short cut to the hotel, a steep narrow path, with a close prickly pear hedge on one side, a stone wall on the other; we sauntered on in silence as the path was too narrow to allow us to walk side by side. Presently a strange sound fell upon our ears; we paused and listened; it approached rapidly; suddenly Mrs. A. cried out: "Good Heavens! it is a buffalo." Too true! in a cloud of dust, with tail erect, and lowered head, the creature was wildly charging up the narrow path, in which there was hardly room for it alone to pass, under the quietest circumstances, and now it was taking its "half" quite "out of the middle." One frantic glance round showed us that no help was in view, that the buffalo would reach the end of the path long before we could, so retreat was impossible. The prickly pear hedge was of course impracticable. The stone wall alone remained to us as a refuge. The buffalo was close upon us. With "horrific" roars! dropping our cherished trains, and hurling our pretty prayer books far before us, regardless of dainty dresses and delicate gloves, we grasped the rough stones and with "superhuman efforts" scrambled up the wall. We just managed to assume a sort of side-saddle position, extremely precarious on the shaky stones, when the buffalo thundered by, its tossing horns and horrid tail actually brushing our skirts. At the same moment Mrs. A.'s stone gave way under her, and with a shriek she fell over on the *wrong* side of the wall! "O! my ankle," she cried, "I believe I have broken it." With no injudicious haste, but with a grace and dignity, I leave you, gentle reader, to imagine! I descended from my perch, and went to her assistance. She proved to be but slightly hurt, and after a few moments devoted to mingled lamentations and mirth and mutual congratulations that "no one had been there to see," she rose, with my help. We hunted up our ill-used prayer books and consulted as to how we might best reach the hotel unseen. It seemed to us quite an "impenetrable jungle" we had got into. We wound about in and out of trees until we lost sight of our guiding wall. Mrs. A. said "this jungle is nothing, if not snaky," so in fear and trembling we wandered on. At last mirthful voices were heard; a few more steps brought us in sight of a bungalow. We agreed to go round to the verandah and ask for a guide. Gathering up our respective bundles of white and blue rags, we presented ourselves—and found that we had unwittingly come upon the Hotel Bungalow, and that the

voices were those of our friends and fellow guests, Mr. O. and Mr. B. of the civil service. They went with us to the hotel where we arrived just in time for tiffin, and found our husbands only just beginning to wonder at the extreme length of the service which had kept us so long! We told our thrilling tale, and insisted upon everyone fully understanding their great and undeserved happiness in ever seeing us again alive and unmangled.

A. H.

EVENING ON THE RESERVE.

LIFE on our western Indian Reserves is a thing so out of common, in many ways, with the rest of the world that a few hasty touches sketching a part of it may not seem wearying. It is a midsummer evening, and Mother Nature seems doing her best to pay in heat and luxuriant vegetation for the intense cold of the mid-continental winter. The broad chocolate-coloured river is seemingly even more lazy in its flow than usual, but up from its banks the bloodthirsty and busily buzzing mosquitoes come in clouds. You actually breathe in the hungry little pests and, despite your utmost exertions, they will attack you at every vulnerable point. Beside the river rise a number of tall water elms and farther back the poplar covers the prairie in clumps of varying size; giving the whole scene the appearance of a carefully planted park. Scattered here and there for several miles up and down the river are the houses of the Indians; small square cabins of logs and mud, with an occasional one of larger size, denoting the residence of some ambitious councillor or perhaps of the chief. To keep down the mosquito bands smudge fires have been lighted in all directions until the evening sun is hidden in a smoky mist; while youths and maidens and their elders of both sexes are adding to the mist by each giving forth his or her quota of tobacco smoke—albeit it must be said the custom is not as universal among the women as the men.

The cows are coming home from their pasture on the rich grass of the prairie meadow, bringing with them another army of mosquitoes from that region. There is the lowing of cattle, the humming of insects, the creaking of wooden Red River carts, as they come in with their loads of hay (for the band is learning thrift) and soon there is the measured ni-ni-ni- and the stamping of feet, which tells that despite the insects and the heat some itching feet are finding relief in the dance. There are the cries of children at play and the musical jargon of the Indian tongue; the shouts of boys and young men, *aye*, and even old men playing base ball, and ever and anon from the river and the misty farther shore come the unfamiliar calls of wild beast and bird. There is the smell of burning bark, the smell of smoke, the smell of cattle and odoriferous ox harness, the smell of prairie grass and flowers, the smell of new cut hay, the odour of the trees and the damp currents of air from the river.

The evening darkens, the players can no longer find their ball, and the children have lost their arrows, the later cows are coming in, and the almost benighted hay-makers urge on their weary oxen. Men and women in holiday attire return from a visit to the nearest town, carrying themselves with due importance and displaying their purchases to the best possible advantage. The inhabitants congregate in groups to gossip in the smoke and the cattle stand almost in the coils of their own smudge fires. A little girl clad in a single garment with shapely brown bare arms and legs, black eyes and a long braid of blackest glossy hair darts across your path seeking out her father's cattle from the last herd, so in keeping with her surroundings that she almost seems a part of this strange prairie parkland.

The river takes up its part again in the laughing and shouting of bathers, who pay for their dip in mosquito stings. Then in the twilight the white sail of a York boat can just be discerned through the trees, and suddenly the lights of river steamer glide along like the moons of old panoramas; and the swimmers with a chorus of jibes and laughter mock the wheezing engine or the commands of the wheelsman. There are a few canoes moving here and there with steady speed, as silent as the York boat, and too well known to cause any notice to be taken of them. There is a squeak behind of buckboard gear, and we turn to see the agent returning home through this part of the reserve after one of his daily journeys. His restless little ponies battle vigorously with the mosquitoes as he talks to the chief about some non-progressive Indian, who is to be urged to get in his hay and prepare for winter, or it may be some case of unlawful wood-selling, or some children allowed to stay from school: for this tall, anxious-looking man, the agent, is a father to all these children in red, and has to deal with them with all the patience of a kind teacher. The buckboard squeaks again, there is the beating of hoofs on the road and he is on his way. The mist thickens, the cries of children cease, save of an occasional infant-in-arms, and the groups in the smoke disperse to the houses and tents (summer residences), where each rolls in a separate blanket and becomes, so to speak, a human cocoon, of which the head is undistinguishable from the feet. Then the visitor at the mission strolls back to the whitewashed log house standing in its patch of garden, that object lesson to all the tribe, where the missionary and his wife are finishing the watering of their tomatoes, cucumbers and cabbages. He is a young man, the orator of his class, and full of theories about the connection of the Indians with the Japanese, and with even more pro-