

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

TRANSLATION FROM VICTOR HUGO.

THE BUTTERFLY.

When the gorgeous butterfly
In the jubilee of spring
Floats voluptuously by,
Borne on gold and purple wing:
Oft those damask wings are torn
By the faithless rose's thorn.

So—when life is fresh and gay,
Mortals, with capricious joy,
Flutter heedlessly away,
Whither fairest flowers decay:
Soon, alas! their wings are torn
By perfidious Pleasure's thorn!

GEORGE MURRAY.

KUNCHUN-CHURLOO.

I WAS not seriously ill, but I wanted change of air, which, even when it is not of a superior quality to that which we daily imbibe, proves frequently beneficial to the hip and dyspeptic invalid—just as the diet, to be perfectly wholesome, requires occasional variation. I had been two years at Poonah, one of the healthiest, cheerfulest, most desirable stations in the three presidencies; but a close routine of arduous office-work, a surplussage of the red-tape slavery that somehow adheres to every system of government originated and carried out by British heads, it matters not in what country or clime, had undermined the natural strength of my constitution, which required a little repair. I love India—I loved it then, even when authorities and powers were more open to censure than they are now, for happily, not only is the school-master abroad, but with him is to be found the active spirit of conscientiousness, whose rule is progress, and whose law is justice.

I wanted solitude—a little breathing-time from irksome duties, and scarcely less tiresome gaieties. I was sick of merciless field-days, monotonous balls, incessant mess-dinners, and amateur theatricals, where our Lady Macbeths and Lydia Languishes were appropriated by burly captains of the grenadiers, six feet high, and unfledged ensigns, who had not yet mastered the goose-step, nor doffed the unpitied name of griffin. I spoke the principal native languages with sufficient fluency to need no *moonshoe* or interpreter; and needed no other companions in my rambles than two faithful servants, and a sepoy, whose earnest desire to accompany me, backed by my consent, had readily obtained him a month's furlough. He was an excellent *shikar* or sportsman, and a brave honest fellow, whose good qualities I had cognizance of. Determined to avoid the beaten track of mere picnic and shooting excursionists, I chose a range of country which, though then peaceably quiet, had, in the war of the Pindarrees, acquired rather an ill fame. I remembered, indeed, that some six years back, an officer and his wife, while journeying through a portion of it, had been attacked by *looties* or marauders, and that though Major Matheson escaped with his life, the body of his wife, who had been cruelly murdered, was found in the jungle some days after, whilst of their infant daughter no traces were ever discovered.

But these days were over, and report gave out no sounds of warning or alarm. My plan was to ride or walk quietly in the morning until I came upon some pretty hamlet or sequestered spot that hit my fancy, and there to await till my one-poled tent and servants came up to halt for the day—for two or three, if I chose. All places were new to me, and each was almost sure to please by reason of that very novelty. Sometimes there were abundance of plants to collect, for I piqued myself on my botany; very often there was prolific game, unattended by risk in the pursuit; and everywhere there was an old pagoda or a ruined *killa* (fortress) to sketch; perhaps the cell of some ancient anchorite beside a picturesque *bowry* or deep draw-well, over which trailed many a variegated liana, or drooped a banian-tree, laden with its bright-red figs, the favourite food of many a bird.

From those ascetic mendicants who spread their praying-carpets by the wayside, it is not difficult to win many a wild tradition by welcome courtesy, and still more welcome coin. I have seldom failed to enter into amicable alliance with the religious pilgrim, whether of Mussulman or Hindoo creed; but there is a way of doing things, and surely it is easy for all who reverence their own God to spare animadversions on the beliefs of others; quite as sincere, perhaps, though not so enlightened.

In a very happy frame of mind I thus passed a fortnight, wandering here and there, to and fro, until at last I came to Jejjury, a place of which I had heard, and which, although only twenty-eight miles from Poonah, was in those days perfectly unknown to more than half the European community there. Yet Jejjury is not without its claims to the attention of the scene-seeker. It is a Marhatta town in the province of Bejjapoor, and not void of paramount importance as a rendezvous for many a follower of Brahma. The celebrity of its *deul*, or pagoda, renders it a favourite resort for the Hindoo religionist. So far back as the year 1792, we learn from the statistics of Bejjapoor that the priestesses, as they are called, or dancing-girls attached to the temples, amounted to 250. In 1823, when I visited it, there might probably be fifty less; but the Brahmans and beggars that haunted the purlieus of the *deul* were innumerable. Dedicated to one of the endless incarnations of Siva, assumed by him to slay a redoubted and cruel giant, the pagoda has a magnificent appearance as it breaks upon the traveller's sight, newly released from leafy jungles. Situated on a steep ascent, whence a varied and striking landscape salutes the eye, it is visible at a great distance on three sides, where the country is free from wood; and though not covered with gilding, or made musical by glittering bells, like the Buddhist temples of Ava, its gray rugged walls, vast proportions, and salient abutments, here and there profusely festooned with lianas, are well worthy of a minute inspection and description. On the huge misshapen idol, which is the esoteric magnet of the place, it is asserted that, at no very remote period, £6,000 were annually expended; and when the retinue of priests, acolytes, elephants, horses, &c., which is entertained is considered, the fact becomes less a matter of doubt than of astonishment. Certain it is, that this idol is daily bathed in rose-water, and sprinkled with the sacred water of the Ganges, conveyed from a distance of upwards of a thousand miles.

Richly decorated with gems, perfumed with the most expensive *attars*, and surrounded with almost hourly and ever-fresh

offerings of fruit and flowers, the idol is one of the still-existing evidences of the reign of superstitious fanaticism on the earth. The support of the establishment is derived from houses, gardens, and fields given by devotees; nor can it be ignored that the priestesses, the dancing-girls of the temple, are a source of revenue rather than of expense.

I had passed several days here pleasantly enough, when I was asked one morning by a very courteous and intelligent *gosain*, whose acquaintance I had made on my arrival, whether I had visited Kunchun-Churloo.

I replied in the negative, asking what object worthy of observation the place, if a place, contained.

"Maharaj," said he, "it is a place, and one that deserves a visit. The name, as you may know, means the Tank of the Dancing-girl; and the legend which is attached to it renders it a favourite resort to the devout; while to sportsmen, like yourself, there is such abundant variety of game in the jungles and jheels (marshes) near it, that it deserves your investigation."

"And the legend, father, is it so brief as to admit of your relating it in a short time?"

"By your favour, sahib," and the *gosain*, adjusting those robes, dyed with red ochre, which denote the strict worshipper of Siva, related the tradition I here abbreviate:

"Many years ago, when this temple was yet young, the jungle which stretches for four miles towards the west was invested by serpents of such deadly venom and ferocity, as is now only to be found in the *naja* or cobra *da capello*—a sacred emblem, and a worshipped symbol of the Deity. But, unlike this holy reptile, the snakes in the neighbourhood were diabolical spirits, the accursed offspring of the giant Manimal, destroyed by mighty Siva. Now, unhappily, when Siva, or Mahadeo, slew the monstrous oppressor, he neglected to scorch up the blood which flowed from the wounds of Manimal, from every drop of which sprang a vicious reptile. The loathsome twin-headed serpent, spotted with leprosy; the whip-snake, with gray and white bands, whose tail is spiked with poisonous thorns; the green-snake, that darts from the trees on the passer-by; the variegated carpet-snake, whose bite slays ere the bitten has had time to shriek; the black snake, whose fangs emit a sickening odour that fascinates the bird on the bough; and many others, with scorpions and centipedes, were engendered by the blood of the giant festering in the sun's heat. And when Siva, grieved at his omission, and withheld by the Highest from any future incarnation, witnessed the misery that followed, and the desolation of the country, he was permitted to prophesy that the serpent-brood should only be extinct when a priestess of the pagoda, young, beautiful, brave, and chaste, resisting the temptations of the world, should resign herself a sacrifice to death by daring to lead the swarm of reptiles to the lake of the Jins, on the margin of the forest. Well, Maharaj, after many years, a fair young damsel joined the troop of dancing-girls, expressing her determination to offer her life at the tank of the Jins. Two years were passed in holy purification ere the Brahmans consented to the sacrifice, when, perceiving how every temptation that was made to withdraw her from the life of purity and worship she had adopted, was resisted, they agreed. I will not delay my account by describing the grandeur of the procession, and the wonders of the cavalcade that were prepared to do her honour. Obeying, no doubt, the voice of Brahma within her, she refused to mount the sacred elephant that was in readiness, and commanding the Brahmans, the proud Byrages, the Suniassies, and other votaries of our creed, to let her precede them, she stepped forth alone into the jungle, no other weapon in her hand than the *vina* or lute, to which she was accustomed to chant her songs in the service of the gods. O Maharaj! as she entered the forest, followed slowly by the mute and wonderful crowd, every leaf seemed to rustle with life, every tree became alive with livid and horrible reptiles; the air was fetid with breath, and the only sound was sibilation. But, lo! at the first chord of her *vina*, at the first gush of music that issued from her throat, the wind became fragrant as the utterance of a multitude of roses, and the menacing hisses sank into silence, only broken by her glorious voice. Then, too, the terrible creatures, ranging themselves obediently out of the track, without erecting a crest, or vibrating a forked tongue, followed her gravely as she preceded; nor did she falter a step, or pause in her song, till she reached the lake. There, waving her hand in farewell to the crowd, she again began to sing, and, stepping into the water was followed by the noxious swarm of serpents. When she had attained the depth of her waist, she took off her tiara, and, throwing it into the waves, exclaimed:

"Siva, the Destroyer, come now and complete the death of the giant and his progeny!"

"Whereat the whole brood of snakes sank dead into the depths of the pool. When the water had now gained her neck, she cast forward her *vina*, exclaiming:

"Vishnu, the Preserver, let nothing that is poisonous henceforward be found in this lake!"

"And then, with a sound of music strangled in her pure throat by the permitted death, she disappeared beneath the waters. In that spot, where she was last seen, a rocky altar has arisen, whose foot is swathed by the rich foliage and scented cups of the sacred lotus; and thither come the devout, the sick, and the sorrowful, to invoke the assistance of the gentle divinity which presides over what is now called Kunchun-Churloo, the Dancing-girl's Tank."

"Sahib," cried my Marhatta sepoy, Jung Rao, "let me instantly order the *saman geeman* (bag and baggage) to proceed to this wonderful place."

"All in good time," said I, smiling at an eagerness which, whether proceeding from his avowed admiration of the *gosain*, or from the delight he anticipated in a new field for his sporting capabilities, was sufficiently apparent. Thanking the *gosain* for his legend, and quietly depositing an unrejected monetary proof of my obligations in the skirts of his robes, I received his assurance that he intended to follow me to the tank, where he could point out to me the various beauties of the scene.

It was, in truth, a lovely spot; and as I ordered my little tent to be pitched on a gentle knoll, ascending from the verdant rim of the tank, and saw that the silvan beauties of the landscape nowhere deteriorated into thick or sombre jungle, whilst little patches of cultivation—millet, chick-peas, and other grain—testified that agriculture was not altogether wanting; and whilst some scattered buffaloes and sheep were feeding in the rich meadows, or the former splashed like sea-horses in the tank, I could not but think how happily and innocently a few lives might pass here under a kind and paternal dynasty, and blest by education and peace. There was a small

hamlet close by; and the result of our first day's sport was a banquet of game so ample that all who chose had a share in it.

Next morning, when as yet the skies gave forth no rosy courier of daylight, I wandered forth alone, directing my steps to the east, that I might witness the effects of sunrise on the upland glades which ascended towards a distant mountain. There was a broad path; and as I slowly advanced, the cry of the quail amidst the grass, the coo of the wood-dove among the bushes, and the whirr of an owl or bat, retreating instinctively from the coming light, announced that already dawn was at hand. And yet no signs of it, to my wonder appeared; and presently, as I looked at my watch, and perceived that, instead of coming from the east, which I faced, a dim and unaccustomed light was thrown from behind me, my ears were saluted by the welcome "rum, rum," of the *gosain*, and there, in advance of me he stood, his arms erect and extended, his form dilated, and altogether presenting a very statuesque appearance.

"Glory be to the sun and to its Maker!" cried he; "the west is to Him even as the east!" and turning round as he pointed to the west, I beheld a sight that in very truth astounded me. I witnessed a rare phenomenon, of which I had not then even as much as heard, although I now know that it has been observed by some of our recent travellers. The sight was very fine; for there, in the west, appeared the bright and symmetrical beams of the rising sun, reflected with marvellous beauty from the opposite quarter, where all was dark. There was yet something I cannot describe, but which gave the whole an unnatural aspect, in the clearly defined rays which rose gradually to the zenith, illuminating the horizon with a sparkling sort of rose-white. For perhaps five minutes, not more, this show in the firmament lasted; and then, lo! all vanished, and the east redeemed its appanage of sun and light.

This optical phenomenon, which, many years afterwards, was observed by Hooker among the mountains of Tibet, has been described by him with a graphic pen; and to the credit of my friend the *gosain*, it may be stated that he ascribed no superstitious attributes to it, but hailed it merely as a phenomenal evidence of Deity.

As we pursued our walk, which occupied several hours, for we made the circuit of the tank, avoiding, as only the *gosain* could have taught me to do, some very undesirable quagmires, we came upon a party of Brinzaries—those gypsies of the east—those useful nomads who, in every war, have been found of incalculable service to the English, by bringing grain and forage to their camps. They were driving a few heavily laden bullocks to a clump of trees beside the tank, both cattle and men appearing wearied and worn, for they generally travel by night. As they turned at our approach to make obeisance to the *gosain*, who was evidently known to them, I was struck by the remarkable beauty of a little girl, who, mounted between two sacks of corn, and chatting merrily with a robust elderly woman, seemed to me to be utterly out of place in this scene and society. The child was sunburnt, as well might be; but for all that, her skin was exquisitely fair, her profuse ringlets of an auburn brown, and her eyes of that dark grey which is so much more expressive than either black or blue. The dark, handsome, Egyptian countenance of the woman was in such complete contrast, that I could not help exclaiming, as they began to unpack their cattle, and the girl actively set about helping the woman:

"O *gosain*, that child is a European!"

"Maharaj," answered he, "it is a truth; and wonderful is the history which belongs to it. It may be that the time has come for discovery; and, with permission, I will speak a few words to my ancient friends here, and gain their consent to unfold the matter to you."

I sat down at some distance, while the *gosain* parleyed earnestly with the Brinzaries. Presently—and I knew that all was adjusted amicably—the elderly woman kissed the child, and putting something into a plantain-leaf, pointed towards me. Neither shyly nor awkwardly, but with a sweet and gentle grace, the tiny creature approached me, and making a *salam*, presented her offering—a handful of delicious dates. She accepted without reluctance the caresses I lavished on her bright and well-cared-for ringlets, and prattled away in a *patois*, part Hindoostanee, part Dukkhani, to which my responses were very vague and concise. She soon, however, ran away from the stranger, when the *gosain* approached me, and commenced his narrative.

"It is some six or seven seasons since Narrainah and Mahla, the Brinzari man and woman who conduct the party, were pursuing the same route they have just come; they were laden with grain, and the Pindarree war having but recently ceased, were travelling cautiously, for the country was then over-run with marauders. In the jungle of Kargholi, about ten miles hence, they were alarmed by shrieks and cries, and the clang of arms. It was dark night; but the flash of torches at no great distance warned them that travellers were being assaulted by plunderers; and in great alarm they withdrew into a thicket for concealment. After some time the clamour ceased, and presently they beheld a troop of men pass by, one of whom led a horse, caparisoned in the European fashion. When they had disappeared, the Brinzaries carefully regained the road, and before long, *ufos!* (alas!) they came upon an overturned palanquin, deserted by its bearers, and lying beside it the yet warm corpse of a European lady, covered with cruel wounds. A faint cry revealed to them a little infant, nearly smothered beneath the body; and in dread that the robbers might return, the men of the party were going to leave the child there, but Mahla had lost a babe shortly before, and, full of compassion, refused to move from the spot until Narrainah was fain to consent to her adoption of the poor foundling. They escaped from the jungles, carrying the little girl with them; and not many weeks after, I saw them, and advised them to go to Poonah, and make the circumstance known to the government authorities there. But they stuffed their ears with the cotton of denial. Narrainah was afraid of bringing trouble on themselves by making the affair public. It might even happen that the murder and robbery would be laid to their charge; and the woman was loathe to give up the infant, whom she had named *Motee* (the Pearl), after her own child. They, in consequence, carefully avoided Poonah, and every place where English troops were stationed; but they are at length convinced that it is their duty to follow my advice, and are willing to resign *Motee*, provided any relation claiming her is discovered."

"My good friend," said I, "the child doubtless belongs to Major Matheson, an officer who, passing that very jungle, with his wife and daughter, was attacked by robbers, and barely