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WANDERER'S

o o o TRAIL

By A. LOTON RIDGER



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PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR  
*(Photograph by H. W. Busbridge, Blackheath)*

# A WANDERER'S TRAIL


BEING A FAITHFUL RECORD OF TRAVEL  
IN MANY LANDS

BY

A. LOTON RIDGER, F.R.G.S.

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IN TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

TO

S. C. HESTER

AND

J. M. RYRIE



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*I have to thank Mr JOHN BUCHAN for much kind encouragement, and particularly Mr S. L. BENSUSAN for his sound direction and assistance in going through these pages.*

A. L. R.

VANBRUGH PARK,  
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**PART I**

“ Much have I seen and known ; cities of men  
And manners, climates, . . .  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’  
Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.”

TENNYSON.

## INTRODUCTION

BEFORE bringing my reader to the date of my first departure from England a few words of personal record may not be out of place.

I began my business career at the age of seventeen in a London insurance company. After some months in this office I had the opportunity to join the well-known Japanese house of Mitsui, in whose service I remained nearly three years. I left that firm to join the house of Arbuthnot Ewart & Co., with which I was connected till my departure from London.

Besides gaining a fair practical insight into general commerce in the service of these two important houses, I gained, further, that which was of even greater value—the friendship and interest of some influential business men, whose help and practical kindness to me during my years of travel made possible a task that had been otherwise hopeless.

From my schooldays the desire to wander into the Great Unknown was always very strong in me. I made many efforts to obtain some foreign appointment, but, chiefly owing to my youth and a slight delicacy of constitution, the efforts were unsuccessful. One day, however, whilst in conversation with a merchant I received rather a rude shock. I was enlarging on my eagerness to “go abroad” (that vague phrase so often in the mouths of young Englishmen at home) when I was disconcerted by the blunt retort: “Then why the devil don’t you go?” With a rather injured air I began to explain my many fruitless efforts to this end. I was cut short, however, by my listener saying: “My boy, if you want to go abroad and see the world—go!—ship in the first tramp you can find, bound anywhere. *That* is the only way to see the world!” These words made a deep impression on me; so much so that within

## INTRODUCTION

a month my kit was packed, my farewells said, and I found myself travelling down to Barry docks to join a tramp steamer bound round the Horn for San Francisco.

Through the kindness of a shipbroker I had been able to arrange a passage on board, paying only the small sum of three shillings per day for mess-money.

I had ten pounds in my pocket and a few letters of introduction, most of them not worth the paper on which they were written. I had then, however, that which was of far greater value. I possessed untiring Energy, unlimited Hope and the unbounded Enthusiasm of youth. So I was rich in capital, richer than I knew ; for nothing is of real value till it is lost !

## CHAPTER I

### MY FIRST VOYAGE—BOUND FOR 'FRISCO

THE date was the 18th of February 1907. On a bleak, raw night typical of February I reached Barry docks, which looked as desolate and dirty as they possibly could. Rain was steadily falling, and it might have been doing so for weeks on end, so sloppy and muddy were the roads and wharves.

On leaving the station I inquired as to the whereabouts of the steamer *Strathyre*, the ship that was to be my home for many weeks to come. I found her at last moored to one of the wharves under the coal-tips, in process of being coaled for her long voyage. Boarding her by means of the rope-ladder hanging over her side I clambered on deck. Everything there was coated with coal dust—men included! Welsh coal may certainly be the best burning coal in the world, but it is also the dirtiest; its dust seems to have a knack of finding every nook and corner of a vessel, and of lodging there.

The *Strathyre* was a new steamer—the usual type of a modern cargo boat with as much iron about her and as little wood as possible. Her registered tonnage was nearly three thousand and her carrying capacity some six thousand.

However, that night I obtained but a glimpse of her in her coat of coal dust. Inquiring for the captain, I was told to go down to the saloon, where I found him sitting busily writing. In response to my question as to whether he were the captain he replied: "Yes, I'm the master." The term then struck me as rather strange. Having informed him who I was, I asked, seeing him so busy, if I could not give him a helping hand. He gratefully accepted my offer and told me he was nearly dying

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

for want of sleep, having been up on the bridge for the best part of three nights, while bringing the ship over from the Continent, as fog was with them all the way.

As the writing to be done was all connected with shipping matters with which I was fairly familiar, I was able to relieve him of a great deal of work ; in fact, by one o'clock he was fast asleep in his chair, whilst I was finishing the last letter. He was very grateful for my timely help, as he termed it, and I was only too glad to make myself useful. The captain and I became very friendly during the voyage and I often look back with pleasure to the many enjoyable days I spent in his company.

He was about as unlike the ship's captain my fertile imagination pictured as he could possibly be. My idea of a sea captain, founded on the stirring yarns of youth, was a bull-necked, ferocious-looking man, who could not speak without oaths ; whilst Captain G—— of the *Strathyre* was a quiet, refined Scotsman, who would not have appeared out of place in a pulpit.

I found I was splendidly berthed—the captain's spare cabin being placed at my disposal. Down to that time I was not sure whether I might have been ordered to sleep in the fo'c'sle or in a ventilator. I was prepared for anything.

The following morning, the ship not being due to sail till the afternoon, I took a stroll round the town of Barry and its outskirts. In the sunshine the town appeared by no means so dismal as it had seemed to me the night before, whilst the country round after the recent rain looked quite pretty. It was, besides, my last day in England, so I was not inclined to be critical. Even the grimy docks and wharves appeared when we were slowly steaming away from them more pleasing than they looked on the preceding night.

At four o'clock the pilot came on board ; shortly afterwards our lines were cast off, and with the aid of a tug we steamed slowly through the lock gates into the Bristol Channel. It always is a sad sight to see an old tramp starting out on a long voyage with no last farewells, no waving handkerchiefs,

## MY FIRST VOYAGE—BOUND FOR 'FRISCO

no interested eyes to follow her slowly steaming away in the distance. Nobody seems to care! Her departure is unnoticed! Only the old dock-hand curses her for going out so slowly.

It was blowing fairly hard when we got into the Channel and a choppy head sea was running. Though I felt somewhat squeamish that evening, and on and off during the next day or so, I was fortunate in gaining my sea legs without having to pay the usual tribute to Father Neptune, despite the prophecies of loving relatives. I learnt that night, however, the wisdom of shutting my port-holes firmly, for, on the steamer suddenly shipping a big sea in the Channel, I found myself and my cabin nearly swamped, one of the ports not having been securely shut.

By noon of the next day we were well in the Atlantic, with the cliffs of England—at Land's End—fading away in the distance.

I was surprised to find that all the crew and firemen were Chinese. This I have found to be the case with nearly every freighter in which I have since sailed. It seems a pity!

The officers, however, were all Britishers, the engineers all being Scotsmen from Glasgow. Our cargo was chiefly building material for San Francisco, Portland cement forming the bulk of it. We had further a good supply of wines (which the carpenter and I on more than one occasion sampled) and other luxuries from the Continent.

There were two messes on board—the deck-officers' mess and that of the engineers. My seat was with the former.

The food was plain but wholesome, tinned stuffs and salt pork appearing frequently on the menu owing to the length of the voyage. My appetite then was, however, equal to anything; and I am quite sure that the owners would not have cared for me as a life-passenger on the three-shillings-a-day basis.

The first few days at sea I spent exploring all the nooks and crannies of my floating home—everywhere from the chain locker to the shaft tunnel. To-day I can vividly recall the keen and absorbing interest I took in all the details of the ship,

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and in the daily routine of work on board. I spent hours on the bridge, especially if it were blowing hard, feeling the driving wind and rain as refreshing as nectar. The changing of the watches, the ringing of the bells, the taking of the log, the hauling up of the lights—in short, everything that is part and parcel of the regular life on board of a deep-sea tramp—was a source of absorbing interest to me. At the outset of the voyage the captain and I had struck a bargain. He was very anxious to learn French; so I undertook to teach him that language as well as my knowledge would permit. He, on the other hand, promised to teach me navigation and as much astronomy as he knew. Hence our evenings were always well occupied.

Running south and west, skirting the Bay of Biscay, we soon came into warmer latitudes, where the weather became finer and the seas calmer. Seven days after leaving England we sighted Madeira, and on the morning of the 28th of February we anchored off St Vincent Island, the chief island of the Cape Verde group.

Shortly after medical inspection the coaling of the ship began. All the coal obtained at this island is Welsh coal, imported by colliers and stocked on the island. Iron barges, towed out, brought it to the ship lying in the bay, being transferred into the steamer's bunkers by means of baskets. Steamers can be coaled here at the rate of some twelve hundred tons per day.

I went ashore after breakfast with the captain, but was not very greatly impressed by the appearance of the first foreign soil on which I put my foot. What chiefly seem to have remained impressed on my memory are the gaudily painted buildings of a glaring green, and the pompous appearance of the Portuguese sentinels who guarded the official buildings. A swarm of beggars greeted our arrival on shore, one and all offering their services as guides. The inhabitants seemed to be a mixed race of Portuguese and negroes.

Having visited the ship's agents, where I had the opportunity of sampling some real Madeira wine and bananas, we strolled round the town to see all that there was to be seen, which was



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very little. The island for the most part appeared barren and sandy, though in places I noticed tropical fruits growing in abundance. Like the others of the group, the island is of volcanic origin and is both mountainous and rocky. The group is owned by the Portuguese, who discovered and occupied it as early as the middle of the fifteenth century. Apart from the importance of St Vincent Isle as a convenient coaling port for steamers southward bound, the Cape Verde Islands are but of small value.

Coaling was finished late in the afternoon, and shortly after sundown we weighed anchor and steamed away. It was full moon on the night of our departure; and I can recall how very picturesque the islands looked in the moonlight. As we slowly steamed out we passed a large jagged rock which stood out like some giant sentinel guarding the entrance of the island. Looking back, one saw the twinkling lights of the little town, almost paled by the moon's rays, die out one by one, till only the high peaks of the islands remained above the horizon.

The weather, as we steamed south-west, continued delightful, hot and sunny. When crossing the line we got into the south-east trade winds, having lost those from the north-east a day or two after leaving the islands. The chief officer had by now enlisted me as one of his painters, or sailors (there is mighty little difference to-day), and I usually spent my mornings in painting stanchions and making myself generally useful. It kept me busy and prevented time from hanging heavily on my hands. The nights, however, in these southern tropics were, if I may say so, the best part of the day. Sunny days, ended by lovely sunsets, were followed by perfect starry nights. Nothing but the rhythmical sound of the throbbing engines, as the ship made her way through the phosphorescent seas, broke the peaceful calm of these tropical nights. Now and then a squall would strike the ship with midsummer fury; torrential rains would descend from the black canopy above; vivid flashes of lightning would for a moment turn night into day, but within the hour all would be peaceful again with the passing of Nature's angry mood.

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It was generally late before I turned in, for I spent hours walking to and fro the deck, dreaming such dreams, building such castles in the air as only a young man of twenty-one can when he has all the world before him.

A favourite nook of mine in the cool of the afternoon was the ship's bows, where I waited for the sun to set. I would follow the graceful flight of the flying-fish, watch the gambols of a school of porpoises diving to and fro under the ship, and gaze fascinated into the smooth depths of the fathomless waters through which the steamer sped. My first impression of the peaceful calm of those days and nights in tropical seas is indelibly imprinted on my mind, and stands out to-day perhaps more prominently than anything else in that first voyage of mine.

Leaving the tropics, still steering south-west, we felt the change in the temperature and the weather became less settled and colder. We then met some rough days with heavy winds and seas from the south. Our progress became slower, our usual run of some two hundred and twenty miles dropping to under two hundred, and big seas every now and then swept the forward part of the ship. We passed many whales in these southerly waters, though never near enough to allow me to obtain a good view of them.

On the 23rd of March, thirty-eight days out, we sighted Cape Virgin, a low white cliff; and shortly afterwards we made Dungeness, where we reported ourselves at Lloyd's station. We anchored at midday in Possession Bay to wait for the turn of the tide. As we lay at anchor in the entrance of the Straits of Magellan we had a full view of the inhospitable shores of Patagonia and of the island of Tierra-del-Fuego.

Special caution is necessary in approaching and navigating these straits, as the currents and tides off the coast are very strong; the force of the current through the Narrows is sometimes as much as five to seven knots an hour. Cape Virgin is but a very low cliff, and, the distance off shore not being easy to estimate, negotiation of the eastward entrance to the straits

## MY FIRST VOYAGE—BOUND FOR 'FRISCO

needs extreme care. Sailing ships, of course, never attempt the passage, but sail round the Horn.

On the turn of the tide we weighed anchor and entered the straits with a strong south-west wind against us. For about one hundred miles from Cape Virgin the land was low, grassy and treeless. The low-lying ground then gave place to rugged country of rough-outlined hills and towering mountains, which, dark and gloomy, with blue glaciers interlodged, reared their snow-capped peaks over the waters at their foot. Their solemn grandeur was very impressive. The still silence that reigned added to the desolation of the scene.

Darwin, in his work on the voyage of the *Beagle*, describes the scenery of the Straits of Magellan in picturesque words: "It would be difficult to imagine a scene where Man seemed to have fewer claims or less authority. The inanimate works of Nature—rock, ice, snow, wind and water, all warring with each other, yet, combined against Man, reigned in absolute sovereignty!"

The town of Punta Arenas, born since Darwin's time, is, however, the symbol of Man's assertion of his rights; though the glittering blaze of lights seemed but to intensify the loneliness and wildness of the surrounding country.

The passage through the straits, a distance of three hundred and ten miles, took us thirty-seven hours; we passed several homeward-bound steamers, to which we dipped our ensign. Fortunately the weather kept clear, for dirty weather in these straits greatly increases the risk of navigation, as there are but few anchorages which afford any shelter to the ship that is "standing by" till the weather mends.

As it was getting dark we passed Cape Pillar, a bold cliff with high mountains to the southward, and entered the Pacific, meeting a high head sea which repeatedly broke over the ship. Steaming north, we soon sighted the coast of Chile; and on the 29th we anchored in Coronel Bay, off the town of that name.

The seaport of Coronel owes what prosperity it possesses to the somewhat inferior coal that is mined in its vicinity, chiefly at Lota. To the sightseer Coronel produced nothing of much

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interest. I visited the market and watched the inhabitants at their marketing, which chiefly consisted in gossiping, idling and smoking.

The Chilians, during our short stay, fully lived up to their national reputation for procrastination : *Mañana* (to-morrow) is their watchword ! It was Easter-time when we arrived, and the people, being Roman Catholics, were celebrating that season in a most festive way, to the total disregard of business obligations and ordinary work. To the many requests and protests of the steamers lying in the bay and waiting for coal *Mañana* was the only response. As we were the latest arrival we soon saw it was hopeless to think of getting supplies for some time to come ; consequently, as we had enough left in our bunkers to take us up to 'Frisco, we replenished our stock of fresh water and provisions, weighed anchor and steamed away.

Other ships were, however, not so fortunate. One French cargo boat had been lying in the bay for two weeks waiting for coal, but, notwithstanding the promise of double wages to those who would work, the steamer could not obtain so much as a ton. Her captain informed us that the ship was due in one month at Baltimore to take up a fresh charter and had then only just sufficient time to reach that port. But the urgency of immediate coaling did not in any way worry the pleasure-loving, procrastinating people, and the prospect of that steamer being ready to leave for another two weeks was very remote. The French captain was a philosophic man, however, and *les beaux yeux* of the Chilean girls seemed fully to compensate him for the delay of his ship, which, though he had done his best to avoid it, was after all not his trouble so much as that of his owners. Doubtless the opening of the Panama Canal will affect considerably the importance of Coronel as a coaling port ; though, on the other hand, it may lead to the development of some of the industries at present in their infancy. Petroleum was reported to be present in the vicinity, though whether in profitable quantities I could not learn. It was in the streets of Coronel that I first saw oxen in yokes used as beasts of burden ; and I felt so sorry for the poor animals

## MY FIRST VOYAGE—BOUND FOR 'FRISCO

patiently standing in the full blaze of the sun, compelled by their yoke to move in unison. The town was very hot and the glare from the coloured-plaster houses trying to the eyes ; so I was not at all sorry to be once again at sea.

Resuming our voyage, we re-entered the tropics and on nearing the equator we experienced some extremely hot weather. The sea was like a sheet of glass ; not a ripple disturbed its surface. One immediately thought of some poor sailing ship lying becalmed in these waters—the dreaded Doldrums ; of the deadly monotony of life for those on board, who see day after day the same unruffled sheet of water, the same pitiless sun bleaching the sails as they cling lazily to the mast. It was stiflingly hot on board our steamer, making as we were a nine-knot breeze. The pitch bubbled in the bridge-deck and the iron decks were too hot for the bare foot of any white man. Here and there in the glassy seas I caught sight of the fin of a shark stealthily gliding along.

Nearly two weeks after leaving Coronel we sighted the Galapagos Isles, noted for their turtles. The following day we recrossed the equator, that day being the hottest of our voyage.

Day after day we steamed steadily north till the coast of Lower California appeared on the horizon, and off the coast we sighted the first sail since leaving Chile—for over twenty days we might have been the only craft afloat ! The weather daily grew cooler, as we were now in the north-east trades, and our voyage was drawing to an end.

At four o'clock in the morning of the 24th April we picked up the American pilot off the coast of San Francisco. I was on the bridge at the time with the captain when the pilot boarded us, and from him we learnt the latest news. So full of interest to me at all times was the manœuvring of a deep-sea steamer that it mattered little at what hour of the night or day we entered or left a port—I would be up on the bridge the whole time. During the years I travelled perhaps no subject has been of more continual interest to me than that of navigation or anything

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

to do with the handling of a ship; hence the freshness and strangeness of everything was specially absorbing.

We entered the Golden Gate at sunrise, and anchored shortly afterwards in the bay of San Francisco, one of the most beautiful harbours in the world. It was the 24th day of April. Our voyage had taken us sixty-nine days. To all on board save myself it had been uneventful enough, nothing untoward having occurred during the trip. To me, however, the journey from the first day to the last had been full. I had learnt much of a life of which before I had been totally ignorant; I had gained knowledge of the laws that govern the coming and going of the ocean tramp and of the life and daily routine of those on board. The impressions of life in general that I obtained on that first voyage are still very clear in my mind.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST EXPERIENCES IN CALIFORNIA

**M**Y arrival in San Francisco was just twelve months after the great earthquake and fire that demolished and devastated so large a part of that city. A section of the town was still almost in ruins. Though to a certain extent the full effects of the great catastrophe were no longer apparent, the results were still obvious in nearly every street one crossed. Gaping holes, twisted girders, broken masonry and tons of wreckage met the eye on all sides.

To make matters worse, the town was also in the throes of a labour war. Every effort of the capitalists to rebuild the city was thwarted by the policy of the labour unions, whose demands struck one as being as childish as they were outrageous. Seven sections of labour were then on strike ! The unprecedented wage of five dollars gold a day was being paid for ordinary unskilled labour—for knocking mortar off bricks. The carpenters had struck for seven dollars a day, and when their demands were granted the boilermakers followed suit ; and so it went on. One felt as much admiration for the inhabitants of the wrecked city in their determination that a still more splendid town should arise from the ruins as one felt contempt for the unpatriotic actions and demands of the labour unions, whose one aim seemed to be to take advantage of the city's plight. However, the last straw was the car strike. When the carmen ceased work and demanded increased wages the capitalists put their foot down. Strike-breakers were brought into the city by train loads from all parts of America and the strike failed, though not before many attempts had been made to wreck the cars by dynamite. A signal defeat for the unions resulted, and I believe

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I am correct in saying that the cars in San Francisco are to-day run by non-union men.

That it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good was very clearly illustrated by the increase of business in Oakland across the bay, though a great deal of 'Frisco's business went up to Seattle after the fire, and incidentally much of the vice went with it.

Before leaving the *Strathyre* and securing permission to enter the States I had to undergo an examination by the immigration officials. I was asked: "Have you any work to do?" I had not; but I was wrestling in my mind as to whether it would be politic to confess that fact. However, I replied in the negative. I was then informed I could enter the country, after having satisfied the officials that I had fifty dollars in my possession and that I was neither an anarchist, a polygamist nor an ex-criminal. I learnt afterwards that, had I said that I had some work to go to, I should not have been permitted to enter, owing to the regulations in force against indentured labour. To tell the truth in America is the best policy—sometimes!

One of the instances when it is the best policy *not* to tell the truth is over the question of alien or head tax. This tax—four dollars, I believe, I paid in 'Frisco—is charged on all persons entering the United States. Those exempt, besides American citizens, are Canadians or those who reside in Canada; but—and here's the point—the person entering from that territory, whether he is Canadian born or not, is compelled to show a clear year's residence in that country. The absurdity of this stipulation is apparent in the following instance:—A Canadian-born enters the States; he enters free, showing, say, twenty-five years' residence in Canada. He stays, we will suppose, in the United States for a few months and then returns to his home. Now, after a stay in his own country of perhaps a couple of months, he decides to return again to America. He does so; but on this occasion, according to the regulations, he has to pay alien tax because he cannot show a clear year's residence in Canada! The absurdity of this precious piece of American



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legislation is apparent.<sup>1</sup> The obvious course to adopt is *not* to tell the truth ; and then everyone is satisfied !

Having left the ship, and being now free to enter the States, I tasted my first cocktail and learnt then the meaning of the price "two bits." As this is the hallmark of your knowledge of the West I impart the valuable information. It is twenty-five cents. I further learnt, this first day in 'Frisco, the phrase "up against it." This expression was in the mouth of every San Franciscan when he was discussing the one and only topic of conversation with visitors—the fire of 1906 ; they never talk there of the 'quake ! It was certainly a very expressive phrase, and one that aptly described the condition of the inhabitants of 'Frisco during their troubles, whether from fire, 'quake or labour unions.

As fifty dollars represented all my worldly wealth, I had devised some wonderful schemes for economising. I had an opportunity of putting into practice my resolution to economise this first day of mine in America. As it was very hot work tramping through the dusty streets, I went into a saloon and asked for a glass of beer ("steam beer," I think they call it—one generally gets more steam than beer unless the bar-keeper knows his job well) and I put down a nickel (five cents). I was curtly informed : "All drinks fifteen cents each, two for 'two bits.' " I tried lemonade. No good ! I was told that with a "free lunch" counter they could not afford to sell anything at five cents a glass. Not having then the "gall" to walk out I paid my fifteen cents, but despite the fact that I had just had lunch I made terrific inroads into the "free lunch" counter. I am quite sure that the saloon made nothing out of the deal. I left feeling proud that I had put my new scheme of economy into practice, though I must confess to feeling very sluggish for the rest of the afternoon. My next visit was to a cigar store to buy some Virginia cigarettes. The "wise guy" (I believe that is the correct term) in the store said that he did not stock them ; in fact, he half

<sup>1</sup> It may be that this stipulation is no longer in force ; I only speak from my experience in 1907.

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insinuated there were no such cigarettes on the market. "We only sell foreigners," he informed me. By that, of course, I inferred he meant Turkish or Egyptian cigarettes—and not strangers! I apologised for my ignorance, pleading the foolish notion that as Virginia was one of the States of the Union it had occurred to me that the tobacco grown there might be smoked in America.

I had in my possession a letter of introduction to an Englishman who had left home quite a youngster and was, I had been told at home, in business as a commission merchant in Oakland. As he lived in Alameda, across the bay, I decided to look him up the following day. Early the next morning I caught one of the many ferries that ply to and fro, and reached Alameda. I found the house and presented my letter. With true Californian hospitality I was invited to stay a few days till I had made arrangements as to what I was going to do. Much to my surprise my host informed me in course of conversation that his business was not exactly that of a commission merchant; he was a saloon-keeper. He said that he had thought it a kindness not to make any mention of his real occupation to his folks at home, as he had no wish to shock their conventional ideas. He also asked me when writing home not to mention the true character of his commission merchant's business. Needless to say I promised. I must confess that I was not altogether sorry that my merchant had materialised into a saloon-keeper, as I felt he would more readily understand my desire to see life. Though I had come out ostensibly to find some commercial position, I had, I fear, but little intention then of settling down right away. I had my freedom, and was possessed of but one idea—to gain experience. To do that I was ready and willing to do anything, or to go anywhere.

In the company of my host I visited his saloon, which lay in the central part of Oakland. Whilst walking through Alameda towards his saloon I caught sight of trains with clanging bells rushing through the streets; at first sight they appeared to me very strange. My companion, as we walked along, pointed out to



SAN FRANCISCO: ENTRANCE TO THE GOLDEN GATE



SAN FRANCISCO'S SUBURBS



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me what were to him noteworthy objects of interest. He first drew my attention to a church, remarking briefly: "That's where I was married!" I silently sympathised. A little farther on he casually said: "I laid this side-walk on which we are walking when I was up against it two years ago!" I was naturally very surprised to hear a man, married to a charming lady and living in a lovely house, talking of "running a saloon" and "laying cement side-walks." My English orthodox idea that to work with your hands was derogatory here received its first rude shock. Further, I secretly registered a determination to emulate at the first opportunity my companion's noteworthy performances. Strange is it not how small things alter the course of one's life? Had my companion been a staid business man, possibly to-day I might be a well-to-do alderman in San Francisco; whereas he, being what he was, imparted to me much of the roaming spirit of the West—and thus to-day I am what I am!

In his saloon I met all sorts and conditions of men. I fully entered into the spirit of my surroundings (though not too deeply into the alcoholic part) and mixed freely in the company of gamblers, miners, and the usual run of men who are habitués of a bar in the Western States. But for the fact that there was no vacancy I was quite ready to take the job of a waiter in the saloon—to carry to and fro trays of drinks to the thirsty frequenters—so determined was I to penetrate into the different strata of life. The intense novelty and the great contrast from the conventional atmosphere in which I had up to then lived gave a zest to all my experiences in the West.

After a few days in these surroundings I had carefully acquired a stock of choice Americanisms with which to interlard my speech, and I made valiant efforts to acquire the intonation of the Westerner, which is not the nasal twang of the globe-trotter or that heard in the New England States. Notwithstanding, however, my fluent flow of Western slang it was always my English accent that gave me away. Our uneven accentuation in speech, in contrast to the monotone of the American,

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constitutes, I think, the chief difference between the two modes of speech.

Things were very dull on both sides of the bay, business being more or less stagnant ; and so, notwithstanding my efforts and those of my host, I was unable to obtain work of any description. To get any office work was out of the question ; and I must confess I was not anxious to obtain a job of this description. It was too tame for me. I therefore decided to go up to Portland, for I heard work was plentiful there and in the lumber camps in the vicinity of the town. I felt that watching games of poker, prowling round the docks, running the risk of a broken head in Chinatown and seeing moving pictures in "dime" shows was hardly the way to make a fortune. My saloon-keeper friend, however, suggested that before I left California I should go up to a fruit ranch owned by some friends of his and there get a glimpse of real Californian life. I jumped at the opportunity and started off the same afternoon. A three hours' train ride through very picturesque country brought me to my destination—a small place called Healdsburg. From here I had been instructed to strike boldly through the country due west, till I reached certain roads, one of which led to the ranch.

It was just getting dark when I alighted from the train, or, to be more truthful, when I fell off—this unorthodox and somewhat undignified method of alighting being occasioned by the unusual distance from the step to the ground and the absence of a platform. On leaving the station, or "depot" as it is termed out there—with a tremendous accent on the "e"—I started to steer my westerly course ; but like a true tenderfoot I took the wrong road, passing by the path I should have taken. I thought in my ignorance that it could not possibly aspire to the title of a road, having yet to learn what roads were like in California. Presently I entered a thick forest of redwood trees. It was quite dark before I reached it, but when I had gone some fifty yards through the forest of towering timber the blackness became so intense that I could not see a yard in front of or above me. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I could follow the

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path I was treading. I had never before, and indeed have never since, experienced such darkness as that which enveloped me then. I was fortunately in possession of good nerves, for the rustling in the bushes and the slight movements amidst the towering timber that every now and then reached my ears in that impenetrable darkness were, to say the least, very trying. However, carefully picking my steps I blundered on till I found my way barred by a fence. I was then confirmed in the belief that I was on the wrong road. There remained then nothing else for me to do but to retrace my steps, and I accordingly did so. I heaved quite a sigh of relief when I saw once again the light of the stars. Eventually I reached my destination, only to find the farmhouse and its occupants wrapped in slumber. My arrival soon started the dogs going ; they awakened the household, and, as I was expected, a faint voice from the darkness cried out : " Are you the Englishman ? " My accent, apparently, satisfied them that I was, for the dogs were quietened and I was welcomed in.

After my two hours of prowling about redwood forests I was not at all sorry to have some supper and get to bed. To my hosts I attributed the lateness of my arrival to every other cause than the right one ; for I was slowly learning wisdom.

The day after my arrival was very wet, a drizzling rain falling all day. However, despite the rain, one of my young hosts took me over the ranch, showing me all the growing vines. The ranch covered many acres of ground, and when we had seen all over it it was full time to have some lunch. The day following we drove over to a neighbouring saw-mill, where I had the opportunity of seeing the big redwood trees being converted into marketable timber. The road to the mill seemed in my inexperienced eyes impassable for any vehicle. I had yet to learn the strength of an American buggy and the great amount of knocking about it will stand. Over boulders and through running streams our buggy went jumping and bumping from side to side. On taking the reins I found that I needed all my attention and skill to avoid capsizing the vehicle. A Californian buggy is, how-

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ever, made for wear and it is astonishing what strain it will stand, notwithstanding its apparently fragile appearance. A buggy on a Californian road is only equalled by a Russian droshky on a road in Manchuria.

From the saw-mill we drove to a neighbouring ranch, the owner of which had some young horses which he wanted to catch and break in. He enlisted our services, or at least those of my companion; mine were thrown in. Having tied up our buggy we went off to the field where the horses were grazing. I was stationed at the one exit of the field, whilst the other two mounted horses and started driving the animals they wanted to catch down to the opening near where I was concealed. My instructions were to keep the horses from going up the road, the corral into which they were to be driven lying in the opposite direction. The horses were driven out and I executed my flank movement with brilliant success—a not very dangerous or arduous task. The horses were soon safe in the corral; and then the fun began! My young companion (the owner of the horses appearing no more anxious to undertake the work than did I) entered the corral and, having marked his horse, deftly roped him with a lasso after one unsuccessful throw. Quickly taking a turn round a tree stump he held on, the captured horse pulling back with all his might. The pressure on the animal's neck soon became so severe that it choked and dropped. The line being slackened the horse quickly recovered, and so the struggle went on. But soon the young animal, more frightened than wild, became exhausted; whereupon my companion, sidling a mule alongside, had him speedily tied. The other horses were similarly dealt with, only one of them giving any considerable trouble. To such a degree did this one carry his resistance and fight before submitting that he even allowed himself to be dragged along some yards over the stony ground behind the mule to which he was fastened. However, a heavy whip and the pain of being dragged over the sharp stones soon showed him the wisdom of submitting and of following the mule. My companions told me that it was generally the case that the horse that resisted



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the longest became in the end the easiest to handle. On the way back I asked my companions whether either of them would ride one of those young horses just caught ; they both replied very emphatically : " Guess not ! " Riding bronchos was, I found, not an everyday vocation—even in California. The usual method employed for breaking in horses is to harness them with mules pulling a heavy load ; this soon takes out their superfluous " freshness."

The next couple of days I spent roaming over the ranch. Whilst wandering near a creek I espied some glittering stones in its bed. Geography had taught me California was noted for gold ; so the remembrance of this fact, coupled with the shining pieces of stone in my hand, fully confirmed me in the fact that I had discovered gold. I had not yet learnt that all is not gold that glitters—in more senses than one !

Thoughts of motor cars, private yachts and suppers at the Savoy flashed through my brain. I spent the whole of that day wading creeks, smashing up rocks, and getting myself in a generally dirty condition. Now and then a slight doubt assailed me as to whether it were gold that I had discovered—for there seemed tons of the stone about ! No ! It was gold, all right ! Having carefully retained some of the choicest specimens to take back with me to San Francisco, I spent two more pleasant days roaming the country round. Many Italians were settled round about engaged in vine-growing and fruit-farming, both very profitable occupations. Several fruit-canneries were erected in the district and fed by these fruit farms. The fruit-farming industry was rather humorously summed up in the sentence :—" They eat what they can, and what they can't they can ! " In passing, I would just say that I sincerely hope my reader will not make the same howler when repeating this saw, as attributed to one young English girl (by Americans, *of course*), who is alleged to have told it to her friends thus : " They eat what they can and what they can't they—put into tins ! " This story was told me in 'Frisco to illustrate and to convince me of the Englishman's lack of humour.

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Bidding my charming hosts farewell I returned to San Francisco. On my way there in the train I showed my gold (?) quartz to some men sitting opposite to me. One of them, after having examined a piece with a critical and knowing eye, remarked seriously: "Gee! you've got something good there!" He followed up these words by adding that he hoped that I had marked the spot from where I had obtained the specimens. I looked at him with a do-you-take-me-for-a-tenderfoot sort of expression and replied loftily: "Why, sure I did." I had one small piece of satisfaction when an assayer in 'Frisco to whom I had taken the stones drily remarked: "Shasta mica; tons of it in the neighbourhood!" and that was that I was not the only fool in the world, remembering my *vis-à-vis* in the train.

Having thus gained a glimpse, if only a short one, of real Californian life, I started on my plans to go up to Portland. I felt that it was about time to do some work!

## CHAPTER III

### EXPERIENCES IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

**M**Y return to San Francisco was made just in time to allow me to catch the *Strathyre*, which was sailing that same evening for Portland, Oregon, where she was to load a cargo of timber for China. As the American law forbids any foreign ship to carry cargo or passengers from one American port to another, I signed on the articles as purser for this short trip.

We left San Francisco in the evening, passing through the Golden Gate when it was dark ; when well in the Pacific we dropped our pilot and headed north. On the following day we ran into a thick mist which necessitated a sharp look-out ; the whistle was kept going continuously. During the day we passed quite close to a school of whales, and I was able at last to obtain a good glimpse of their unwieldy bodies.

After three days' steaming, out of sight of the coast most of the time, we approached land and in the afternoon picked up the sea-pilot who brought the ship into Astoria, a small town at the entrance to the River Columbia. Here we anchored. After a short wait for the tide we started up the river under the guidance of a river-pilot. The scenery along the Columbia is very pretty, the banks being thickly wooded on both sides, the long slender pines growing to a great height. The banks were lighted at intervals for navigation purposes, these little lights twinkling like fireflies in the darkness of the banks. We steamed through calm waters till we reached Rainier, where we anchored. It was just midnight and the little town lay wrapped in slumber. Everything was quiet and still save for the croaking of the frogs in the forests.

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Early the following morning I left the ship and caught the morning train to Portland. We passed through great stretches of thickly timbered country, though along the line of railroad much of the timber had been burnt down and the scene was barren and desolate. I reached Portland shortly before noon and was very much impressed by the town. It seemed to me the soundest and most stable on the Pacific coast. The atmosphere of commercial prosperity pervading the streets was in some degree lacking in the other cities of like size on this coast—particularly in Seattle. Portland is certainly not so much in the general public's eye nor is its progress sensational; but its foundation and progress are the more sound and sure. As a consequence Portland suffers less from the periodical booms and depressions which occur from time to time along this coast. A boom is a thing to be avoided, as many a poor investor knows to his cost, but, unfortunately, many of the boosters of these Western towns do not realise that the reaction must follow the boom as surely as thunder must follow the lightning; and the reaction must ever be in the shape of a slump!

Portland is eminently a conservative city established on a sure foundation. One might term it an inland town with a seaport. Its growth has been steady. The harbour is one of the largest fresh-water harbours in the world, and, at the same time, the city lies in the midst of one of the richest agricultural valleys in America—the Willamette Valley. Nearly every foot of it is splendid agricultural land and of yearly increasing value. If I had a thousand dollars to invest, not to speculate with, and had the choice of any town on the Pacific coast, I should not have much difficulty in selection.

On my arrival I presented a letter which had been given me in San Francisco to the Eastern and Western Lumber Company. I told them I wanted to get a job in one of their camps. I was then referred to the boss-foreman of the camps—a hard-looking specimen of humanity, as he well need be for the position. On my explaining what I wanted he gruffly asked me: "Do you mind getting killed, young fellow?" I replied that though I

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was not exactly anxious I was prepared to take my chance. He thereon gave me a note to the boss of No. 1 Camp, which I learnt was situated at a place called Eufaula, on the Washington side of the River Columbia.

Having two days to spend before the river-steamer bound for this spot was to sail, I hired a room for fifty cents a day and in it deposited my bag (my "grip," I had by now learnt to call it) and started out to see the town. The greater part of my baggage, I might mention, I had left behind in Alameda, realising the folly of carrying unnecessary clothes while I was on the move.

A line from a man in 'Frisco obtained for me a good lunch at the Arlington Club with one of the lumber-men of the town; there I tasted the famous Hood River strawberry, which though smaller than that at home is quite as tasty. However, it was not so many weeks afterwards that the sight of one of those strawberries was the surest way of extracting profane language from me, but of that anon.

The period of two days having expired, on the evening of the 19th I caught a little river boat—the *Beaver*—bound down the Columbia. I took with me only a blanket, in which I rolled a few odds and ends, and thus equipped started off to become a lumberer.

At nine o'clock we left and arrived at our destination at daybreak, having stopped at intervals at places along the river taking on and discharging passengers and cargo. Despite all the noise and hubbub I managed to snatch a few hours' sleep during the trip, but was awake by dawn. Everything at that hour of the morning was very damp, the dews at night being heavy; but the world seemed very fresh and clean.

The sun was just rising when I left the boat and headed for the camp to which I was bound. It almost goes without saying that I lost my way through the forest and clearings, but blundering on I eventually came on to a railroad track. Whilst I was inquiring from a man whom I met near by as to the direction in which I should go to reach the camp, a light engine, which I was told was bound there, came along. The driver seeing us

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waiting slowed down, and a gruff voice shouted, "Jump on!" A quick glance had shown me a small platform on the front part of the engine on which two men were already standing. I assumed I had to jump on to this. I did so, fortunately without mishap, though not without some inward qualms that I might miss my footing and fall under the moving engine. It apparently never dawned on those lumberers that I might not be as accustomed to mounting running engines as they. In a few minutes we reached the camp. I first got some breakfast. Whether a man has a job or not no one goes hungry in a lumber camp!

After breakfast I interviewed the boss, from whom I learnt that whilst at the moment there were no jobs going in the camp a contractor working a section of the company's timber wanted a fireman for his donkey engine. Asked as to whether I could do this I insinuated with perfect equanimity that what I didn't know of firing donkey engines was not worth knowing. Consequently I got the job! The pay—that concerned me most—I was told was three dollars a day and "all found." This was as good a wage as was paid for any section of work going in the camps at that time.

Having got my job, I thought it would be just as well if I endeavoured to find out as to what kind of work it was that I had to do, and that was worth such a good wage. From tactful inquiries made I gathered that "all I had to do" was to saw up trees, chop them up into firewood, and feed the furnace of the donkey engine. It *sounded* easy enough; and whenever any doubts as to whether I was a past master in the use of an American axe assailed me, the memory of how I successfully hacked down a tree in the garden at home fully dissipated them. On the strength of my job I got "on tick" from the camp-store a pair of woodmen's leather gloves; and then gaily went off into the forest to find out where I was to begin my work on the morrow.

I found the grubhouse and the bunkhouse, and strolled into the former. The good dame in charge presently asked me what I wanted. I replied laconically "Nothing." Finding this pertinent

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question did not hasten my departure the worthy lady went on to inform me that the house was only for use of the lumberers during meal-times and was not a sitting-room ; and, further, she inquired : “ Have you been in a lumber camp before ? ” Satisfying her curiosity on this score (though as to whether in a truthful manner or not I will not confess) I went off and investigated the log-dwelling where I was to sleep that night—and many nights afterwards, as I then thought !

The bunkhouse was a large wooden building, a kind of barn built out of rough logs. I pushed open the door and looked in. My first view rather damped my ardour and my youthful ambition of becoming a Western lumberer. The inside of the shack was lined with rows of bunks, in and round which lay littered about in hopeless confusion clothes, boots and plenty of dirt. Having feasted my eyes on this romantic touch of the Wild West, I sat down on a tree stump outside and began to consider my position. Here was I, a young man of twenty-one—who not many months ago prided himself on his immaculate garb—sitting on a mossy tree stump, clothed in a pair of dungaree pants and a rough shirt, a prospective donkey-engine fireman ! The change was so sudden that I felt somewhat like a fish out of water. Nevertheless, I cheered up and consoled myself with the thought that I was seeing the world with a vengeance and was acquiring plenty of experience ! My spirits rising, I began to reckon that, with the thirty-odd dollars I had still left out of my initial capital, after two months' work—I decided I would stop that long—I should be worth two hundred dollars. The idea that my services would not be retained for just so long as I wished never entered my head. Thus calculating I had reached in my mind the stage where I owned half the forests of Washington, when my reverie was interrupted by the men returning from work. Looking up I saw the sun was just setting.

After the lumberers had had a perfunctory wash I joined them in their course to the grubhouse. We all sat down to a well-laid table. The food was rough and plain, but wholesome and plenty of it. After the evening meal was finished the men sorted them-

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selves out—some to play cards, others to smoke and yarn. Some lounged in their bunks, whilst one or two ground their axes blunted by the day's work. An axe is to the lumberer what the lariat is to the cowboy.

I sat by a silent observer. Fragments of conversation reached my ears, chiefly on the subject of some individual's latest attempt to paint red the "tenderloin" district of Portland. I felt rather out of it all; for I was in a little world strange and new to me. One or two exchanged a few remarks with me, but by the majority I was little noticed. When asked from where I had come, I discreetly replied: "From South America." I had no wish to conceal my nationality, which was obvious to them; but I will frankly admit I was none too anxious to make conspicuous the fact that I was a raw Englishman just out from home. Even in the short time that I had been then in these Western States I had noticed that so often when a Westerner met an Englishman of the better class he assumed right away that he was up against a "doggoned" fool. For that we have to thank some of the gilded youths and remittance-men who have been our forerunners. I had been told many times before I had come out West that Englishmen were unpopular in these Western States; some of them are—and rightly so too. The type of Englishman who, though he has made America his home and makes his living from that country, is yet always belittling the place in which he lives is unpopular and most deservedly so. An instance I have in mind is the case of one Englishman, a long resident in California, who wrapped every child of his at its birth in a Union Jack. Such a type of man both England and America can well do without! In his own eyes he may be a patriot in exile; in mine he is an ungrateful cur. Another type, and perhaps an even more despicable one, is represented by the Englishman who takes out his "first" papers whilst in America, and on the slightest opportunity will avail himself of American protection. In different surroundings he is a loyal Britisher and the first one to damn the Yanks. With such a type also both countries can well dispense.



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In all my wanderings in the West—from 'Frisco to Klondyke and back—I found without exception that I was as cordially treated as in any other country in which I have since travelled. I found the Western American a *man*, sincere, and ever ready to lend a helping hand. I have only the pleasantest remembrances of the many types with which I came into contact whilst roaming on this coast. But I used tact and further made use, or endeavoured to, of the brains God gave me. From the start I avoided odious comparisons, was always ready to acknowledge the many "pros" that life in these states had over that in my own country, and had no intense desire to remind them of the also many "cons." I endeavoured everywhere to live by the axiom of doing in Rome what the Romans do, so far as was compatible with common-sense. Should these lines by chance meet the eye of any young Englishman who proposes to become a settler in the West—and he could do far worse—let him just note my words; and if he acts on them, he will never add to the unpopularity of a Britisher in the Western States of America, but will be as well received as though "he came from Missouri."

One by one the men turned in and soon, but for an occasional word here and there and the deep breathing of the sleepers, silence reigned. Outside in the sleeping forests all was still. I had found a vacant bunk well filled with straw some time before; and this I appropriated. I lay awake listening to the croaking of the frogs and meditating on my new surroundings till I fell asleep. It was then about nine o'clock. Men in lumber camps keep early hours, as they have to be early risers.

It had seemed but a matter of an hour or two before I was awakened by the movements of my neighbours. Rubbing my eyes and looking about me I saw it was just daylight. I jumped out and put on my clothes—at least, the few I had taken off—and joined the little crowd of men outside, each waiting his turn at the one tin bowl to get a hasty wash. It was very cold, the sun not yet having risen, and the dew had been very heavy during the night. By six o'clock we were all seated at breakfast. Mush, hot cakes, meat and eggs, with hot coffee would satisfy

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the most fastidious man ; and one could hardly with truth apply that adjective to a lumberer.

Half-an-hour afterwards the whole party of us were on our way through the damp forests towards the part where operations were going on. A few minutes' walk brought us to the clearing where the hauling apparatus was to be found, together with my donkey engine. I scrutinised the latter as well as the man in charge of it, who, on seeing me, pointed out an axe, a two-handled saw, and a large felled tree, and without any waste of words told me to get to work. The diameter of the log was about three feet, and with the long saw I started merrily away to saw off my first length. This I did without any mishap. However, by the time I was nearly through the second length I began to feel pretty warm, the sun by then having risen well into the sky. The heat coupled with the unusual exercise made me very thirsty, and I drank copiously—too copiously—of the cool water near by. Having sawn up three or four lengths I then started to chop them up with the long-handled axe. Then it was that I found the job was worth three dollars a day ; then it was that I learnt that it was not so easy as it looked to wield an American axe. For with every stroke of the axe I wedged it so tightly in the log that it was even harder work to withdraw it. The engineer in charge of the donkey engine watched for a short while my awkward efforts with an amused smile on his face. I also caught out of the corner of my eye the foreman gazing at my acrobatic feats with the axe, doubtless wondering whether he ought to supply me with a pail in which to stand.<sup>1</sup> The former at last motioned me aside and, picking up an iron wedge and a nine-pound hammer, with one or two heavy blows on the wedge split the log in halves ; then, with a few deft cuts with the axe completed the process of converting the log into firewood.

I valiantly strove to emulate his deeds with the hammer, wedge and axe, and added a little to the stock of firewood which—fortunately for the hauling operations—had been there before

<sup>1</sup> A precaution taken with "tenderfoots" to avoid an accident:

## EXPERIENCES IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

I came. I also gingerly fed the furnace, till the engineer rather lost patience and told me to put on plenty of wood and not scraps.

In this way I laboured on, taking periodical spells of rest, pints of water, and a smoke every now and then, till the whistle blew for the midday meal. How I blessed its welcome sound ! Throwing down my axe I followed the rest of the men back to the grub-house where we were soon seated before a good spread. I was, however, more thirsty than hungry after my unusual exertions. Having finished the meal I lit my pipe and, whilst strolling towards the bunkhouse, I met the contractor who had employed me. He stopped and said briefly that he thought the job of firing was too heavy for me—in other words, he was telling me to “get.” In my denseness I did not perceive that he was rather kindly telling me that I was no darn good for the job and was “firing” me ; so I calmly started to reassure him of my ability soon to get used to the work. However, he made his meaning plainer and I realised that I was “fired.” He paid me one dollar twenty-five cents for my morning’s work ; I repacked my few belongings and slowly returned to the junction a sadder and wiser youth.

After all, I thought, it is only a change from the active to the passive mood : I came to fire, but was fired ! I further consoled myself with the thought that even getting the sack was experience ; so what had I to complain about ? The humour, too, of the situation was by no means little : all my dreams of wealth and of stopping there for at least two months being so rudely dispelled by the lack of appreciation of my services on the part of my employer.

I did not intend, however, to be content with this short glimpse of a lumber camp so I decided to visit some of the other camps in the vicinity, where perhaps I might strike a softer job. I got a bed that night at the lumber store, the storekeeper there being a very good chap, who took pity on my inexperience. He even took back the leather gloves that I had purchased on credit.

Early the next morning I got on one of the lumber trains

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bound for Camp 3, some miles off. The train consisted of about twelve long flat cars, each laden with logs of some thirty to forty feet in length, securely fastened to the car with chains. The logs were on their way to the river station, where they were to be rafted and towed up the river to the saw-mills round Portland. The dimensions of these rafts are very great, some of them containing over a million feet of timber.

The train on its way passed through great stretches of cleared forest which looked very barren and desolate, the ground being littered with broken and charred timber. Fire so often follows in the wake of the lumberer and completes the destruction of what young timber is not already destroyed in the extraction of the felled trees, which very frequently break much good timber in their fall. America, it is to be feared, is living very heavily on her capital in this industry ; for the supply of Oregon pine must soon come to an end, if the extraction is continued to be carried on in such a reckless and wasteful fashion. The term "Oregon pine," by the way, is rather a misnomer, as the greater part of the timber in that state and that of Washington is the Douglas fir, spruce and hemlock also abounding in fairly large quantities.

On arrival at the camp I approached the foreman for a job. He was a taciturn Scotsman, concealing, however, much kindness under his rough and rugged demeanour. He told me that at the moment there was nothing doing, but that if I liked to wait a few days something would turn up. I thereon asked him if I might go over the camp and watch operations. "Why, sure!" was the ready response.

I had my evening meal that night in the large grubhouse of the camp, where there were seated some fifty or sixty men. During the meal I had occasion to ask my neighbour to pass me the treacle. The following rather amusing dialogue then ensued : "Will you please pass me the treacle?" "How's that?" was the grunt that reached my ears. I repeated my question, though this time with some little alteration : "Pass me the treacle—that yellow dope over there." It was no good ; certainly I got what I

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wanted, but with the curt rejoinder: "Say, can't you speak United States?" With some heat I snapped back: "What the hell do you call it then?" "We call that molasses!" was the surly grunt I received in reply. I did not pursue the conversation any further, feeling that it was not exactly wise to argue the point, the odds there being sixty Westerners to one Englishman. Unfortunately I am unable to reproduce the unimitatable drawl of that Westerner, or the drawling "a" in "can't" and "molasses." I leave it to my reader's imagination.

In a lumber camp it is a great breach of etiquette to be *polite*! If you want an article or dish of food that is on the table but not immediately in front of you, it is not expected of you to trouble your neighbour who is busily engaged eating—all you have to do is to reach over and get it yourself. That in doing so you brush your sleeve over your neighbour's plate, or knock his food from off his fork, why that's a mere bagatelle!

All the next two days I spent wandering through the forests and watching the work that was going on. I first visited the part where felling operations were in progress. The lumberers in this occupation work in couples. The tree to be felled is first selected by them, and then the best place where it is to fall is afterwards chosen, to avoid the smashing of the surrounding timber as much as possible.

When I came on the scene the lumberers were engaged in cutting with their axes a wedge in the tree—on the side where it was to fall. The tree must have been nearly three hundred feet in height, straight as a ship's mast, and it must have measured fully five feet through the centre. With regular and rhythmic blows of their axes the two men, facing each other, had soon cut into a third of the thickness. They then started on the opposite side, sawing obliquely downwards, using a large-toothed two-handed saw, one man at either handle. After steadily sawing for nearly an hour, an ever-increasing lean of the tree towards the wedged side—away from the sawers—and an ominous cracking warned one of its approaching fall. A warning cry of "Timber!" then rang through the forest. After a few

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more cuts with the saw the stately monarch of the forest swayed, staggered, and then dipped slowly forward. With a crash that echoed far and wide the towering pine fell, smashing many young trees to fragments in its fall and shaking the earth.

The fallen tree was then sawn up into lengths of varying dimensions under the directions of the " scaler." The logs were then dragged by wire hawsers attached to the donkey engine through the forest to an available spot, there to be loaded on to the railroad trucks, three logs to one truck. The strain on the wires that haul these logs through the forest is tremendous ; and the vicinity, where the blocks or sheaves through which the wire ropes run, is a veritable danger zone. Under the heavy strain the sheaves, though fastened as securely as possible to trees, very often " carry away " ; in doing so they would sever the limb from any human being they struck in their flight as cleanly as would a shell from a twelve-inch gun. Despite the most careful precautions, accidents such as this and others occur only too frequently in the lumber camps ; though perhaps not so frequently as in the saw-mills.

After a couple of days at this camp and no job having turned up, I decided to make for the river again and catch a boat back to Portland. With this in mind I shouldered my pack and started off for a small place called Stella, a distance of six miles, where I was told I could catch a river boat.

I thanked the grim old foreman for his kindness in giving me the opportunity of getting a practical insight into the lumbering industry, of the working of which I had obtained a good glimpse, though certainly not as much as I had anticipated when I was a prospective donkey-engine fireman.

It was late in the afternoon when I set out with my pack on my back for my destination—Stella.



LUMBERING



IN THE LUMBER YARDS





## CHAPTER IV

### TRAVEL IN THE WESTERN STATES

**A**FTER a long and weary tramp I reached the little town of Stella shortly after sundown. Stella is one of the many little wooden settlements that lie along the Columbia, where the timber from the neighbouring forests finds an outlet ; it possesses one or two saw-mills fed by the locality. As is the case with many of the small places on the Columbia, Stella owned a small but flourishing industry—that of scouring the river and picking up any stray logs that had broken away, *or had been* broken away, from the great rafts that pass by on their way to the saw-mills in and round Portland. The stray logs were captured, brought in and sold to the local saw-mill, “no questions being asked.” One man, who used a small motor boat in this occupation, told me a good day was worth as much as fifty dollars and more.

On finding that the river boat was not due till midnight I looked about me. Anchored off the town was a large Norwegian sailing ship loading a cargo of timber for the East. Making inquiries as to what there was doing in the place in the way of work, I learnt that the sailing ship was short-handed of long-shoremen—the men employed in the work of loading the ship. I asked my informer—a huge raw-boned Swede—what the work was like, to which he replied: “Why, quite easy !” I thought it might be for him, all bone and muscle, but what it would be to me was quite another question. However, I decided to tackle the captain on the matter. On my asking him for a job he replied: “Do you want to work ?—well, be down at the ship to-morrow sharp at seven !” The rate of pay was fifty cents an hour, with a further twenty-five cents an hour for overtime.

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This class of work—longshoring—is the best paid unskilled labour on the Western coast ; and consequently in America as the rate of wages in the west is much higher than that on the east coast. The pay is good, but the work is of the hardest.

Having decided on my course of action I hired a room at the one small hotel in the town and turned in early, as I felt that I should need a good night's rest in view of next day's programme. With my last failure clearly in my mind it had not been without some hesitation that I had taken on this job ; for I was then beginning to realise that hard manual work needed a lot of practice. However, I succeeded in lulling my misgivings and, like them, was soon asleep.

I was down at the ship sharp at seven in the morning. The boat was lying about a hundred yards off the shore, and to reach her one had to cross over floating rafts of railroad sleepers with which the ship was being loaded. As many of these sleepers were floating *singly* in the water I had to take great care in stepping, or a ducking would have ensued. I reached the ship in safety, though not without one or two hair-breadth escapes from going into the river.

The job I had was that of stacking up the sleepers in rows in the hold. As the timber was very wet, and the hold fairly high, the work was by no means light ; but I was determined that I would not be beaten in this attempt to hold my own. And I won out ; though not without feeling very weary and sore by evening, when my hands were much blistered and torn through handling the rough timber. We knocked off work at five o'clock. I returned to my room feeling very tired but very happy ! Indeed I felt as pleased with myself then and as proud of my victory as though I had graduated from Balliol. My youthful satisfaction at that moment may perhaps not have been as childish as it might seem, for the encouragement given me by that moral victory—it was more of a moral victory than of a physical one—was not inconsiderable. It showed me what I could do if I set my mind to it—and tried ! Had I been sacked at noon

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as in my preceding job, I think there would have been a far deeper sense of shame than of humour.

I worked all the next day ; but as the day following was Sunday, when work was at a standstill, and as I further learnt that the work for the next few days would be irregular the supply of timber being near exhaustion, I decided to return to Portland. With earnings amounting to nine dollars in my pocket and my blanket roll on my back, I caught the river boat that evening. Early the next morning we stopped at Rainier, where I found the *Strathyre* still lying. I decided therefore to spend the Sunday with my old friends on board and return by train to Portland on the morrow.

On my relating my experiences to the officers on board the *Strathyre* they were at first rather sceptical, but my raw and blistered hands fully convinced them of the truth of my tale. To my dismay they one and all began to reproach me for being so foolish as to do manual work. They could not, or would not, see that I wanted the experience.

On the following day I returned to Portland, though not till I had inquired at the saw-mill at Rainier if there were any work available for me, much to the disgust of the chief officer who was really quite impatient about my methods.

For a few days after my return to Portland efforts to obtain some work were ineffectual, though I made many visits to the various saw-mills in the vicinity. Unfortunately also the surveying parties, which go out each spring, were filled up, and consequently there was no opportunity for me to join.

Whilst visiting the saw-mills, I was very interested in observing the working of the ingenious and almost human-like machinery there in use. I watched with fascination the large band-saws cutting through huge rough logs with as much ease as though they were cheese, the working of the ingenious "hands" and "dogs" which so accurately regulated the movements of the timber—in short, all the machinery that reduced the parent logs to strips of timber of any size required.

During one of my visits I was the unwilling witness of an

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accident of a very ugly description. Whilst one of the large saws was revolving at a very great speed, cutting through the rough log, a splinter flew off and in its terrible flight struck one of the mill hands. The splinter, over a foot long and of some inches in thickness, pierced the right arm of the unfortunate man and penetrated his chest, pinning the arm to the body. It was, of course, a fatal accident—unfortunately one of many!

It was during this period of inactivity in Portland that I witnessed my first baseball game, the town team playing that from Oakland and the former winning by seven points to five. I am afraid that, being ignorant of the finer points of the game, I could not appreciate it as much as did the spectators, who became wildly enthusiastic. I admired, however, the clean fielding and the force the pitcher put into his throws. One incident rather marred the game in my eyes, and that was when one of the players attempted to strike the umpire, being dissatisfied by his decision. For this the player was turned off the field, and most rightly so too; but I gathered from the little impression the incident seemed to make on the crowd that it was by no means an unusual one.

After a week's inactivity I read an advertisement in one of the newspapers for men required for strawberry picking at Hood River. I interviewed the people in connection, and arranged to go up there, after listening to eloquent accounts of the money to be earned and of the easiness of the work.

Early the next morning, therefore, I caught a river boat—going upstream this time—to Hood River. We passed on our way some extremely pretty scenery, and soon we caught sight of the beautiful snow-capped Mount Hood. The little steamer had great difficulty in negotiating the rapids in parts of the river, and cautious navigation was most essential, as much of the river-bed was strewn with boulders and rocks. But we reached our destination at midday without incident.

Waiting for the steamer at the small landing-stage, in order to return to Portland, was a small crowd of men and women, most of whom had come up a few days previously on the same

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errand as that which had now brought me up. They were one and all disgusted with the whole affair. They told us (there were other gulls as well as myself bound on the same errand) that there was not even a living wage to be earned and the work was exceedingly trying.

Though somewhat disconcerted by this piece of news it did not worry me much, as it was all fresh experience. I felt also that the beautiful scenery around fully compensated me for the small outlay in the shape of the two dollars for my passage. The others were, however, not so easily consoled. Beautiful scenery, unfortunately, won't feed a wife and six children.

On making inquiries I found that I had in front of me a good two hours' walk in order to reach the farm at which I had arranged to work. Strong was the farmer's name, and there apparently seemed to be about a dozen farmers of that name in the neighbourhood ; anyway there were two and I, with my usual luck, was directed to the wrong one, who, of course, lived in exactly the opposite direction to where my man did. After wandering miles about the country I eventually reached my destination not far off sundown. I found quite a motley crowd on the farm, of all ages and of all descriptions. It was not long before the evening meal was ready ; I did ample justice to it after my wanderings in the country round. As it did not get dark till about seven I was asked after tea whether I would start in right then. Though not feeling at all anxious to start "grafting" at that hour of the day, still I thought it would be more politic to do so. Accordingly I did. The job given me, however, was only to pack the boxes filled with strawberries into crates for transport to Portland by rail. I did this work till dark, and, on learning the rate of pay for this class of work, I calculated I had earned the huge sum of nine cents ! Then I understood the reasons that little band of disgusted grumblers had in returning to Portland. After this job was over, I was told to give a hand with another young fellow to harness a team (about which I knew precious little) ; and when the crates were all packed into the cart off we started to the railway

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station some five miles distant. It was a lovely night, though rather cold ; but in company with the young American—a kindred spirit—I fully enjoyed the drive

On our return I found that there was no room for me to sleep in the farmhouse and, as all the outhouses were also full, I had to select the roomiest cart I could find. This I filled with hay, making it as comfortable as I could with the modest material at my disposal. Wrapping myself up in my blanket it was not very long before I was asleep. I did not have, however, a very restful night, as it was very cold and the dew was extremely heavy. At daybreak I left my “downy couch” and started strawberry picking. My reader may possibly imagine, as did I *before* I started, that this kind of work is not very arduous, or in American parlance that it was a “snap.” Quite the contrary, let me assure him ! Stooping for hours on end picking the berries, with limbs cramped, an exertion trying and yet insufficient to bring out a perspiration under the scorching rays of the sun, was arduous work. The monotony, too, was deadly ! Give me any time a longshoreman’s work in preference to such a job as that ! It was the worst job I struck in my six years of wandering—save writing this book !

Having plodded on for two or three hours and having reached the end of a row by which ran the main road, I decided to have a stretch and a smoke. Whilst thus occupied, a man who for some little while had been leaning over the rails lazily watching my labours—a wise man !—started conversing with me. Glad to avail myself of any break in the monotony and quite oblivious of the black looks of the farmer, who, however, had “no kick coming,” as we were all working on piece-work, I made myself comfortable and chatted away merrily with my gossiping companion. The subject of our yarning turned on doings in Alaska, where my companion told me he had many friends. He spoke so eloquently about this country that I then and there registered a determination to visit that part of the world before I left the shores of North America. What little things decide our path in life !

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I resumed work and continued till eleven o'clock, when the sun began to be intolerably warm. I had by then picked thirty-six boxes of berries, having on the whole worked, *I* considered, like a Trojan. At the rate of one cent a box I had earned thirty-six cents, which, with my nine cents on the preceding evening, brought my total earnings to the sum of forty-five cents! Many others like myself were pretty disgusted with this state of affairs, especially as the cost of our board nearly equalled our earnings. Having learnt that a neighbouring farmer was paying a half-cent more per box, I suggested a strike. My motion was adopted; so we all proceeded *en masse* to demand this increase in wage, threatening otherwise to quit in a bunch. Much to my secret disgust our strike was successful and the price raised to one and a half cents per box.

The young American, with whom I had become by now quite friendly—Abe by name (no one makes use of surnames out West in this stratum of life; most generally one is called “young fellow” if one’s first name is not known)—told me that his brother had just come up from Portland and was working on the next farm. As his brother had with him a tent he was going to join him; and he suggested that I came along too. I readily agreed. Without informing our farmer of our intentions, and leaving our wages in lieu of our board bill—a poor exchange!—we decamped during the day with our belongings. The neighbouring farmer welcomed us two recruits heartily, for labour was very scarce—a fact not much to be wondered at in view of the poor pay, which though the farmers could not afford to increase.

We pitched our tent and soon had made ourselves comfortable, the farmer’s wife sending us out some ice-cream. I am afraid none of us treated our situation very seriously, regarding the whole affair as a sort of picnic. We played cards and yarned till late in the evening.

My two “pardners” were from St Louis, the elder, Emory, having been till quite recently a manager of a large flour-mill in that city, but through some disagreement he had thrown up

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his billet and come West to look round. His younger brother had spent most of his life on a farm and had also responded to the call of the West.

We were all up by the sun and worked industriously till eleven o'clock, without a break, in the full heat of the sun. When knocking off, our earnings were about sixty cents each. We were all feeling very "headachy" after the many hours in the open ; so we point-blank refused to start work again till in the cool of the afternoon. The farmer rather unwisely said too much ; so all three of us, with true Western independence, quitted our jobs. Having packed up our belongings we returned to the town, there to indulge in ice-cream.

We had some time to wait before the steamer's arrival. Fortunately, however, we were kept enlivened by a band of picturesque cowboys who, mounted on fine young ponies, were raising Cain all over the town. It was a glimpse of the old days, now almost a thing of the past !

There were many others like ourselves returning to Portland, and a motley crowd of dirty gypsies we all looked. Shortly after sunset the river boat put in an appearance and picked up its load of grubby humanity. As none of us three was flush of money we decided not to indulge in the luxury of a bed, finding instead nooks about the boat in which to curl up. I was fortunate, as the night was cold, in finding a warm corner near the engines ; with a piece of old sacking as my mattress, and my blanket as my pillow, I was able to get a fairly good sleep. I say "fairly," as every now and then I would be disturbed by the lurching of some fellow-passenger who had been trying to find consolation for his troubles in rye whisky. We reached Portland at daybreak.

Our next step was to find some work of a different kind ; we found it at the Albina docks resacking flour ! It appeared that certain merchants in Shanghai had ordered a special class of flour known by a certain brand. None of this flour at the moment being available our employers were despatching a cheaper kind, but pouring it into properly branded sacks. Our work





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was to pour the contents of one fifty-pound sack into another, the latter requiring a deal of dumping down before it would hold all the flour. It was not by any means thrilling work and was certainly very tiring. Emory gave it up after the first day ; he had had enough, his knuckles being all torn by the rough sacks. Abé and I stuck it out another day ; and then we quit. We, too, had had enough, our hands being quite raw and torn. I further managed to get one hand poisoned from the green paint on the sacks. We had each earned a little over three dollars a day ; so we were still in funds !

The only solitary advantage about our job was that we were always able to obtain very comfortable seats in the tramcars on our return in the evening to town. As we were covered from head to foot with flour, well-dressed people courteously made way for us. This was the only redeeming virtue the job had !

After three days of idleness, poking our noses into "dime" shows, our hands giving us all excellent excuse, we decided to go farming. We selected a ranch in Oregon State. A three hours' train ride through very pretty country brought us to the place, by name Broadmead, near where the ranch was situated. The country through which we had passed was all well cultivated; fruit farms being especially noticeable. It was pouring when we alighted from the train and commenced trudging towards the farm where we hoped to get some employment. Having covered a few sloppy miles we reached the ranch and were all hired forthwith—rather to our surprise. I did not say much as to my qualifications as a farmer, or farm hand ; consequently, as my companions were used to the work I was hired with them, the foreman remarking that I looked willing. I could then *look* most things ! Even wise !

That same day we started work. We were all set to the task of sifting landplaster ; and again were completely whitened ! We had very decent quarters in the farmhouse—on the top floor, the six other farm hands occupying the lower. Our wages were one dollar twenty-five cents a day and "all found." The food was excellent, similar to that in the lumber camps. We had

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as much as we could eat, with milk and cream in abundance as the ranch had six cows all of which were in milk, and the dairy produce was all at our disposal. We had to be up at five in the morning, before the sun had risen; by six o'clock we were working in the fields.

After our landplaster-sifting job was finished, we three were sent into the neighbouring woods to cut timber. We went off to work with axes and saws. It was chilly at that hour of the morning and the woods were very wet, as it had been raining fairly steadily for the last few days. After a ten minutes' trudge we reached the spot where we were to work.

We took turns in felling the trees (the most popular work amongst us) and then in shaping and sawing up the logs. Here I had the opportunity of putting into practice what little I had seen and learnt in the lumber camp from which I had been so ignominiously "fired." We knocked off work at eleven o'clock for our midday meal, resuming work at one o'clock. Our labours for the day ended at six in the evening.

Having had our tea we were all soon ready for bed, after ten hours' hard work—more or less—in the forests. To be frank, none of us overworked, as the foreman was a most accommodating fellow, never worrying himself to inspect the number of cords of wood we cut per day. On piece-work I fear we should not have made a fortune!

After three days of this work we were put to hoeing hops, or at least to hoeing the weeds round the hops, though I fear at times in the midst of some heated argument many young and innocent hops, as well as weeds, were cut off in their prime. This work was not half so interesting as that which we had been previously doing, and after a week of it the monotony began to make me rather restless.

Sunday was a veritable day of rest. The three of us spent the morning swimming in a creek which ran through the ranch, the wash doing us no harm. I further washed one of the two shirts still in my possession. The afternoon and evening we spent in yarning, reading and playing cards. Of reading matter we had

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an inexhaustible supply, the bunkhouse being simply littered with magazines of all dates and of all descriptions. "Pedro" and "Blackjack" were the chief games of cards that we played, chiefly the former, as the latter needs coin to make it interesting, and that commodity was conspicuously absent.

After some days of hoeing hops I decided to seek a change. The fact of an eruption of boils having broken out on my neck, doubtless due to the bad water I had drunk in the last few weeks, gave me a good excuse to return to Portland in order to get treatment.

I bade good-bye to my two shortwhile partners, whom I have never seen since. If by a remote chance these lines should meet their eyes, they will read as well the writer's heartiest greetings.

It was near the end of June when I returned to Portland, which was on the day of my arrival gaily decorated for the annual Rose Fiesta. The festoons and garlands in the streets looked very pretty, and the procession, with its charming Rose Queen, was indeed a welcome sight after seven days of "'oeing 'ops." The day of the festival was extremely hot—ninety degrees in the shade—as I also knew to my discomfort, being well-bandaged about the neck on my return from the hospital.

In a few days I was well again and decided to seek fresh woods and pastures new. With this object in mind I went down to the employment offices and examined all the boards, telling where labour was wanted. These agencies are a feature of the Western coast. From them a stranger in the town can easily learn where and what are the chances of getting a job. Not being run by Government, they are efficient; and, if there is work going and the applicant can do it, there is not much time lost before matters are fixed up. Having scanned most of the boards, I never realised so forcibly what a really helpless individual I was; for there was nothing I could truthfully say I could do. At last, a man standing in the doorway of one of these offices seeing me reading one of the notices remarked: "Well, young fellow, want a job? I want a nice clean young 'un for a janitor in a lumber camp." Yes, I thought rather bitterly to

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myself, that is about all my helpless English education fits me for. Certainly the most confirmed insular optimist cannot say that our home education does much to equip young Englishmen for the struggle for modern existence and for the battle of life abroad. Though my so-called "intellectual attainments" (including two imperfectly-learned foreign languages) were greater than those of the majority of the men with whom I had up to then come in contact, I realised that they were in every respect my superiors in that they could use an axe which I could not ; in that all had some trade or line, however small and humble, to follow which I like the thousands of others similarly trained at home had not.

However, it was not to get a job this time that had taken me down to these employment offices, but to make them pay my rail fare somewhere up north. This sounds as though these agencies were philanthropic institutions, which is by no means the case, as all Westerners know. The idea, to which I had been "put wise," was to select a job in the place where one wished to go, or failing that as near to it as one could get. You then paid the fee and received a railway ticket, giving as security your "grip" or roll of blankets. This is the general procedure when a man is genuinely wanting work. In my case, however, the "grip" that I intended to place in the hands of the employment agency was one to be bought for fifty cents at any Jew store. On receipt of your ticket you left the "grip" as a security, and incidentally as a legacy. In the case of the genuine seeker of work, the baggage is handed over to him on his arrival at his destination when he has started work.

With this scheme in mind—not a very honest one, certainly, but Necessity is a hard mistress—I selected a job of an expert saw-mill hand in a place called Chehalis, which was as far north as I could get. I paid my fee of one dollar fifty cents and was told to call next morning for my railroad ticket.

Having made these preparations I bade farewell to the few friends I had made in Portland. I spent my last evening in the company of some Japanese acquaintances, from whom, during

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my periodical stays in the town, I had received innumerable kindnesses. In passing, I would remark that it seems a pity that Western Americans cannot discriminate a little better between a Japanese gentleman and a Japanese coolie. The latter, I grant, is by no means a welcome visitor. Americans, when visiting Japan, are often eager to surfeit their Japanese hosts with profuse protestations of undying friendship and good-will, whereas when they themselves are hosts they certainly do not live up to their words. A little more in deeds and a little less in words would do much to convince the Japanese of the sincerity of the good-will Americans have towards them.

On the following morning I called at the employment agency for my ticket, but found to my dismay that the job I had arranged to take had been since cancelled by wire. As there were no other jobs in the direction I wished to go, I received the refund of my small fee and left the office disgusted, feeling as though I had been very badly treated. My "security grip" had been a useless investment!

These well-laid plans having thus fallen through, I decided to take a boat to Kalama on the Columbia, and from there to take the train to Tacoma. But I determined not to pay fare on the train and to adopt the usual method of the "hobo"—namely, to "beat" the train (*i.e.* to ride without paying fare).

I reached Kalama at about six o'clock in the evening and then went to the one small hotel in the town to get something to eat. Whilst there I got into conversation with two men, who informed me in quite a matter-of-fact way that they were going to "make" the night freight train to Tacoma. This excellent opportunity I seized. I remarked casually: "Why, so am I." To my suggestion that we should join forces they replied briefly: "Sure, kid."

We sat by the stove yarning till nearly midnight, when we heard the shrill cry of the down mail from Tacoma, which warned us it was time to get moving. One of my companions told me that he had travelled right through the States, from New York to 'Frisco, without paying a red cent in fares,

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"beating" the trains where he could and, when unable to do that, "counting the ties" (tramping along the railroad track). It had taken him over two months to do it. In America, particularly in the West, there is a very large floating population of men, who migrate from one state to another, never settling long in one place. A man will spend a part of the year in a lumber camp, perhaps the summer up in Klondyke, and will then spend his earnings during two or three winter months in the "red lights" of one of the big towns. When broke he will start all over again. Year after year, so he goes on, till rheumatism from the camps, or a bullet in a 'Frisco brawl rings down the curtain.

Leaving the hotel, we reached the freight cars and slipped quietly along the rows of standing cars and trucks. I noticed other skulking figures, from which I deduced that we were not the only intending "passengers." I left my fellow-hobos to take the initiative, following in their footsteps, doing as they did, hiding when they did. They first tried the doors of the cars, but found them all locked as they had expected, though one is sometimes lucky enough to find one unfastened. Stopping at one car, one of my companions silently clambered up the side, taking care whilst doing so not to be observed by any brakeman. On reaching the top he disappeared for a moment and I heard the sound of hushed voices in conversation. Presently he reappeared and climbed down with the brief remark: "Full!" Meanwhile the cars were all being shunted to and fro, the waving lights of the brakemen's lanterns appearing every now and then indicating to us their whereabouts. The brakeman is the natural enemy of the "hobo," and there is mighty little love lost between them.

I was beginning to get a little anxious as to whether our efforts to board the train would be successful. My companions, however, seemed not to worry in the least; they knew exactly what was going on and what they were going to do, being seasoned hands. At that particular moment I was standing between two cars, just behind my companions who were in the shadow, when one of them glancing round suddenly noticed my



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position. Quickly he told me to move away and concluded by saying : " Never stand 'tween cars, kid ; you never know when they won't be moved ! " I had barely shifted my position, and the words were scarcely out of his mouth, before the very cars between which I had been standing were suddenly jerked by the engine and started moving. It was a narrow escape, and my companion looked at me with an amused what-did-I-tell-you kind of expression on his face. Statistics record that over five thousand hobos are killed yearly on the American railroads.

Most of the cars on the train were specially designed for fruit-carrying, being fitted with ice boxes at either end. We finally found one car in the refrigerating box of which there was room for all of us, only one other occupant being already there. The breadth of this compartment, fore and aft, was about four feet ; the width was that of the car. To say that we four men were a tight fit in this narrow box is a mild way of putting it. However, as it was pretty cold at that hour of the morning, it was not so uncomfortable as it might have been. Packed thus like sardines, we waited for the train to start. We expected every moment to get away, but the confounded train hung about till three in the morning, when it started languidly to cover the distance to Tacoma, rumbling through stations, stopping here and there.

We had been on the move for about an hour when a brakeman running along the tops of the cars peered into our hiding-place. Seeing us he demanded in the choicest of language : " What the — are you — hobos doing in there ? " I was the nearest to him, but I answered not a word. However, as he repeated his question in even more forcible language I meekly replied : " We are going to Tacoma ! " It was rather an obvious statement. He then asked us what money we possessed ; to this we all replied promptly and unanimously : " None ! " One of my companions further gently told him to go to hell. Apparently he had no sense of humour, for he waxed wroth at this. He hurled at us all sorts of abuse and threats if we didn't " get. " Rather to my surprise both my two companions " got " ! They both climbed out and left the train, only, however, to clamber into

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another car under cover of darkness. The other occupant and I sat tight and remained right where we were. I then remarked with true Russian diplomacy that I had a fifty-cent piece ; this I gave the brakeman, and peace was made. He told us to stay where we were (a rather unnecessary permission) and he would let us know when the train was nearing Tacoma, when we should have to get off. My remaining fellow-traveller was quite an entertaining chap. He was an ex-British naval sailor and also an ex-American, having deserted from both navies ; at the moment, he told me, he was a barber !

About nine o'clock in the morning the brakeman passed over the tops of the cars and shouted to us to clear out quickly as the train had slowed down and was getting up speed again. I clambered out, feeling very stiff and cramped after eight hours in that little compartment. Indeed, it was with no little risk that I ran over the top of the car, which was rocking to and fro as the train's speed was fast increasing. Reaching the end of the car I quickly climbed down the side and, choosing the right moment, jumped. My companion followed me and a few seconds later jumped clear. But from that moment I missed him.

Just as I was picking myself off the ground I ran up against my two former companions and we all commenced trudging towards Tacoma. We were in sad need of a wash. Our hands and faces were grimed and grubby, and three more disreputable "hobos" it would have indeed been difficult to find. However, no one looks "sideways" at you out West because you are down on your luck, and it was not long before we came on a small shack where we got a decent wash. Feeling cleaner, but decidedly hungry, we were glad to reach the town and have some breakfast.

Citizens of the rival Western towns call Tacoma "a dead hole," "Sleepy Tacoma," etc. My stay was not long enough to judge whether the city deserved that title or not ; the streets certainly did not give one the same impression of bustle as the other towns had.

On visiting the docks the first man I met was my sailor-

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companion of the previous night. He was seated on a wharf truck gazing placidly out to sea, "looking for work" he calmly remarked on seeing me. He seemed genuinely glad to meet me again, for, as he had lost sight of me the moment I jumped from the train, he had got it into his head that I had been smashed up, particularly, he added, as he had seen something white pass under the wheels as he left the fast-moving train and remembered that I had a white scarf (*i.e.* a part of a flour sack) round my neck. After assuring him that I was still alive and kicking, and remarking that I also had been wondering where he had got to, I asked him whether there was anything doing in the town. He said everything appeared to him to be very quiet, and as my impression was the same I decided to go on to Seattle.

The following afternoon I caught one of the fast steamers for Seattle and arrived there after a two hours' passage. It was a pleasant trip, the scenery of the shores of Puget Sound being very pretty.

On my arrival in Seattle I booked a room—a two-bedded one—for twenty-five cents, as funds were getting low. The other occupant, an old miner, was fast asleep when, after exploring part of the town, I turned in.

Seattle looked a very prosperous town. I say looked because I could never find out—and I'm no wiser to-day—what really supports Seattle, a city possessing palatial buildings and an ever-growing population. Certainly I recall the city engineer, in the course of a speech which he made during my stay there, remarking: "We have the two things essential for a great city: cheap bread and good sanitary arrangements." But, with all due respect to Seattle's distinguished engineer, I think something more than these necessities would be essential to support or found a great city. Comparatively speaking, Seattle possesses but few industries of any size; and the Alaskan trade (so often cited as *the* support of Seattle), shared as it is with Vancouver and San Francisco, would not support skyscrapers like the Alaska building in Washington Street for long. At any rate I

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was quite unable to discover what it is that supports Seattle, and gives it that air of prosperity. Every other person in Seattle seemed to me to be a real estate agent. I wonder how much of Seattle's real estate is really real !

I had in my possession a letter of introduction to some English people who had been long resident in this town, so I decided to present it and get acquainted once again, if only for a short time, with refined surroundings. The residential part of Seattle struck me as being well laid out, with many pretty and commodious houses. The Western type of residence is extremely artistic, particularly so in California. From the high parts of Seattle, which one reaches by means of cable cars (the grade of the hills is too steep to permit of ordinary electric cars), one can obtain an extensive view of the surrounding country. Beautiful Mount Rainier (or Mount Tacoma, as the citizens of that town call it) stands out prominently, snow-clad the whole year round, overlooking the quiet calm waters of Puget Sound shaded by the richly timbered banks.

I presented my letter and was very cordially welcomed ; and with true Western hospitality was invited to stay a few days. In the company of the younger members of the family I saw much of life that was pleasant in Seattle. We visited together many of the " dime " shows, which are quite a feature of the Western coast, as also the theatres and ice-cream and candy stores.

The 4th of July—Independence Day—fell during my visit here. Some few days before, when I had been in the company of a party of Americans, I happened to ask what they generally did on that date, as I had heard so much about it. " Why," one replied jocularly, " that's the day we insult all you goddam Englishmen ! " However, the chief feature was a great display of fireworks. The day itself I spent in the company of my friends, bathing and boating at a small place on the Sound. We were most of us young people and you cannot beat a party of young American boys and girls for thoroughly enjoying themselves. There is not the same rigid segregation of sex out West as in England, the result being that the girls are far more natural



MOUNT RANIER



MOUNT HOOD

1917  
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1917

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and do not regard every young man they meet in the light of a possible husband.

It was on the Madison ground in Seattle (after my return from Alaska) that I witnessed my first game of American Rugby football. Seattle High School was playing Tacoma High School, the result being a win for the former by thirty-two points to nil.

Truthfully speaking, I can't say that I was very greatly impressed by this style of football, of which I heard so much. Compared with English Rugby, there being but little open play, the game seemed too tight, and in consequence, from a spectator's point of view, was rather uninteresting. The rules appeared to be to some extent similar to those of English Rugby, with the exception of the forward pass, which I was told had been but lately introduced. It appeared in my eyes to be a poor innovation.

During the course of the game ten men were laid out, though nobody was seriously hurt. The frequent stoppages in consequence made the game rather tedious to watch; for, if one allowed three minutes per man injured, that meant at the very least a waste of half-an-hour during the time of play.

If the game did not particularly appeal to me, the attendance certainly did, the relative supporters of the rival teams expending in cheering and "rooting" nearly as much energy as did the players on the field. I think also that I never saw so many pretty girls as I did on the Madison ground the day of that match. I fear gazing at some of them took my eyes too frequently off the game, so that my impressions above may be at fault. I made a special note in my diary to the effect that if Seattle apparently produced nothing else it could at least boast some charming girls.

I found work very scarce in Seattle and, as after a few days nothing turned up, I decided to go up to Alaska. With this in view I made many efforts to secure a job on one of the steamers that periodically left Seattle for the north, but I found such employment very difficult to obtain. After numerous visits to the docks I was at last offered a job as a janitor on board the *City*

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of *Seattle*, which was due to sail the same evening for Alaska. It was, of course, an understood thing that one signed for the round trip, but I had not the least intention to make the return trip, or at any rate not yet awhile. My intention was to desert on arrival. Having this in view I accepted my janitorship, the duties of which consisted, I gathered, in doing all the dirty jobs that were to be done about the ship. The first duty allotted me was to start cleaning up the "glory hole" (the stewards' quarters), and to make up the bunks there. The first glimpse of the place nearly took my breath away. Boots, clothes and boxes lay on and under bunks in such confusion that it was with difficulty I could move a step. I started on the bunk nearest the door. With a few energetic movements I made a clean sweep of everything in it, throwing all the motley contents on to the ground. This, instead of clearing the way, only seemed to intensify the chaos that surrounded me. Then I confess my heart failed me. After a prolonged and melancholy gaze at my untidy surroundings I slowly put on my coat and with a meditative but watchful air went on deck again. Without even saying good-bye to the chief steward I skipped down the gangway and shook the dust of the *City of Seattle* from off my shoes, and incidentally from off my clothes also.

I wonder if my reader can imagine the choice language of the irate owner when he gazed on his wardrobe and precious belongings all lying in one confused heap on the ground ; or the scathing comments of the chief steward on his missing janitor. I can !

My arrangements to get up north from Seattle not seeming to get "much forrarder," I decided to go up to Vancouver, where I learnt there were often opportunities to reach Alaska by taking up cattle, which, in my sanguineness of spirit, seemed to me a job I could easily tackle. I was not, however, keen on any more janitor jobs.

Having thus made up my mind I caught the little steamer *Ramona* on the evening of the 15th July, bound for British Columbia. The fare was only two dollars, this, of course, not



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including a bed, of which luxury my state of funds, now alarmingly small, would not permit.

I bade my charming friends good-bye and, with a last look at the twinkling lights of Seattle fading away in the distance, I said for a time farewell to the hospitable shores of America.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME EXPERIENCES IN CANADA

**E**ARLY on the following morning, after a twelve hours' sea passage, I first put my foot on Canadian soil. The town of Vancouver, in comparison with Seattle and other Western cities, appeared small and insignificant. It disappointed me greatly, particularly after hearing so often from the various Canadians I had met in the States that Vancouver was a wonderful place. I have generally found it to be the case that the smaller the *dorp* the louder do the citizens talk of its size and prosperity.

Vancouver is the smallest of the large Western cities. The go-ahead atmosphere of the American towns seemed to me to be more or less absent up here, and instead a mixture of American, Canadian and English ideas, which appeared in some way not to harmonise one with the other. Considering its age, Vancouver is a thriving city and one with an undoubted future before it. The opening of the Panama Canal should very considerably increase the volume of the trade. To-day, it must be remembered, Vancouver is the terminus of several large continental railroads and a seaport of growing importance. I would, however, like some of the Vancouver "boosters" to walk through the streets of Johannesburg once before they commence enlarging on the marvellous growth of their town in such a short period.

It was in Vancouver that I first came into contact with that despicable object—the remittance-man. The bulk of the species I ran across were human derelicts, moral if not physical wrecks: in most cases living monuments to a father's ignorance or a mother's folly! One of the greatest mistakes parents can

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make, when sending their sons to Canada to become citizens of that great Dominion, is to give them a monthly allowance. With but few exceptions the inevitable result is the complete moral, if not physical, ruin of the boy.

On making inquiries as to what opportunities there were to get up to Alaska I found that, for the next ten days at least, there were no boats leaving for the northland ; but I learnt that there was a probability of a cattle boat leaving shortly afterwards. As my stock of dollars was now in its "teens," the necessity to get some work was urgent.

The day after my arrival in the town I got a job—the only one I could. It was laying cement "side-walks" in one of the main streets of the city. My work was to shovel cement and gravel and wheel it in barrows along a narrow plank to the desired spot. Some of the terrifying moments I had when the barrow was within an ace of the edge of that plank, not a foot wide, baffle description. It was extremely hard work and the pay was poor, only twenty-seven and a half cents an hour ! In fact, my fellow-labourers told me that it was the toughest work going in the town at the moment ; and to the truth of that statement—at noon of the first (and last!) day—I could fully testify. To shovel for hours on end with a long-handled shovel a mixture of cement, gravel and water, and then to wheel it in a barrow over the narrow plank, uphill—well, it was as hard a job as any I had yet tackled on the coast. I struck work after one day ; I confess it was too much for my not over-Herculean frame. Even lithe-limbed Danes fought shy of that job !

Whilst strolling down Granville Street the following day pondering over what I should do, the idea of getting a job in a cigar store suddenly occurred to me. Not letting the idea die at its birth, I went into the first cigar store I came across. On inquiring for work I was naturally asked whether I knew the business. I replied diplomatically: "Well, I'm more used to cigar stores on the American side." This slightly ambiguous answer seemed effectual. Unfortunately, however, there was no

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vacancy ; but I was told to " call again ! " <sup>1</sup> After trying quite a number of stores in the town I was becoming rather disheartened as no success met my efforts. At last I struck oil, though I must say not in very paying quantities ! The cigar store I came to was one which was being run in conjunction with a real estate business (every other man is a real estate broker in the West) ; this business occupied one side of the store and the tobacconist's the other. I learnt from the owner, who did not seem very prosperous, that the cigar store would not support an assistant ; business in general, particularly real estate, he said, was very dull. He appeared, however, undecided ; so I placed before him such an eloquent prospect of the immediate large increase in his real estate business that would inevitably result if he employed me to look after his cigar store that I got myself engaged forthwith. I really believe that I bullied the poor man into giving me the job ! Unfortunately the best pay I could extract from him was a dollar per day, which, to say the east of it, was not a very handsome wage—even for Vancouver. Still it kept me going till I could fix up a boat for Alaska. I arranged to run the cigar store from two in the afternoon till ten at night—closing time.

My occupation then for the next few days allowed me to spend the morning at English Bay—a most delightful resort just outside the town. A car ride down Robson Street—scene of my heroic efforts with shovel and barrow—lined with picturesque dwellings with shingled roofs and wide open porches, brought me to the bay, where every morning many came to bathe and swim. After my lunch I would turn up at the cigar store and " run " it. This consisted chiefly in sitting behind the counter, reading and smoking the stock, as customers were conspicuous by their absence ; in fact I was the best one.

My first day's takings were under five dollars ; and this figure I found was about the average, with the exception of Saturday—

<sup>1</sup> A phrase very often in the mouths of the inhabitants of the coast. When a lady is paying an afternoon call on her neighbour the latter, when speeding her parting guest, invariably remarks : " Call again ! "

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when sales amounted to about ten dollars. Twenty-five dollars would, I believe, have bought the shop, though it was lined to the roof with an imposing array of empty boxes, which at first in my blissful ignorance I imagined to be full of tobacco.

Giving wrong change, shaking the dice and yarning with customers helped to pass the time away when I was not reading. It was in American parlance "a snap." I can recall very well the first occasion on which I shook the dice with a customer. I was busily engaged in reading "The Count of Monte Cristo," when a "hard-looking case" walked into the store with these words: "Say, kid, do you shake the dice? I want some cigars." Now, I had seen the dice box under the counter, but not up till then had I manipulated it; and I was just wondering whether it would be wiser to confess my ignorance or to bluff. I decided, on looking at my customer, on the former. So I replied: "Sure, though I'm not very wise about it." My customer told me not to worry about that; "I'll soon put you wise, young fellow." He did; and I won every time, till he quit in disgust with the remark: "You golldarned tenderfoots have the luck of the devil." Another incident I recall very well. A customer had purchased seventy-five cents' worth of cigars and had tendered a five-dollar bill in payment. Now, in the Western towns of America one never sees the colour of a note from one month to another; all currency is gold or silver. In the East the case is exactly the opposite. In Vancouver, however, bills are not unfrequently seen, and this occasion was when I first caught sight of a "greenback." For a time I was scared to change it, fearing it might be a wrong 'un. However, as my customer had no small change, I had to. I carefully counted out the change and handed it over. About ten minutes later it dawned on me that I had not deducted the cost of the cigars as, in my mental perturbation, I had handed over the entire five dollars in silver.

After a week or so in this "responsible" position, I secured a job to take up cattle to Alaska. On applying for it I was asked as usual whether I knew anything about the work. Employers nowadays seem far too inquisitive. To this impertinent ques-

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tion I replied diplomatically: "Not very much; but I know a great deal about sheep." Observing quite a large number of those harmless-looking animals in the pens, I felt quite safe in saying that; though I must confess I didn't half like the look of the big-horned steers in the corrals. However, I felt I had to live and learn. Of the latter I felt confident, though somewhat doubtful of the former. Those horns looked so sharp and long.

Whatever the cattle boss may have thought he anyway kept to himself and hired me. I returned to my store and informed my old real estate friend that I was leaving the next day for Alaska with a bunch of cattle. The old chap shook his head dismally when he heard of my intention and warned me that in two or three months the Klondyke winter would set in. He also told me tales of the dire distress that I might experience. Not being any too confident myself as to the wisdom of my intention, this old croaker's words rather confirmed my fear that I was taking big chances, which, indeed, was the case to a greater extent than I was aware. However, I bluntly said I was going and that everything was settled.

Early the following morning I was down at the docks and helped to feed the cattle—from the outside of the pens fortunately; for I had been rather fearing that it might be expected of me to enter the corrals and distribute the fodder amongst the steers. Luckily I was spared that ordeal, otherwise I rather doubt whether these lines would ever have been penned. I was further very pleased to note that the boss kept just as discreet a distance from the horns of the cattle as I did.

Three other young fellows were also hired to go up with the cattle; one was an Englishman, another a Scotsman, and the third a full-blown Cockney who said he was Irish. The "Irishman's" horrible twang made the most profane and slangy American sound like music in my ears. We christened him "Irish" then and there, and by that nickname he was always known. He told me a little time afterwards, in confidence, that he was an ex-potman from East Ham. The Scot (he was always

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known as "Scotty") and the young Englishman, Ted, were both well educated; and, as neither was a remittance-man, they were in consequence two real good fellows, the rough life out West having made men of both of them. We were as dissimilar as possible so we got on splendidly together.

From seven in the evening till midnight we were kept busy driving the cattle, sheep and pigs on board the steamer. The sheep and pigs were all put into the lower holds with some of the cattle, though the greater part of the latter were stowed on deck in the for'd and aft' well-decks, divided off in roughly constructed wooden pens. The steamer on which we were sailing was a fairly large cargo boat of seventeen hundred tons—the s.s. *Halvard*—which, with her sister ship, the *Haldis*—made regular trips to Alaska during the open season. I came across both these boats in China some years afterwards.

The drove of pigs we had to drive to the docks from a yard some distance away, through the streets of the town. On our way one wilful pig went off on his own account, and, though we searched high and low for him for a good hour and more, he beat us. He remained at large and may to this day, for all I know, be roaming the streets of Vancouver. We had great difficulty in getting the others all down to the docks in safety, as many of them seemed not a little anxious to follow the example of their erring brother. I learnt quite a lot about pigs in that one hour. Whilst thus occupied I was imagining what would have been said of one doing such work as this—driving pigs—through, say, the streets of some select suburb of London. I could picture the uplifted noses and stony glare of one's aristocratic relations and acquaintances. One would be immediately ranked in the Legion of the Lost.

After the work of loading the live-stock and the fodder was completed, some large pieces of mining and dredging machinery were put on board; great quantities were then being sent up yearly for use in the Klondyke and Tanana gold districts. Nearly all the machinery was of American manufacture. The cattle and the other live-stock were British. The greater part

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of the cattle came from Calgary, being railed from there to Vancouver. In the early days of the Klondyke the only supply of meat obtainable by those up in the northland was that sent up by the cold-storage companies. In recent years, however, live-stock is regularly sent up to Dawson City from Canada and the States, and there slaughtered. Cold-storage meat finds practically no demand in Alaska to-day.

We managed prior to sailing to snatch a little sleep lying on bales of compressed hay, in spite of the hubbub of loading cargo and the noise of the cattle moving, so far as their cramped quarters would permit them. We had altogether one hundred and thirty steers, three hundred and fifty sheep and fifty pigs on board.

We got under way just before daybreak and steamed through the Gulf of Georgia, between the Isle of Vancouver and the mainland. When the sun rose the shores of British Columbia looked very picturesque ; in the light of its early rays the deep green of the country, covered with luxuriant timber, presented a very lovely scene.

After breakfast we started feeding and watering the live-stock. With the pigs and sheep this was easily done ; but not so with the cattle, as the steamer had none of the ordinary facilities of ships in the cattle-carrying trade. The bales of hay were all lying in the lower hold, so each bale had to be hauled up by hand, and this was by no means a light task on account of their weight. When sufficient fodder had been hauled up, we started distributing it amongst the cattle in their pens. In the open pens this was not difficult, but in the part of the 'tween decks where some of the cattle were stowed it was a more irksome and dangerous task, as it necessitated one of us going into the pen, receiving the fodder from those outside and distributing it amongst the cattle within. Whilst engaged in this work one needed to keep a wary eye on the movements of the steers to avoid getting jammed or horned by any of them. We all took turns at this rather risky job.

When the feeding was finished, we started watering the



## SOME EXPERIENCES IN CANADA

cattle. This we had to do in a most primitive manner, for we had only wooden troughs available for the purpose. They were four feet by one foot, with a rope attached at either end, by which means we lowered the trough into the pen. When the trough was in the pen we turned the hose on and filled it. But few really got a proper drink, owing to the little space in which the cattle had to move; for one to turn was almost an impossible task. Further, we could only water them from one side, as the opposite side was the ship's bulwarks. Their movements, too, often turned over the trough; and it was quite a lengthy performance before all of the animals were watered. We were compelled also to make pretty free use of our sticks to turn the animals round, as by some streak of contrariness they all seemed to prefer facing the sea, the side from which we could not water them.

After the watering of the cattle the iron decks of the steamer became very slippery, and the poor animals had a very rough time. Fortunately, the rolling of the ship was not very great as we were steaming through sheltered waters, but what there was added to their discomfort. In more than one instance we had to get inside the pens to force some animal on to its feet again after it had slipped down and was in danger of being trampled to death under the feet of the other oxen. We had, I fear, only too frequently to use our heavy sticks before the day's work was finished. Handling cattle is hardly a woman's work!

Late in the afternoon we anchored at the entrance of the Seymour Narrows to wait for the tide. It was then in the cool of the day, and we four cattle-boys, having finished our work save for an occasional tour of inspection, were seated on the poop smoking and chatting. The steamer lay within a stone's-throw from the shore and we had a perfect view of the beautiful wooded hills that lay so close. The sea was quite smooth and calm; nothing disturbed its surface save the occasional plunge of a silver-backed salmon out of the shining waters.

After dark we weighed anchor and steamed through the Narrows. We all turned in early the first night as we had not

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

had much rest the preceding night. I say turned in ; but we had nothing to turn in to, as our beds consisted only of the bales of hay that were in the hold. On these we lay, wrapped in our blankets, and endeavoured to get as warm as we could. The farther north we got naturally the colder the nights became, and the nights on the Pacific Coast even during the summer always strike fairly chilly. The dew, too, is very heavy.

The following morning was foggy and we were compelled to anchor for some hours, as off these coasts careful navigation is essential. Shortly after noon the fog lifted and we resumed our voyage. We steamed through Queen Charlotte Sound and when outside we felt the swell of the Pacific Ocean which caused a certain amount of motion to the ship, the live-stock in consequence suffering badly as they were unable to keep their feet on the slippery decks.

After crossing the sound we ran again into sheltered waters, between the mainland and the countless islands that lie off the coast. The scenery here was truly magnificent ! Picturesque islets, thickly wooded to the water's edge, lay on one side, whilst on the other stretched the shores of the mainland, green and luxuriously timbered, in the background of which loomed the towering mountains with their snow-capped peaks shining white in the sun's rays. The forest-clad slopes of the shores seemed to be almost within arm's reach. And what a wealth of resources lay there ! Timber in abundance. Forests of fir, pine and beech reared their noble heads over the clear waters at their feet. Plentiful also were the salmon that leapt in countless numbers out of the shining seas. And mineral wealth untold lay near those towering peaks—silent sentinels of treasure.

Our first stop was at the small port of Ketchikan, the port of entry for Alaska, where all the custom-house requirements of the United States Government have to be fulfilled. Steaming north and skirting the shores of the mainland, some even more impressive and magnificent scenery revealed itself. Beryl-blue glaciers, lodged between mountains covered with eternal snows, gleamed over the forests that stretched away to the coasts.



ALASKA, A COUNTRY OF IMPRESSIVE WILDERNESS AND SOLEMN GRANDEUR



## SOME EXPERIENCES IN CANADA

Round us lay countless wooded islands ; over us towered ranges of snowy hills overshadowing pine-clad slopes through which beautiful cascades leapt into the sea. Switzerland was out-rivalled !

Two days after leaving Ketchikan we steamed through the quiet waters of the Lynn Canal, at the head of which lay Skagway—our destination. We berthed alongside the wharf in the afternoon of the fifth day out, near by the little river of Skagway which leads up to the once-dreaded White Pass—the gateway of the Yukon.

We had been fortunate in not losing on the voyage any of the stock, for loss occurs frequently on steamers where no provision is made for the cattle.

I had now to decide whether I would accompany the cattle up the Yukon to Klondyke, or seek my fortune in South Alaska.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN ALASKA

ON arrival in Alaska I found myself with choice of three moves. I could go on with the cattle up to Dawson City, remain in or round Skagway, or return to Canada by the *Halvard* as a sailor before the mast. I abandoned the idea of accompanying the cattle into Klondyke on account of the very pessimistic tales I heard on all sides of the scarcity of work and the bad state of affairs in general prevailing in the Yukon and the Tanana districts. As there seemed also nothing doing in Skagway itself, my thoughts were reluctantly directed towards returning to Canada—a course I was unwilling to adopt. Then Fate in a rather peculiar manner decided for me. Sufficient for me to say now—I did not sail by the *Halvard*.

When the cattle were all off-loaded and my work finished I took a stroll through the little town of Skagway, which merely consisted of a collection of wooden shacks scattered about the foot of the mountains. There was one main street lined with stores and shops. In a steamship pamphlet I had read that the town of Skagway possessed up-to-date stores and many neat houses with pretty gardens; further mention was also made in this pamphlet of the fact that there was much in Skagway and its vicinity to attract the tourist. As regards the up-to-date stores and neat houses I must say that the few I saw were conspicuously rare; and I could not name anything that struck me as offering any great attractions to the tourist, unless it were the numbers of empty shacks that Skagway possessed—relics of her past greatness! Skagway in the days of '97 and '98 housed its five or six thousand, whereas to-day it does not hold as many hundreds.

It was in the Packtrain Saloon—the one and only saloon in

## IN ALASKA

the town and the scene of many an orgy and brawl—that I met the man who decided for me my course of action and who became my companion, or “pardner,” during most of my stay in the northland.

At first sight we had many points in common. We were both young, we were both out of jobs, and we were both almost broke—the latter being an ever-common bond between us. He told me that he had just come down from Dawson, where he had been working for most of the time as a dish-washer in a restaurant. He had also been the secretary of the labour union up there, for he was a very well-educated fellow, and an ardent socialist to boot. I think two years of dish-washing in Klondyke, with for many months a temperature of 70° “below,” would be sufficient to make anyone a socialist. It spoke highly, I think, for my partner’s strength of mind that he was not an anarchist. A few days previously he had come into Skagway from a small place called Robinson, which lay midway between the town and Whitehorse. In this place he had spent a few weeks after leaving the Klondyke, and whilst there had located a copper claim in one of the hills just outside the settlement. He had been, however, done out of the claim through some technicality, and it was reckoned to be worth fully twenty thousand dollars. The claim, in one sense, was not really his ; “located ” was hardly the word I should have used. To endeavour to explain to my reader the exact position of the whole affair would take me too long, but briefly to sum up the position it was this : My partner had “ jumped ” a claim from a woman, who in turn had “ jumped ” it from her partner, who was in New York. The woman, incidentally, ran a gin shop without a licence and she further owed five hundred dollars to the brother of the Official Recorder at Robinson. The reader may suggest that he is none the wiser now, and may ask what on earth these latter facts have to do with the case. But there is a simple explanation. The whole question was one of my partner’s word against that of the woman (her partner in New York was not in the act at all—he was finished !), and the decision rested with the Recorder at Robinson. Now, the

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

Recorder knew full well that if he gave the decision in favour of my partner his brother would never get back his five hundred dollars, whereas, if he decided in the woman's favour, there was still a sporting chance. Hence his verdict! The legal question was all one of time—which of the two had re-located the claim first after it lapsed? According to my partner the woman perjured herself till further orders. There was one strong point against her, and that was in my partner's words: "We can get her run out of the country for selling liquor without a licence!"

My companion had been up till then too dispirited to take any further steps, but my youthful and sanguine temperament instilled into him fresh hope and energy. Then and there in the saloon we joined forces; pooled our capital—I had eleven dollars, my partner two—and after a lengthy confab decided to "count the ties" over the trail to Robinson, as there were still remaining twelve days out of the period of thirty allowed to lodge our protest. My companion, I might incidentally remark, was a glutton for coffee; how many cups of coffee he drank during our consultations I would not like to say.

The following morning we purchased food for three days, and other necessary articles including a gun.<sup>1</sup> But little remained of our small capital when he had completed our purchases, and the prospects for the success of our venture were hardly of the brightest. Lack of the "ready" was our stumbling-block; if we had had a couple of hundred dollars, half of which to place in the hands of a smart and possibly not over-scrupulous lawyer, we should have, I really believe to this very day, recovered that mining claim. We started out over the trail late in the afternoon keeping to the course of the railway through Skagway Valley, and once out of sight of the little town we began the steady climb over the rugged mountains. The trail led along the precipitous sides of the mountains that overlooked the foaming Skagway River. Tons of rock had had to be blasted out to make way for the railway—a railway which was, indeed, a triumph for British engineering skill and perseverance.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* revolver—all such are termed "guns" in the West.



## IN ALASKA

After walking steadily for a couple of hours with our packs on our backs we left the trail along the railroad and descended to the old one which had been trodden by few since the early days. Beside the trail, here and there, we passed by little heaps of stones—the graves of some who fell by the wayside in that mad rush to Klondyke when pioneers dragged their bleeding feet up the icy stairways of the White Pass! As I gazed up at the peaks above me I thought on the tragedies those silent mountains of eternal snows must have witnessed, the sights they must have beheld! Men dying with their packs on their backs, frozen to death, heedlessly passed by—heroes fighting epic battles with the elements; men quarrelling like wolves, their very vitals seared by the icy cold; men swept away in scores, like chaff before the wind, by the resistless force of the snowy avalanche.<sup>1</sup> Never did sentinels guard more faithfully Nature's treasure-troves than did the precipitous White Pass and the rock-scarred Chilcoot, throttling the hopes and lives of so many who sought to enter the Valley of the Yukon. Nature's wisdom was indeed never more manifest than here in the stern White Pass truly named—the Gateway of the Yukon. None but those who could pay the toll—the fitness and the strength to battle with the privations of life in the frozen north—were allowed to enter; the faint-hearted and the weak were stopped and turned back on the threshold. Thus was prevented a great tragedy—the tragedy of the Yukon becoming a graveyard of thousands slain by the hand of the Arctic winter. And the magnet? Gold! Gold, against which all acid is powerless, is surely itself an acid more powerful than any known to our scientists. It dissolved in those prosperous days of '97 the bonds of honour and friendship as effectively as the rays of the morning sun swept the mist in the Skagway Valley. So intense became the hatred, where before had been love, that it was no unusual occurrence for a division of all goods in common to take place on the mountain-sides, the one canoe even being severed in two to prevent one obtaining any

<sup>1</sup> A party of pioneers were, nearly to a man, swept to their death by a sudden avalanche of Chilcoot Pass in the winter of '97:

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

advantage over the other. The last scene in that drama is not hard to imagine—two unburied bodies, whose last thoughts were only of hatred and murder.

We camped for the night at a "half-way house" almost in ruins—a relic of the pioneer days. It was fairly cold, and after our long weary trudge packing our traps over the rocky trail we were not sorry to rest. Scraping together some wood, including the fragments of an old chair, we soon had a good fire going. Hot pork and beans with some coffee warmed our chilled bodies, and we sat late into the night yarning and smoking. There still remained in the old log-cabin the wooden makeshift of a couch, on which we curled ourselves up in our blankets and both were soon asleep.

The following morning my companion found to his dismay that he could barely put his foot to the ground owing to the return of an old sprain due to the exertions of the previous day. As he was unable to proceed without much pain we decided to wait there one day and go on the day following. I occupied my time whilst my companion rested in following the course of a creek that ran through the mountains, ever hoping against hope that I might discover gold. When a man is in such parts as these—'way off the beaten track and in a known gold region—he seems to be obsessed with but one idea—to find gold. To find gold he feels as though he would sell his soul, honour, and even his chances in the next world.

" There's gold and its haunting and haunting ;  
It's luring me on as of old ;  
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting,  
So much as just finding the gold." <sup>1</sup>

Every now and then some glittering stone or piece of quartz in the running creek would raise my hopes, only, however, on closer examination to be dashed. Gold never glitters ! The usual prospector's test for gold is when the dull yellow substance in the quartz has the same appearance and colour from whatever angle

<sup>1</sup> " Songs of a Sourdough " (R. Service).

## IN ALASKA

he looks at it. Between virgin gold and the wedding ring, between the uncut diamond and the stone in the engagement ring—there is a vast difference! After a long and tiring day, tramping over rocky boulders and wading through streams, I directed my footsteps towards the camp; and not till then did I notice how tired I was, so absorbed had I been in my search.

I found my companion seated beside a roaring fire, reading some ancient magazines which he had rummaged out of the debris and rubbish accumulated. After a good meal we sat by the fire and gazed in silence up at the gloomy mountains which surrounded and overlooked us. It was all very quiet and still save for the distant sound of a mountain stream pouring its waters into its rocky bed, the faint cry of a night-bird, and the gentle swish of the breeze through the timber close by.

The next day my partner's leg was but little better, and, as our supply of food would not permit us to go on by easy stages over the trail to Robinson, there remained no other alternative but that of returning to Skagway and abandoning once and for all our enterprise. It was rather hard luck—a case of so near and yet so far!

In passing I would remark that this attempt was my nearest to making a fortune. All the fortunes seem to have been made before my arrival in the various countries I have visited; at least, judging by the fact that I am to-day still as poor as a church mouse and by the thrilling tales that I was regaled with in so many places of the fortunes made in “the good old days.”

The next day saw two dispirited and weary-looking objects trudging in silence along the trail in the direction of Skagway. They talked but little, but gathered every now and then some of the wild raspberries that grew in profusion on the mountain slopes. The contrast between the warm summer in Alaska and the rigorous cold of the winter is very great. The summer is as warm as in Oregon, flowers bloom and vegetables grow in plenty. In the winter, on the other hand, the land sleeps under its cloak of snow and ice against which nothing can prevail; the glass

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

sinks to 70° "below" and the land is all but wrapped in living darkness.

We reached Skagway late in the evening. Our position was not exactly cheering. We had three dollars between us, and, when we had left, the prospect of getting work was not very bright. However, Fate was good to us ; two men got drunk that night ! That meant that on the morrow two vacancies in the gangs working on the wharf were filled by my partner and myself. Our work consisted of trucking freight from the sheds and loading it in the railroad cars which ran alongside. Every now and then we were also called upon to do longshoring—to unload the steamers when their time was short. The work was hard, but after a day or two of it I got into the swing, being now in fairly good trim, and found nine hours of manual work in Alaska not much harder than sitting for a like period in an office. The pay was thirty-five cents an hour.

Having got work my partner and I rented for four dollars a month one of the many empty shacks that made up the town of Skagway. There was still some furniture left in it—a large wooden bed, a table, a stove and a couple of chairs ; they were all that we really required. We bought a stock of groceries on credit, and after our day's work we would buy some meat or some fish for our evening meal. Halibut was plentiful in the sea off the shore, so this fish we were able to buy very cheaply. Bacon and eggs, too, often appeared on our menu.

Our life during these days was not very exciting. We would be at our work on the wharf by seven in the morning and would knock off at six in the evening, with a break of one hour at mid-day. After our supper we would yarn and smoke till about nine o'clock when we turned in ; for, as we had to be up by six in the morning, we could not afford to keep late hours, especially after a hard day's work. Saturday evening was generally more lively, and Sunday was indeed a day of rest. In fact, I do not think I ever appreciated my Sundays so much as I did then after a week of hard "graft." A long sleep well into the morning would be followed by a general clean up of the shack, of the plates and



ALASKA : A "SHACK" IN THE MOUNTAINS



## IN ALASKA

dishes, and finally of ourselves, who perhaps needed it most. When this was finished one of us would take up an axe and set off to chop a week's supply of firewood, often breaking into an empty shack and utilising some of the spare wood lying about there. And we were not at all particular as to what we converted into firewood. It would be not far off sunset by then, and our supper would be followed by a yarn and smoke. My companion-in-toil was a most entertaining fellow and talked very well. Besides being well read, his hard experiences of the seamy and sordid side of life had taught him much—for there is no better teacher than Experience! He had been out West then over six years. His favourite subject was Socialism, and, when he was discussing his pet topic, his eyes would flash and he would speak with much fervour, his fluent flow of language at times almost approaching eloquence.

After we had been housekeeping together for a couple of weeks, my companion had to leave me and take a shack of his own, as he developed some skin disease, which he must have caught amongst the mountains where there was much poisoned ivy. It was nothing of a serious nature but, being contagious, it necessitated his moving.

Skagway, the name of which in the Indian dialect means "windy," fully lived up to its title. Through the gorge between the lofty mountains, at the foot of which the little town lay, the wind on many days would blow with great violence, and when it rained, as it did very frequently, work on the wharf was far from pleasant. But one can get used to anything in this world, and in an incredibly short time. After a few weeks of regular life in this little out-of-the-way spot, the dark and sombre surroundings began to grow on me. I grew accustomed to the towering mountains that cast their gloomy shadows over the settlement at their feet. One large glacier, lodged between two jagged peaks, on which the rising sun threw its early morning rays used to greet my sleepy eyes every morning as I threw open the cabin door. When a mist hung over the peaks obscuring them from sight, a feeling that something was missing used to come over me.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

My companion left me in the middle of the month of September, restless and anxious to return to the States after an absence of two years. I said good-bye to him with feelings of regret as we had been excellent partners whilst together. I never saw him again!

Having in mind the intention to go into Klondyke, I arranged to take up the last bunch of cattle for the year. I quit my job on the wharf after seven weeks of regular work, during which period I had saved eighty dollars gold. I was strongly advised not to attempt to enter the Klondyke at that time, as the winter was on the eve of setting in, the nights already having commenced to be cold and frosty. I was told that within the short space of two weeks the Yukon would begin to freeze over and within a month would be unnavigable. Despite all this, I determined to take the cattle up north. Looking back to-day I see clearly the risks I ran but then ignored, in making my trip into the Yukon so near the approach of winter, whilst every steamer was bringing down its load of hundreds leaving the northland to "go below." The same Providence, however, that watches over the sailor and the drunkard must have kept a watchful eye on me also.

With my wad of greenbacks in my pocket, with a cheery last word to my pals, I boarded the train on which were already loaded the cattle bound for the Yukon.



## CHAPTER VII

### DOWN THE YUKON TO KLONDYKE

AS the train drew out I felt more like alighting than going on, being not a little anxious about my return. All my fellow-workers I was leaving behind must have thought I was mad going up to Dawson at that time of the year; in fact, some of them flatly told me so. But few of them could understand the desire, so strong in me, to see fresh places and to gain new experiences.

From Skagway the train ran along the trail we had trodden some weeks before; near the hanging rock at Clifton I looked down into the valley below and caught sight once again of the little log-cabin in the mountains in which we had spent one or two nights. The train consisted of only four coaches, but drawn by *three* engines; this should give an idea of the almost precipitous heights we were ascending. Before reaching the White Pass we passed through a long tunnel and then over a steel cantilever bridge spanning a yawning cañon.

We reached the summit of the White Pass a little after noon. It had taken us three hours to cover the short distance of twenty miles, from Skagway to the top, where lay the boundary line between American and British territory, the two flags flying within a few feet of each other.

Thence the train ran along the Thompson River, skirting many small lakes and streams. We reached Lake Bennett at about two o'clock, near to which lay the town of the same name, a small settlement of wooden shacks. After a short stay, we resumed our journey, skirting the shores of the lake on the eastern side. On the opposite side, some miles across, could be seen huge mountains that rose almost precipitously from the

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

water's edge. At the end of the lake we came to the small settlement of Caribou where the train crossed another bridge.

Still going north we passed numerous lakes and rivers ; and had sight of the death-dealing rapids of Miles Cañon through which in the early days boats were steered with the Fear of Death for pilot. We arrived at our destination, Whitehorse—the terminus of the railroad—at half-past six in the evening. It had taken us nine hours to cover a distance of one hundred and twelve miles.

After the cattle had been transferred from the train into corrals I went off to a restaurant close by to get a meal, and there tasted for the first time a moose steak, which seemed to me very similar to a beefsteak.

Here at Whitehorse I had my last chance to turn back, whilst there was yet time. I found I was the only solitary one going into Klondyke, whilst every boat was bringing down its hundreds from Dawson. However, I decided to go on and risk it.

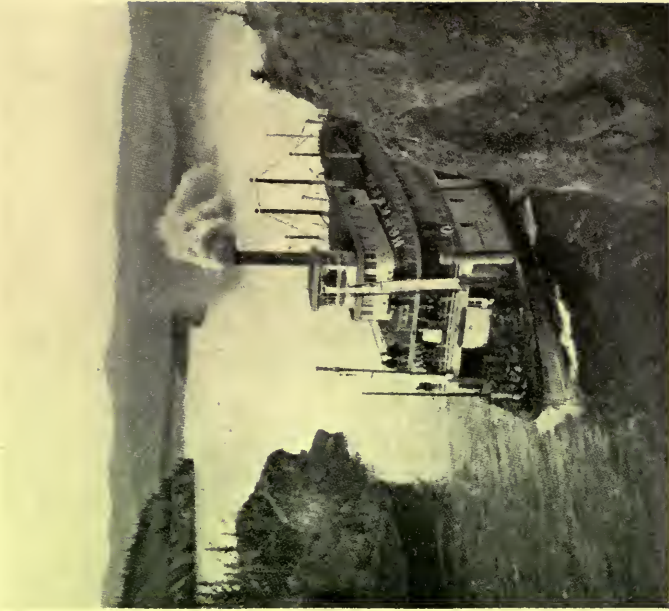
We did not start the task of running the cattle on to the river boat, the last to go down the river for the year, till shortly after three in the morning. It was very cold at that hour and the clear frosty sky was brightly illuminated by the northern lights, clearly indicating the near approach of winter. It was not without much shouting and cracking of long whips that all the cattle were put on board before daylight. In all we shipped forty-seven steers, thirty calves, and a score of sheep, which I was commissioned to hand over to their owners in Dawson City.

Just before sunrise we cast off our lines and started the passage down the Yukon. Towards eleven o'clock in the morning I had finished my work of feeding and watering the live-stock, and had, consequently, plenty of time and opportunity to view my surroundings.

From the Whitehorse Rapids the Yukon ran through low and hilly country ; the banks were green and in places flowers grew abundantly. It was, indeed, at times hard for one to



FOUR COACHES DRAWN BY THREE ENGINES



ON THE YUKON

EDUCATION  
1917

## DOWN THE YUKON TO KLONDYKE

realise that one was within a few miles of the Arctic Circle. However, on the second day much of the scenery was more rough and rugged.

A rather unusual incident happened on our first day on the river. Whilst I was down on the lower deck, I heard shrill blasts of the steamer's whistle continuously sounding. On going on deck to ascertain the cause I saw ahead of us two large moose swimming across the river within fifty yards of the oncoming steamer. Naturally every gun on the boat spoke, resulting in the bag of one of the animals, the other having the sense whilst there was yet time to turn back to the bank and seek shelter. It was but the work of a moment before three of us were in one of the ship's boats rowing off to secure our prize. The animal weighed over three hundred pounds, though only a yearling.

During the night the steamer made her way along the river by means of a powerful searchlight, the rays of which illuminated the dark wooded banks and gloomy surrounding country. Here and there the light flickered on jagged boulders over which the fast-flowing river tumbled. After two days' steaming with the current we tied up at Dawson.

It was just before dawn when the famous city of the Klondyke loomed in sight, just outside the Arctic Circle.

In the cold small hours of the morning we discharged the cattle, when I was through with my job.

I am not going to attempt to describe Dawson. Space forbids ; and, besides, many an abler pen has assumed the task with only a moderate measure of success. Suffice it for me to say that Dawson is all built of wood ; not a brick is to be seen within its confines.

Considering the fact that ten years ago there was not a dwelling worthy of the name on its site, its present size with all its modern appliances <sup>1</sup> is surely a wonderful testimony to the power of gold. Banks, hotels, churches and saloons are to-day to be found along the wooden side-walked streets of Dawson

<sup>1</sup>Dawson City boasts that it can supply the miner with anything from a tenpenny nail to a 60 h.p. boiler.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

City ; but the Dawson of to-day is not the Dawson of yesterday—of '97. Its glory has departed.

The famous town of the Klondyke lies at the foot of the Dome—the mountain that overlooks Dawson. From the Dome a magnificent view of the surrounding country is obtained. One writer describes it in these words : “ Stretching away to the north-west could be traced the winding course of the Yukon on its way to its extreme northern point at Fort Yukon where it crosses the Arctic Circle. On the north and east were visible, nearly 100 miles away, the snowy peaks of the world's greatest ridge which sweeps northward from the plateau of Mexico, rises in the heights of the Rockies, and is perpetuated in the northern chain of mountains across British America to the Arctic Ocean. On the south-east lay the valley of the Klondyke and its tributaries—the great goldfield which has lured its tens of thousands of eager and hopeful argonauts to the discovery of gold ; has contributed over 100,000,000 dollars to the world's supply of that precious metal.”

The winter had now almost set in, the river at its banks having already begun to freeze up. The days were rapidly getting shorter. As Dawson is so near to the Arctic Circle it is light even at midnight in the middle of the summer ; but, on the other hand, during the depth of winter the sun makes but a very short appearance.

On the day of my arrival I visited Bonanza Creek, near which the first find of gold was made. The days, however, of a poor man's proposition in the placer workings of the Klondyke are a thing of the past. Just as on the Rand they have given place to the extensive workings of the capitalist. Where ten years ago one saw a couple of miners with a pan and a few sluice boxes, to-day one sees a huge electrical dredger at work ; the “ freezing-out ” process, made easy by great wealth, has played its part.

I walked along the Klondyke River and obtained a glimpse of the mining operations that were still at work. Here and there I exchanged words with miners, who had no intention to “ go below,” but with the “ grub stake ” they had made by

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wage-working during the summer were going to spend the winter prospecting. Prospecting with the glass "70° below" and the need to thaw out the ground is perhaps the hardest test of endurance the world can to-day supply. One miner told me that he had been eight years up in the north-land without ever leaving it; and further was determined not to return to the States till he had struck it rich. Ever that obsession—to find gold! He said he now almost preferred the grim wildness of the north to the soft and sunny clime of California, where was his home.

On my return to Dawson in the evening I strolled into the "M & N" Saloon, where from the rather disturbed atmosphere of the place I noticed something was amiss. One man was just picking himself from the ground, whilst most of the attention was concentrated on a drunken miner sitting on the billiard-table. On inquiring what was the trouble, I was informed that the miner had "buffaloed" the saloon—in other words, he defied the crowd or any of the bar-tenders (the man whom I had observed picking himself up was one of the latter) to put him outside. He remained there calling on any doggoned son of a b—— to put him out. No one accepted the invitation, till the door opened and a trooper of the R.N.W.M. Police in his red coat strolled in. Another trooper quietly followed. Neither in any way appeared to notice anything was particularly wrong. The first trooper strolled up to the table and, looking steadily at the drunken miner, quietly ordered him to put his coat on and get out. The miner started to swear and bluster; but at the repeated order, this time in rather sharper tones, he put his coat on and walked out like a lamb. The two troopers followed. They did not even trouble to arrest him, the occurrence being no unusual one. This little incident, made me realise what an influence this small body of men had gained in that wild stretch of country. During the great rush the troopers of this corps—one of the finest that ever ruled the King's dominions—did their work in the icy north on their wage of one dollar a day, when the lowest wage for ordinary unskilled labour was seldom under twenty. During

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that mad rush into Klondyke not a single murder was committed in British territory. That alone speaks volumes for the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

I was fortunate in being able to arrange a workaway's job back on the *Whitehorse* (the steamer on which I had come down the Yukon)—a job which was at that moment a much-sought-for one, particularly as this was the last steamer to leave for the year. It was the 29th day of September.

The following evening the steamer sailed, packed from top to bottom with its living freight—the last of those to leave the now almost empty city; the rest, poor devils, to pass months in almost living darkness shut up in the frozen north.<sup>1</sup>

The job I had allotted me was that of making the beds for those in the steerage, as well as to give a hand to the various wood-piles where the ships tied up to take on a supply of fuel—neither a very onerous task! The first-named occupation generally meant two or three hours' yarning with the owners of the beds; whilst the latter was but an hour or two of hard work.

On the first day out, whilst making myself generally useful—at that particular moment trying to make a refractory stove burn—I got into conversation with a mining engineer, a Bostonian, and during our short trip we had many interesting chats. I formed on this river steamer a friendship which is as firm to-day as then. My Boston friend was a tactful man, for, whilst informing me that he had noticed me roaming round Dawson, he mentioned that he had thought that I was not exactly born to the life I was leading. I thanked him for his compliment, at the same time adding that I was glad that there were still noticeable some strains of respectability in me, which were certainly not apparent in my ragged pants, kept up by a rope, and my rough shirt.

Amongst those in the steerage was a coon who used to entertain us with plantation songs—and none but a darkie can sing them—accompanied on a violin.

<sup>1</sup> The Yukon is not open for navigation till about the middle of May.



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Against the strong current we made much slower progress than when going north. We had also in tow a scow—the barge of the Yukon—which made our progress slower still. Indeed through the Five Finger Rapids it was just as much as we could do to steam against the foaming current.

The course of the Yukon is very tortuous, winding through every variety of scenery from the rugged gorges of the Five Fingers to the low and desolate country round Hootalinqua. In places the obvious result of glacier movement was very noticeable. On one range of hills the tops were flattened with surprising regularity, for all the world like the turrets of an old castle.

Stopping here and there at the many wood-piles, which meant for me an hour or two of “grafting,” on the third day we reached Tantalus, where a seam of coal was being worked. Its quality was rather poor. The nights now were very cold and frosty, though it was still warm in the daytime. Steaming through the quiet waters of the Yukon during the night, with the white rays of the powerful searchlight intensifying the darkness of the silent and gloomy mountains, was most impressive. It was interesting, too, to watch the pilot flashing the light along the banks till he picked up the landmark he was seeking, his only aid for navigation.

After five days we reached Whitehorse, the river boat tying up at daybreak on the first day of October.

Having an hour or two before the train to Skagway left,<sup>1</sup> I roamed round the town, which was in every way similar to Skagway, though in a rather more flourishing condition. Close to the town were the Whitehorse Rapids, where so many met their death in the early days.

Much copper was being mined round Whitehorse, and an excellent grade of ore too. I shovelled many a ton of it on the wharves at Skagway and needed no reminder that this ore was being exported in ever-increasing quantities to the States, there

<sup>1</sup> Being an ex-employee of the railroad I was granted a free pass over the line, thereby saving twenty dollars—the fare at twenty cents a mile !

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

to be smelted. Many Yankee tourists on the round trip to Skagway used to remark this bright copper ore ("Peacock" copper) lying on the wharves in heaps; and not a few of them thought it was gold quartz from the Klondyke. I was asked more than once by some fair maid: "Might I take just one small piece, please?" I blandly gave them all permission. It wasn't mine, and besides they couldn't have taken away a dollar's worth if they had tried. It was on one of these occasions that I was offered my first tip.

I remarked one young damsel—she was pretty—with a fragile pair of boots on daintily picking her way over the heaps of ore, selecting the pretty-looking pieces (doubtless later to tell her friends: "This is gold quartz from the Klondyke!"). At that particular moment I was sitting on my barrow awaiting my turn to get a load—and I used sometimes to miss my turn. Forgetting that I was only a navvy, I asked the young girl to allow me to gather her one or two pieces. She thanked me and asked me to do so. Whilst I was giving her a few specimens a flat-hatted, dough-faced object, with pants three to four feet across the hips like flour sacks, and chiffoned shoe-laces,<sup>1</sup> joined her. On seeing me handing the young girl the several pieces of ore, this lop-sided specimen of humanity described above pulled out a dollar and held it out to me. I looked at him for a moment, raised my rather ragged hat to his companion, and walked away with the parting words: "You'd better keep your money, as I may have more than you!" He looked remarkably silly, and the young girl, I was pleased to note, looked daggers at him. After all, I suppose it was rather foolish of me—not to have taken it. One hard old case, who had witnessed the little episode, certainly thought so, for when I returned to my barrow he said: "Say, did that guy offer you any money?" I replied: "Why, yes! But I didn't want his money!" The old man gazed despairingly at me for a moment, then slowly rejoined, emphasising every word: "Say, kid, when you've been in this country as long as me, you'll

<sup>1</sup> The typical get-up of the modern American tourist—the bane of the Far Eastern ports.

## DOWN THE YUKON TO KLONDYKE

take from man, woman or child ! ” With these words he left me, looking the picture of disgust.

By two o'clock we were on the summit of the White Pass, which was now covered with snow. It was bitterly cold, and from Lake Bennett we had come through a blinding snowstorm. The Alaskan winter had now set in in earnest.

Before entering American territory all of us on the train were searched by troopers of the R.N.W.M. Police to see whether we had any gold-dust secreted on our persons. The Canadian Government demands its royalty on all the gold that leaves the country. I told the trooper, who was wasting his time in searching me, that of all the gold he found on my person he could have half. He was no richer when he was through !

It was miserably wet and windy when we descended into the Skagway valley and reached the town.

Having now completed my trip into Klondyke and back, my intention was to return to Vancouver as soon as possible. With this object in view I haunted the docks for the next few days, worrying every south-bound ship with as much tenacity as I had worried them before to go north.

I was fortunate during these few days in being able to get some work again on the wharf, though the gangs of men were much reduced in size since my departure to Dawson as the work for the season was all but at an end.

At last my efforts to get a workaway's job were successful. I joined the steward's staff for the trip of the *Princess May*, one of the C.P.R. steamers that ply between Vancouver and Alaska.

My last night in Skagway I spent in the "Packtrain" playing "blackjack" (a species of vingt-et-un) in company of some miners from Dawson and others, amongst the latter being my three cattle-companions of the *Halvard*, who, since they had come up, had been working in a section gang on the railroad. I was a few dollars to the good by the time we "let up" in the early hours of the morning.

Late in the afternoon of the day following—the 9th—I said my last good-bye to the many pleasant fellows with whom I had

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lived and worked for so many weeks. I felt quite sad when I saw those gloomy peaks that overshadowed Skagway pass out of sight. I took one long lingering look at my glacier, which was now less distinct, as its before-dark surroundings were now covered with snow. I realised then in a small way the fascination this wild northland had for those who breathed its atmosphere for any length of time. I began to realise the truth in the words of the Canadian Kipling<sup>1</sup>:

" I hated it like hell for a season, and  
Then I became worse than the worst ! "

It was dark when the lights of Skagway had faded away in the distance.

The steamer on which I had arranged to work my passage back to Canada had to call on its way south at many ports along the south-east Alaskan and the British Columbian coasts, thus giving me an excellent opportunity of seeing a little more of this part of the world.

Our first stop was at the small Indian settlement of Wrangel. This little town is the *entrepôt* for all goods and freight destined for the placer workings round the Stikine River. Wrangel, from a historical point of view, is interesting, as it was founded as early as 1834 by the Russians. After the change of ownership in 1867 the United States Government established there a military post and the place for many years was known as Fort Wrangel. To-day, however, the title of "fort" has been dropped and much of its past glory has departed. To the sightseer, beyond a glimpse of the Alaskan Indian at home and his totem poles—his idols—there was nothing much of interest.

Passing again the beautiful wooded shores of the mainland backed with their snowy ranges of mountains, we reached Ketchikan early in the morning of our second day. Ketchikan is, as I have already mentioned, the custom port of entry for American territory; it has besides a growing canning trade, the fisheries off the coasts producing an almost inexhaustible supply

<sup>1</sup> " Songs of a Sourdough " (R. Service):



SKAGWAY, ALASKA



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of salmon, halibut and other fish. The salmon is the principal fish that is canned. This little town is also the centre of a growing copper district.

It was suggested by the second steward just before the boat sailed that I should help to wait at table during the trip. Being quite determined not to do anything of the kind I quietly and tactfully set to work to make him realise how disadvantageous such a course would be to the passengers and to the ship in general. I gently hinted that I would be quite equal to tipping plates of soup into ladies' laps, as well as plates of pie down their necks. My words had the desired effect ; and as there were two other "workaways" on board I was detailed off to make up the bunks of the passengers in the steerage and to clean up the lavatories of the ship ; in short, to do most of the dirty work on board. In other words, I was the "janitor." The other two "workaways" were inspanned as assistant waiters and I wished them luck with their job. I preferred mine to theirs.

I say "I was detailed off" to these various duties, but I do not say for a moment that I carried them out to the letter, for when it came to dodging bosses and work—well, in that I needed a lot of excelling ! When the wharf of Skagway grew every moment more distant and I knew that I was safe to go with the ship, my spirit of independence increased. I then interpreted the duty of making the beds in the steerage into that of yarning and playing "blackjack" with their various occupants, only working like a "perspiring Trojan" when I was warned of the approach of the second steward seeking my whereabouts. I would then be instructed to start the task of cleaning up the lavatories ; on the completion of that task I would be sent off to shine up the brasswork on the upper decks. This was where I scored ; for I spent most of my time, whilst ostensibly industriously polishing door-knobs, in gazing at the beautiful scenery we were passing and in gossiping with passengers. I got so expert by the end of the trip in gossiping and polishing brasswork simultaneously that I felt that I had at last left the ranks of unskilled labour.

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To my surprise I found nearly all the occupants of the "glory hole" or, in other words, the stewards of the ship, were young Englishmen and, with but few exceptions, public school boys, undoubtedly sons of gentlemen, but not for a moment would I suggest it was a case of like father like son. Their conversation was nearly always on the subject of the tips the voyage would produce. I could barely conceal my contempt for them, more particularly when I heard the tenor of their conversation, such remarks as: "The old chap in No. 12 ought to be worth a five-dollar bill!" and: "That old girl in No. 6 I reckon is good for a ten spot!"; and so on. It is almost unnecessary to add that the bulk of them were remittance-men.

During this trip I kept very irregular hours, playing "black-jack" every night until very late. I was sometimes out and sometimes in, never, however, breaking far into my little nest-egg. By the end of the trip I was a five-dollar bill to the good.

We reached Port Simpson early in the morning of the 11th, the atmosphere off the coast being, as is not unusually the case, very misty and damp. Dixon Entrance—the international boundary line between American and British territory—faces this little port. Port Simpson was for many decades the headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company, and it still possesses an old fort and trading post. A rather interesting old building stands near the wharf, which was erected, so it is said, before even the arrival of the Hudson Bay men, which was as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. Concerning this building one writer says: "It was in those days a guest-house of the chiefs, and its supporting logs were grounded into the earth on top of living bodies. The tale of this house, built on the bones of human sacrifice, is one of the many interesting stories of the old Indians." Interesting—but rather gruesome!

A little to the south of this port lies its successful rival—Prince Rupert—situated on a small island off the mainland. We made a short stay here.

Prince Rupert at the time of my visit had just been selected as the terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway. It must be to-day



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double the size it was when I walked through its one-planked main street. It was then termed "the town of the West in the making," and looked what Seattle and other Pacific coast towns must have appeared in their early days. Whether it will ever grow to their present size Time alone will show. The possession of an excellent harbour is one of the chief reasons for its selection as the site for the terminus of the new steel belt which will soon span the Dominion.

Late in the afternoon of the following day we made our last call—at Alert Bay, an Indian village situated on the shores of a deep bay in Vancouver Island. Here we took on a big load of tinned fish for Vancouver, thence to be distributed to all parts of the world.

The Indian village with its rows of hideous totems gave me a better insight into the life and customs of the Indian than any of the places at which we had touched. The village, with its wealth of totem poles, native houses and Indian war canoes, was full of points of interest. The totem poles are most hideous monstrosities.

The Indians along this coast—the aborigines of the land—are said to have lived for centuries as near to Nature as it has been possible for them to do ; and looking at them to-day one is not tempted to dispute the fact.

The following evening we reached Vancouver. Only three short months had elapsed since my departure from British Columbia—but three months that had been lived in an atmosphere of rough and rugged life, in a country of sublime vastness, of impressive wildness and of solemn grandeur : a country that leaves an indelible mark—the mark that reveals to Youth its Manhood.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HARD TIMES ON THE PACIFIC COAST

ON my arrival in Vancouver in the fall of the year I found things very dull, the slackness of trade usually associated with the season being greatly increased by the financial panic which in that year shook the great North American Continent to its foundations. Trade seemed utterly paralysed. Everywhere in the streets of the town one only saw crowds of unemployed. To make matters worse the numbers were being swelled daily, not only by hundreds of men like myself coming down from Alaska, but by hundreds of others coming out West from the eastern parts of Canada. Further, to put the finishing touch to this deplorable state of affairs, shiploads of Japanese coolies were pouring into the country in regular streams, taking what little work there was to be done. Was it then to be wondered at that the working men of Vancouver rioted and wrecked the greater part of the Japanese quarter in the town? The aftermath of these riots, which occurred during the month of September, took the shape of the settlement of compensation claims for damage inflicted to property during the riots. This was in course of progress on my return. When I recalled the sight I had witnessed, during July, of seventeen hundred Japanese coolies arriving in one batch, and when I was told that many fresh batches had since then arrived in Canada, I was not surprised that this coupled with the intense stagnation had roused the passions of the working man.

Besides white men out of work, one saw numbers of white-turbaned Indians prowling the streets in batches, idle and nearly starving; in fact, many of them did die of starvation and exposure during that winter. Despite all this distress, one of the

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great railways kept calling to those in the East: "Come West!" and at the same time employed Chinamen on the line. In such times one feels sympathy with anarchists.

After four days of idleness I went south to Seattle, where I joined hundreds of others in unsuccessful search for work. The state of Seattle was even worse than that of Vancouver; so I returned after a week. To kill time I would stand in company with others and watch the eastern train arrive with its load of expectant humanity, which kept pouring in in response to the heartless cry "Come West!" Yes, some poor devils came West, whilst the half of us were trying to go East—to go anywhere, in fact, to get away from the monotonous cry of "nothing doing." Only the railway made money!

Whilst I still had some dollars left I did not worry very much. I spent many hours, and dimes also, in the various vaudeville shows that abounded in the city, and they helped to pass the time that was beginning to hang heavily on my hands. I tried to get a job in my old cigar store again, but found that my real estate friend had already gone under, an early victim to the depression that was sweeping over the land. In one cigar store I was fairly sanguine of getting a billet. The owner, after my inquiring for a job and explaining to him that I had some experience in the town, asked me to put up some pictures in his store pointing out for the purpose a rickety ladder on which he himself was too scared to ascend. I spent an hour and more, at some risk to my limbs, in fixing up his advertisement pictures round the shop; but on completion of that work I, anticipating a job, was asked whether I smoked and was handed a *five-cent* cigar! He was a Scotch Canadian. Is it necessary to say it?

That evening I obtained a job. I was selected as a "super" for the stage at one of the small theatres in the town. My part was that of a factory hand. It needed no acting; the rôle came quite naturally after my recent months of roughing it. I received per night for my talented services the huge sum of twenty-five cents (one shilling), which just paid for my evening

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

meal. However, I got quite a lot of fun out of it. The first night I appeared I remarked that the leading lady winked at me whilst she was acting the part of Glory in *The Christian*. But the thought that I had made a conquest was speedily dispelled by the realisation that the wink only indicated that I was to shout at that particular moment. Oh, the disillusion !

Some of the incidents behind the scenes were also very amusing. The actor who took the part of the Bishop in the play, having ended his appearance on the stage by blessing John Storm, remarked as soon as he was out of sight and earshot of the audience : " Lord, it is as hot as hell on there ! " This little side-play was, perhaps, only equalled by Glory. She had called forth great applause by her acting of a rather touching scene, ending : " Kiss me, John ! " The moment the curtain dropped, and the touching request barely out of her pretty mouth, she called for the stage manager and swore at him about the arrangement of the stage as daintily, and yet as fluently, as only an accomplished actress could. The witnessing of these and other incidents, coupled with the receipt of " two bits, " fully repaid me, I felt, for placing my histrionic talents at the disposal of the management. The following evening I was offered a job of usher in the pit at the munificent wage of fifty cents a night. I could never gather whether this offer was a compliment or otherwise. It was either an appreciation of my suave demeanour and *air distingué* or a decided reflection on my histrionic talents before referred to. I refused the billet.

During these days I used to haunt the docks, as the position was fast becoming serious enough to compel me to contemplate a voyage to anywhere. One day I nearly got a job as third officer on the *Georgia*, a steamer that ran regularly between Canada and Mexico. I was promised the position failing the unlikely alternative that the ship might secure a real officer with a certificate. This promise was the result of a talk with the captain, who, for a master on a ship, seemed a most credulous man ; possibly he only appeared to me so. However, on the morrow I learnt that the unlikely alternative had turned up

## HARD TIMES ON THE PACIFIC COAST

in the shape of a dismissed *Empress* officer ; so my chance of beaching the *Georgia* vanished.

I also nearly went to Boston during these hard times, in response to an invitation from my Alaskan friend. I endeavoured to obtain the opportunity of accompanying a party of Chinamen who were being sent overland "in bond." This would have meant a free passage to the East and a possible five-dollar bill. I was unsuccessful, being fourth on the list, which, as the railroad clerk showed me, contained over one thousand names ! That alone was a sign of the times. This railroad clerk was quite a good fellow ; for he told me that if I could disguise myself as a parson—*i.e.* don a dark suit and turn my collar round—he would issue me a padre's ticket, which meant a considerable reduction on the usual fare. However, though I flattered myself I could look like a parson, I could not raise half the necessary cash to buy the ticket, even at the much-reduced figure. Hence, my efforts to go east, either as a guard of Chinamen or as a sky-pilot, were of no avail. I couldn't go east, I couldn't go north, I tried hard to go west, even to the extent of making an unsuccessful attempt to stowaway on one of the *Empress* steamers bound for Japan. So I had to go south.

On Thanksgiving Day—31st October—I obtained another job—to count and weigh frozen carcasses of sheep. This brought in a few dollars and kept the wolf from the door for a few days more.

That approaching starvation quickens the wits is, I think, a recognised fact ; judging, therefore, by the following brilliant scheme evolved by three kindred spirits and myself, we must all indeed have been very near starvation point. Two men, whom we ran across in—we'll say in the public library—had just discovered in Vancouver Island the bones of a huge mastodon—a relic of prehistoric ages, possibly a mammoth of the Glacial Period. They had brought the bones over from the island, and having put them together were exhibiting the skeleton in a hall, charging a small sum for admittance. Well, with these two men The Hard Up Company (*i.e.* we four) signed a contract

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that the company would pay within seven days the sum of a thousand dollars for a six months' option on the brute, the said company's idea being to travel with their skeleton through the States and exhibit it there for a consideration. Seeing that the funds at the company's disposal did not exceed twenty dollars, a fact of which the prospective vendors were fortunately not aware, the prospects of the company were not exactly of the brightest. In fact, the managing director, who shall be nameless, was discovered two days before the period of seven days had elapsed offering his directorate and all his interest in the Hard Up Company for sale, a hint being thrown out that a five-dollar bill would effect the transaction. The sale, however, did not come off, there being no buyers. Furthermore the sale of the mastodon never came off, there being no cash. On this the company went into liquidation and remained there. The directors all scattered far and wide, the managing director going over to Victoria to try to get a job.

The sight of Victoria was very refreshing after the weeks I had spent in the hybrid town of Vancouver. I would like to use a stronger word than hybrid, but on consideration I refrain. The scenery between Vancouver and Victoria was very pretty, and one was almost within the harbour of Victoria, which is screened from view by a rocky promontory, before being aware of it. I almost felt like being back in England again, so homelike is the capital of British Columbia. What was particularly attractive was the presence of fences enclosing the gardens of the picturesque dwellings—a thing one never sees in any other town on the Pacific coast. The fence is a typically English institution—exclusive, insular, and conservative.

I returned to Vancouver towards the end of November, practically "broke," but soon gave the city best and left south for Seattle. My diary for that day (23rd November '07) read: "Left Vancouver (I hope for ever!) for Seattle." Vancouver and I never seemed to agree.

Six days later, Seattle being if anything in a worse condition than the Canadian town, I secured with my last few dollars a



VICTORIA, B.C.



VANCOUVER, B.C.





## HARD TIMES ON THE PACIFIC COAST

passage on a lumber boat bound for 'Frisco. Many others, out of work like myself, were also bound for that city, lying rumours having reached us that things were not so depressed in California as in the north.

A heavy swell made our vessel, which had a big deck cargo of timber, roll nearly on to her beam ends. The greater part of the men on board—there was not a single woman—spent their time, when not feeding the fishes, in playing cards and drinking rye whisky, which were about the only things with which to occupy time. We literally rolled down to San Francisco, berthing there late in the evening of the 3rd December after four days at sea.

Things in 'Frisco were very bad; even worse than up north. Work was unobtainable. The city was in the throes of a financial panic. Men who had hundreds of dollars to their credit in the banks were unable to draw a cent, clearing-house certificates realisable in the April following being handed them instead. Well-to-do men were vainly trying to borrow a ten-dollar bill with which to buy their Christmas dinner.

My plight was not exactly a happy one. I had had in my mind the idea of spending the winter on the fruit ranch in Healdsburg, which I had visited in the early part of the year; but on meeting my friend I found that he was as hard pressed as I and was at that moment going up to the ranch himself. He was out of a job, his saloon having failed. So here was I with just two dollars in my pocket; no work, not the slightest chance of getting any; and with every probability of being stranded in 'Frisco which was hardly the town I should have selected for the purpose. But my lucky star did not fail me. My good Japanese friends, who during these years have ever been so ready to lend me a helping hand, came to my aid. Through their influence I was able to arrange to work my passage to Japan in an old tramp. The steamer, at the moment of my arrival, was just completing discharge of a cargo of Japanese coal prior to loading in the Puget Sound ports for Vladivostock. On her arrival in Japan from Vladivostock she was to be sold to a Japanese shipowner.

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I proceeded to the docks, passing alone along the wharves—a thing which no one in his right senses would do at night-time—and found the old steamer that was to be my home for a few weeks. In appearance she was just an ordinary cargo boat ; but she was about as dilapidated an old tramp as one could have wished to see, her rusted sides and ancient paintwork fully testifying to her age of twenty-five years. Her design was old-fashioned, most of her accommodation being aft in the poop, which was connected to the bridge deck by a running bridge over the aft' well deck. Her registered tonnage was two thousand seven hundred tons. I am not giving any unnecessary detail regarding the *Santolo*,<sup>1</sup> for to follow all the old ship's adventures it is necessary to have a little idea of what she was like. The man-in-the-street knows very little about the deep-sea tramp that supplies him with his daily requirements, his slight knowledge of the mercantile marine being limited to a superficial acquaintance with palatial mail steamers.

The *Santolo* flew the German flag, being captained and officered by Teutons ; her crew was Chinese. I said officered by Teutons ; that at the time of my joining her was hardly correct. Her deck officers then consisted of the captain, a young man of twenty-six though none the worse for that, and the chief officer, an even younger man. The engine staff was equally deficient in officers. The "chief" was only possessed of a second's "ticket," besides being hopelessly addicted to drink, and a poor engineer to boot. The second engineer, the only other officer the engine-room then possessed, was, however, quite a different type of man ; and it was solely due to him that the engines were in a passable condition.

My arrival was somewhat opportune, the ship being so short of officers. That same evening—the 6th December—I transferred on board all the baggage which I had left in the town ; and the following morning the steamer, now being empty, left the docks and anchored in the bay. During the process of un-mooring the ship I was relegated to the poop to "stand by"

<sup>1</sup> For obvious reasons this is not the correct name.

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there ; the fact of my being told off to act as second mate made me not a little pleased with myself. Fortunately " No. 1 " was an able seaman, so my part of the work went off without a hitch. My experience on the *Strathyre* also stood me in good stead.

When out in the bay the ship had to be fumigated, this precaution being enforced to prevent the spread of bubonic plague ; a further regulation was also in force that every ship moored to the wharf must have " rat-shields " attached to their mooring lines to prevent any rodents leaving or getting on the ship.

The operation of fumigating the ship was decidedly unpleasant. All parts of the steamer—cabins, holds, pantries—were tightly closed, after large pots of burning sulphur had been placed inside. For a period of seven hours all these parts had to remain shut, under a heavy penalty. More than one vessel, I was told, had been heavily fined for prematurely opening up ; and rumour added that the port authorities derived quite a profitable income out of these fines, adding yet further that the officials went out of their way *not* to impress upon the officers of the various steamers the importance of complying with that regulation. I myself observed more than once a spy-glass being brought to bear on us, some official doubtless hoping against hope that we should open up the ship before the stipulated time. However, we were not caught napping and waited the arrival of the rather sulky official, who instructed us to open up the ship. During the period of fumigation I had been allotted the duty of guarding the ship's stores and provisions, for with a Chinese crew on board nothing was safe from theft. Some time after fumigation the unpleasant taint of sulphur still lingered about the ship causing an irritable sensation in the throat ; and it was not till we had been at sea a couple of days that the steamer was clear of the odour.

We sailed from 'Frisco on the evening of the 7th, after having signed on another deck officer and two engineers. The former was, like myself, without any certificate, but was on the other hand a very capable and experienced sailor having been

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bo'sun on many Boston trawlers. For some years, however, he had been a butcher in the States. The two engineers we shipped were both of the "beachcomber" type; one, without a certificate and with no more than the experience of a fireman, was the better man of the two. He joined the ship as fourth engineer, the other being in possession of a junior certificate. We were not exactly what would be termed a highly efficient crew, for, apart from the officers, our Orientals were about as bad a bunch of Chinks as could be scraped out of the dives of Hong-Kong.

Thus manned, the *Santolo* proceeded up the coast to Puget Sound, where we were to load for the East. Being in ballast we made a quick passage and by noon of the 10th we anchored off Port Townsend. Here we started to load our cargo. As part of my duties as junior officer I had to take a twelve-hour anchor watch during the night in all these Pacific coast ports. Apart from ordinary navigation reasons, it was more than essential that an officer should be on watch during the night, as the steamer was liable to a fine of five hundred dollars for every one of the Chinese crew that absconded from the ship, unless all reasonable precautions had been taken by the master; and the fact of an officer being on watch could save the situation. It was a long and tedious watch—from six o'clock in the evening till six in the morning—and seemed more wearisome than a watch at sea. The greatest hardship was to keep awake.

Part of our cargo we loaded at Tacoma and part in Seattle. The bulk of it consisted of flour from the Tacoma mills, and also a large consignment of fresh fruit. We also took in Tacoma a hundred tons of coal, just sufficient to take us up to Vancouver Island where we were to coal for the voyage, as Tacoma coal is of poor quality, with too much dust and too little lump. We had to move the ship from berth to berth many times whilst taking in cargo, and in all cases this had to be done by hauling on our lines, the ship not being under steam. On more than one occasion I had to "stand by" on the poop, and judging from the fact that I usually got a drink after the operation was over I concluded that I managed to carry out the orders from the

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bridge fairly satisfactorily. The work was always full of interest to me, ten times more so than picking strawberries by Hood River or laying "side-walks" in Vancouver.

On the evening of the 20th we steamed north for Vancouver Island very deep in draught. We reached Ladysmith early the following morning and started to coal. We were ready for sea by ten o'clock the next day. During the night we experienced some extremely violent squalls—a foretaste of the weather that awaited us—and more than once during the night I had to slack the ship's lines to prevent them carrying away. At eleven-fifteen "full speed" was rung down to the engine-room, and the old *Santolo* began her eventful and perilous voyage on the 22nd of December 1907.

## CHAPTER IX

### A STORMY VOYAGE ACROSS THE PACIFIC

THE system of watches kept on the *Santolo* was that they were shared by two officers only; not by three, as is more usually the case, when the arrangement is four hours "on" and eight hours "off." The watches on board were so arranged that in twenty-four hours one officer watched for eleven and the other for thirteen hours; on the next day hours were reversed. Sometimes, when there are but two officers, the watches are shared equally—four hours "on" and four hours "off"; but the former system is often preferred as it permits the officers to get more than four consecutive hours' sleep.

On our departure from Ladysmith the captain told me that I was to share the watch with the second officer, apparently working on the principle that two non-certificated men on watch would be about equal to one certificated officer. I was, consequently, on watch with the second officer from seven o'clock that evening till midnight, when the chief officer relieved us till four o'clock in the morning. From four A.M. till eight o'clock was our next watch.

At midnight we were abeam of Cape Flattery, steering a west-south-west course. On leaving the bridge at eight o'clock in the morning a distinct change in the weather was noticeable, the sky having become overcast and a strong westerly wind having sprung up. A fast-falling glass further denoted a change and warned us of an approaching storm.

After breakfast I turned in till noon. Though expecting some bad weather I was surprised when going on watch again to find quite a strong gale blowing: the unexpected force of the wind

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nearly took me off my feet. The captain was on the bridge when I went up. He looked anxious. I was hardly surprised, for I knew that we had all our coal-bunkers in the alleyways unbattened down, being unable to attend to them till the coal had settled.

The ship was already making bad weather, being very heavily laden. Shortly after two o'clock "half-speed" was rung down to the engine-room as the seas were getting too high. The glass kept steadily falling and hourly the wind grew stronger. By "six bells" in the afternoon watch the gale had increased to a hurricane. So terrific was the force of the wind that the seas were almost beaten down flat, and only one white mass of foam met our gaze. It was nearly impossible to see beyond the bows of the steamer so blinded were we on the bridge by the driving rain and spray. The hurricane increased in force till it reached its height late in the afternoon. Its fury then was beyond description, the force of the wind incalculable.

Rather foolishly the captain had delayed heaving to, and the heavily laden tramp was now labouring badly in the seas. To heave to at once was imperative. Shortly before four o'clock this was done, though not before some big seas had swept us fore and aft carrying away numerous spars and stanchions. One heavy sea struck us on the port-side; it broke clear over the ship, smashing the engine-room skylights and pouring a ton of water or more down on to the engines below. A quartermaster was sent from the bridge to make fast some canvas over the part where the skylight had carried away. Whilst thus occupied the first of the long list of accidents and troubles that befell us on that eventful voyage occurred. A big sea struck the ship; there was a lurch; a foothold was lost—and all was over. Carried by the almost irresistible force of the wind the quartermaster was swept overboard. A lifebuoy was thrown over to him; of no avail—the poor wretch drowned before our eyes! To attempt to launch a boat in such seas was madness. Even if we had been successful in doing so no boat could have lived for a minute in

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such a turmoil of raging waters. With a muttered prayer we turned and faced the bows again.

Though the deeply-laden freighter was hove to we were continually shipping heavy seas over our bows, to such an extent that sailors were sent for'd to pour oil through the ports of the fo'c'sle with the object of breaking the force of the waves. The oil had but little effect.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the second accident occurred; one that came very near to finishing the old *Santolo* then and there. *Our steering gear carried away!* A clatter of heavy chains amidships, the steamer falling off her course—told the tale only too well. We were now in about as helpless and hapless a position as we could possibly be. And night was fast approaching. Tremendous seas broke over the helpless tramp, as she lay wallowing in the trough of the water. She rolled nearly to her beam ends. Our hand-steering gear was useless, smashed by a big sea, though I wouldn't be sure that it was in working condition on our departure.

With but little effort I recall to-day the picture of that vast expanse of tumbling and raging seas on which the luckless vessel tossed, under dark and gloomy storm-clouds that scurried over the heavens. I can hear again the dismal sound of the abating storm whistling and moaning through the swaying masts. And I can see again the fast-disappearing daylight ushering in that stormy night, through which we drifted, never knowing but that the next moment might be our last. Such nights need no diary to recall them; the mind bears faithful record.

Going aft we found one of the steel connecting rods of the steering gear had parted, unequal to the ceaseless strain of the heavy seas running. The rudder, now uncontrolled, was being beaten to and fro by the angry seas and we feared that at any moment we might lose it. The necessity to secure the quadrant to which the rudder was attached was at once apparent, for we knew that if we lost our rudder the ship was indeed doomed.

As though the danger enveloping us was not of sufficient magnitude, the Chinese crew, panic-stricken by the serious



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position of the ship and demoralised by the loss of the sailor who had gone overboard, deserted their posts and remained in the fo'c'sle awaiting the end with true Oriental fatalism. Threats and remonstrances were of no avail. To a man they refused to go on deck. Instead, they burnt joss to their gods and remained sullen and silent.

Hence, there remained but the four of us deck officers to start in the dim light of a flickering lantern the almost hopeless task of lashing the rudder. Large six-and-a-half-inch hemp hawsers snapped like twine under the tremendous strain of the seas. After three unsuccessful attempts we were compelled to leave the poop for a time to turn our attention to an even greater danger that threatened the safety of the ship—our unbattened coal-hatches, through which water was fast pouring. The ship, in fact, was slowly filling.

The task of shovelling the loose coal from off the hatches was a heart-rending one, as every lurch of the distressed steamer undid the work just done. Working feverishly, with shovels and with our hands, we at last were able to get the hatch covers on, despite the constant shifting of the loose coal at every roll of the ship. This task completed, we once again returned to the poop to try to lash the rudder-quadrant. Realising that hemp ropes were unable to stand the strain we thought of a heavy steel hawser. This was stored in the fo'c'sle. The ship, lying in the trough of the seas, was now rolling nearly on to her beam ends. To keep a footing on the sloping sea-swept decks was an almost impossible feat. So the task of bringing that steel hawser through the ship, dodging the heavy seas that continually broke over us, hanging on to life-lines, clutching, in short, to anything on which one could get a hold, whilst sea after sea swept us clean, was about the hardest I can recall. But our efforts with the hawser were successful. By means of it we at last securely lashed the quadrant to the "bits," thereby rendering the rudder immovable. When divers examined the ship at Honolulu, they found one of the sockets of the rudder all but broken off; it was not lashed a moment too soon.

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This urgent work finished we felt entitled to relax our exertions as the immediate danger to the ship was averted. It was then about two o'clock in the morning. The night was intensely dark. Angry storm-clouds scurried over the leaden skies. The wind moaned and howled through the masts of the labouring steamer. Every now and then a faint gleam of the moon revealed to our eyes the wide expanse of foam-covered seas, each threatening to engulf us as we drifted helpless. It was a cheerless scene.

Our decks by now were littered with wreckage. Two of the steamer's boats lay in matchwood. One of them had been lifted clear out of its "chocks" and had been hurled on to the wheel-house, where it lay in fragments. The iron coverings of all the winch-pipes were lying in the scuppers, having been ripped from their fastenings under the onslaught of the seas that had swept the decks. Broken spars, stanchions and pieces of woodwork lay strewn everywhere. In the alleyways a foot of coal-blackened water washed and hissed over the hot steam-pipes lying there. In my cabin amidships things were even worse. Over a foot of water washed in and out over the sill into the alleyway with every roll of the ship. My trunk had been washed out of the lower bunk and was floating! Sleep there was impossible! The wash of the water to and fro was itself like a miniature storm!

Below decks things were just as bad. The engine-room was in a deplorable condition. As the Chinese firemen and wipers had all deserted their posts, there remained only the few white men to cope with the perilous position there. The engine-room and stokehold were flooded. Every sea the steamer shipped poured tons of water below through the broken skylights and the open grating for'd of the funnel. The latter was our only exit from the amidship quarters, as both ends of the alleyway had been battened down. To prevent an explosion the fires were drawn. Even the plates of the stokehold were washed up by the quantity of water shipped and moved to and fro with every lurch of the vessel. The bilges were full; and to make matters worse the

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pumps on examination were found to be useless, being choked by the amount of coal dust that had been washed down through the bunkers. This then was the position—as well as my pen can describe it—in which we found ourselves when day broke on the morning of the 24th of December.

At five o'clock that morning I went on watch alone till ten o'clock, relieving the second officer; our regular watches were quite disorganised. The storm had by now blown itself out, but the seas were still running mountains high and the ship was rolling heavily.

By noon the engineers had repaired the broken rod and the steering gear was put into working order. Late in the day steam was got up in one of the boilers and the ship was brought under control. The seas were, however, still too high to permit us to resume our westward course, so the ship was hove to. That night was fairly fine, but the anxiety as to whether the steering gear would stand the incessant strain of the big seas that were running was with us the whole night. In order to relieve the strain and lessen the jerking we fixed running blocks and tackles to the quadrant—a precaution it would have been wiser to have adopted *before* the accident!

By midnight the seas had moderated enough to allow us to resume our course, though the engines were only put at half-speed. Our progress was consequently slow.

The day—Christmas Day—broke dull and threatening. Another serious trouble now confronted us. Owing to the continual rolling and lurching of the steamer the cargo in two of the hatches had shifted considerably, listing the ship well over to starboard. By noon she was listing fully seven degrees. There was nothing to be done but open up the hatches and retrim the shifted cargo. To open up hatches while big seas were being continually shipped was a risk we had to run. The ever-increasing list of the ship was a serious danger, one that might at any moment be the cause of the vessel foundering. Consequently the best part of the day was spent under the hatches restowing the sacks of flour. All hands, from the chief officer to the cook, were

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engaged. The Chinese had by now recovered from their fright since the danger of foundering was for a time averted. By night-time the ship was considerably straightened.

It was not, certainly, the most ideal way of spending the season of Christmas ; we had, however, no alternative. My Christmas fare consisted of some old salted pork—of very doubtful age—with the luxury of a bottle of German beer. Salt junk was the staple diet on board. Rations of one tin of milk, two pounds of sugar, and tea, had to last five of us in a mess for a week—of course, it never did. We had also some tough Shanghai pigs on board. Eating them in no way compensated us for the ungodly row they raised in bad weather.

At daybreak on the following morning—Boxing Day—the clattering of chains amidships and the ship falling off her course informed us that once again the steering gear had broken. I was on watch at the time. A glance at the compass was enough ! Calling out all hands I rushed aft. In a moment I saw that the repaired rod had again parted. Fortunately the mate had had the foresight to leave in readiness the wire hawser ; so it was not long before the rudder was securely lashed. Perceiving the uselessness of again repairing the rod we substituted in its stead a length of wire rope. This answered rather too successfully, as the strength of the wire threw extra strain on the chains round the quadrant. In the night watch a link in one of these chains snapped ; and—for the third time—the ship drifted helpless before the wind. The link was repaired and for the third time we endeavoured to continue our luckless voyage ! The old tramp was a veritable “ coffin-ship ” ; overladen, ill-equipped, undermanned—and yet she was 100 A 1 at Lloyd's ! I wonder who was the surveyor !

The *Santolo* certainly bore a charmed life. It was something to have been adrift three times in the worst weather imaginable and yet to be still afloat !

The idea of continuing our attempt to make the northern passage through the Pacific to Vladivostock in our present battered condition was abandoned, despite the exhortations of

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the captain, who, poor devil, was anxious to make the speediest voyage possible. It was his first command. But it was obvious to all that a few more days of similar battering about would be the finish of the old steamer—*doubtless to the great regret of the owners!* I say this because it came to my ears that the ship was to be sold to the Japanese for a sum *considerably less* than that for which she was insured!

Our course was changed and we headed for Honolulu, in the Hawaiian Islands, to put in for repairs.

The weather till the 29th kept moderately good—moderately, in comparison with the weather we had been lately enjoying. We made but poor progress, though, owing to the heavy seas that were running—the aftermath of the gales that had been sweeping over these northerly waters. I would like to meet the man who gave to this ocean the name of PACIFIC!

In the evening of that day a heavy gale from the south-east sprung up. The seas soon got too high for us to proceed, and again for some hours we were compelled to heave to. When the storm abated and the seas had moderated to some extent we resumed our course. Not for long, however, as an even stronger gale broke over the ship the following day. Again we lay hove to for hours! During all this bad weather we had with us the continual anxiety as to whether our patched-up steering gear would stand the strain of the mountainous seas that broke over the ship. We became nervous as cats. On watch the sound of the fireman damping over the ashes would strike our ears as the sound of steering chains unshipped; and for a moment our hearts would be in our mouths. Fortunately the gear held. We all considered ourselves very lucky that we had come out of the storm, and that the damage had been no worse. But we had no wish to try the capricious kindness of Fate too much, for fear she might take it into her head to withhold her helping hand on the next occasion. With every storm the vessel met the cabins amidships were flooded. The ship leaked like a sieve! The pumps were kept going more or less continuously the whole voyage. The bilges and bilge-pumps were now in order

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again, though not till after some very trying work for the engineers.

On the last day of the year the weather cleared and the seas moderated. We set our course south-west and rang down "full speed"—for nearly the first time since our departure.

Our Oriental crew from the outset of the voyage had been constantly giving trouble, quite apart from their mutinous behaviour whilst the ship was in distress. This day was marked on our log as the occasion of an attempt on the life of the captain by one of the crew, who had been detected in the theft of some of the ship's stores. The Chinaman was put in irons. He was kept there for forty-eight hours and was only released because he was the ship's cook. He had to thank his unspeakable deputy for the taking-off of the chains of justice, for as long as he was in irons no one could get a decently cooked meal.

The only ill effect from the many days of exposure through which I had passed was a sore throat. But seeing that since leaving Ladysmith none of us had changed our daily soaked clothes, or doffed our sea-boots for many hours, I felt I had nothing much to complain about. I must confess though that during these few days I felt I had received somewhat more experience than I cared for; that the goddess of the shrine at which I was dedicating my young life was hardly "playing the game."

I recalled that, during the time when I was on the *Strathyre*, on many occasions—always in the fine weather!—I had secretly wished for the ship to go ashore in order to obtain the experience of being shipwrecked. But on the *Santolo*, during the few days we were lying helpless and disabled in those terrific seas with every probability of being wrecked, my thoughts were of quite a different order. I do hope I have not conveyed the impression that during these days I was a little tin hero; that I stood on the bridge like a young Nelson, undismayed, fearless and calm! If I have—let me set matters right. When I caught sight of some of those horrible green-crested waves rolling towards the old tramp adrift on the ocean I was far from feeling undismayed, or calm, or fearless. I will be quite candid.

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There was not much undismayed, calm and fearless demeanour about me when, on one occasion, I missed my footing and, caught at the same moment by a big sea which came on board unannounced, was swept to the rails, where, but for one thin bar to which I clung like grim death with my feet in the water, I had been overboard!

The day of the New Year (1908) broke fine and sunny, as we were now getting into more southerly latitudes. We saw the Old Year out on the bridge with a bowl of claret-cup. The light winds and calm seas were most welcome to us after the days of storms and gales, for we all felt that we had had our fill of bad weather in that one week—enough to last us for the voyage.

Steaming south-west we sighted the Hawaiian Islands on the evening of the 6th, when we entered the tropics. That evening I witnessed perhaps the most perfect sunset I have ever seen at sea. My diary records it in rather extravagant language: "Gorgeous sunset—indescribable by pen, unportrayable by brush!" The words were more than true, for not even Turner with his magic touch could have transferred to a canvas one-tenth of those delicate tints and rich blending colours at which I gazed for so many minutes spellbound.

We anchored early in the morning in Honolulu, having stood on and off from the island of Oahu during the night.

I had learnt before my arrival that the climate of the Hawaiian Islands was nearly the finest in the world; and I must say that during the ten days or so that we lay at anchor in Honolulu it fully lived up to the reputation. The sun shone all the time, the heat of the day being tempered by the cool trade breezes that blow the year round.

The arrival of our steamer "in distress" at the Sandwich Islands—a veritable oasis in the desert of the Pacific—furnished the Yankee reporters with plenty of material. They had boarded us before our mooring lines were made fast. Thrilling yarns, and, incidentally, thrilling lies also, appeared about our ship and our experiences at sea in the following day's issue of the yellow rags that were termed newspapers. Such headings as: "Three Days in

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Battle for Life !” and : “Thrilling Tales of Distress at Sea !” were quite moderate in comparison with some of them. Yellow journalism is in its prime in Honolulu. What a blend : yellow journalism and the tropical paradise of Captain Cook’s time !

After repairs had started it was arranged to sell in Honolulu as much of the cargo of flour as had been damaged by salt water. It was also decided to dispose of the greater part of the consignment of fresh fruit, which was now nearly ripe, as we calculated that a full month would elapse before the steamer could reach Vladivostock. By that time the fruit would all have perished. Before discharging any cargo, however, we had first to obtain by cable the permission of the American authorities at Washington, the reason for this being that we had loaded the cargo in American ports, and Honolulu being territory of the U.S.A. it was consequently against the regulations to land there any cargo or passengers. But in view of the peculiar circumstances, cable permission was soon forthcoming, and the discharge of the cargo took place.

At this port, as in America, the same immigration regulations were in force regarding the entry of Asiatics. I was consequently on night watch to prevent any of the crew absconding, though the risk of this was not so great as when in America since the ship lay at anchor in the bay, there being practically no wharf accommodation at all in Honolulu. Being on night watch I had consequently the day to myself. After a sleep till noon I used to spend most of my time ashore, visiting some of the pretty spots in the island. Through the judicious disposal of a few old clothes to a Kanaka boatman I was able to raise a few dollars, which was the only money in my possession, as I was unfortunately not in receipt of any wages on board the steamer ; I was merely working my passage.

Indispensable as Western innovations undoubtedly are, they certainly seemed out of place in the islands of Hawaii. My fertile imagination, fed on stories of Captain Cook, had conjured up lovely scenes of dusky maidens sitting under palm-trees waiting for cocoanuts to fall, etc. Instead of these I found tramcars,





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yellow newspapers and Japanese coolies. Japanese coolies seemed to be more numerous in these islands than anybody else, barring the aborigine Kanaka, who, however, is fast dying out. It suggests an amusing, not to say peculiar, situation in the event of war breaking out between the owners of the island, the Americans, and the chief inhabitants, the Japanese. Doubtless these latter take more than neighbourly interest in the improvements that are being effected in the fortifications at Pearl Harbour in Oahu Island. In fact it was rumoured, though I cannot confirm it, that the Japanese objected to certain material being used by the Americans in parts of these forts, because they, anticipating a more or less early "moving-in," did not consider it was the best material for the purpose!

Whilst I was making my daily prowls round the island our steamer was having a new steering gear put in, its broken boats were being repaired and the wrecked deckwork renovated—all at the expense of that seemingly generous institution, Lloyd's! The new steering gear that was put in at no expense to the ship only replaced one worn out and depreciated by wear; not one wrecked by the "act of God." New boat-covers were supplied the ship to replace those lost whilst "in distress at sea." I had never seen them before the distress at sea; but still! I was sorry afterwards that I had not put in a claim for my old pair of dungarees that saw their last during "distress at sea." What a nice thing it is to be 100 A 1 at Lloyd's!

Just prior to our departure from Honolulu we had serious trouble with our Chinese crew. On our arrival we had reported to the authorities their mutinous behaviour at sea; for this they had been "logged" a month's pay—a very light punishment. The Orientals on the other hand had alleged to their Consul cruelty on our part; but their allegations were disregarded. Daily affrays occurred, and one incident, for which I unfortunately was responsible, brought matters to a head. The mess-room boy omitted to call me at noon (after my night watch), and on my reprimanding him for his neglect became cheeky, whereupon I rather hastily ejected him from the mess-room with my boot.

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The Chinaman picked up a knife and during the scuffle that ensued he got a few nasty knocks and I a ripped-open coat. This incident, though trifling and not unusual, was unfortunately witnessed by a Kanaka boatman, who informed some of the Yankee reporters ashore. Next day we read sensational headings in the Yellow Press : " Shocking Affray on Board the *Santolo*—Chinese Consul going on Board to investigate Alleged Cruelty ! " and so on. The latter part of this heading was apparently correct, for the Chinese Consul did put in an appearance the following morning. I went ashore ! On investigation the Consul remarked to the captain that he was sorry that only two-inch rubber packing had been used (one of the crew's allegations was that they had been struck by the officers and engineers with rubber packing) instead of four-inch. With regard to the incident with which I was concerned the captain informed the Consul of the facts of the case. The mess-room boy also had no pigtail ! That was enough ! I was fully exonerated, the Consul remarking, after having scuttled my accuser from the cabin : " He fully deserved all he got ! "

As though the troubles of the old tramp were not yet sufficient, we were delayed by the United States authorities seizing the steamer on the eve of departure pending the settlement of a suit brought against her by a former dismissed engineer claiming for unpaid wages. The first intimation I obtained of this was by finding on my return from shore a deputy patrolling the decks, and observing a small notice pinned on to the mainmast informing all persons to the effect that anyone found taking away any part of the *Santolo* would be liable to the U.S.A., etc. Beyond wondering who would be so foolish as to waste his time in taking away any part of that old tramp the matter worried me little.

The case was tried and the verdict was given in favour of the ship; but the captain was advised to settle the matter by paying up to avoid further delay. The matter was closed by a payment of two hundred and fifty dollars. The payment of this sum of money, together with the cost of the ship being detained for two extra days, must have amounted to nearly one hundred pounds.

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Even to-day I cannot quite refrain from a sardonic chuckle when I picture the owners' faces on receiving, instead of the terrible news "*Santolo* reported missing," only a pile of bills!

Noon of the 18th January saw the *Santolo* sail proudly out of the harbour of Honolulu; and half-an-hour after noon saw the old tramp again broken down! The pilot had just left us when the second engineer came on the bridge with the unwelcome information that the engines of the steamer (100 A 1 at Lloyd's!) were disabled; and, incidentally, that the chief engineer was lying drunk in his cabin! I could not but feel sorry for the young captain on this first command of his having such innumerable troubles; they were enough indeed to try a far more experienced man. But the German sailor is no chicken-hearted type of man and our young captain was no exception. Then and there he disgraced the drunken engineer, promoting the second engineer to the position of chief. After a period of six hours lying anchored just outside the harbour the engines were repaired and we set our course north-west. Just one more untoward incident occurred before we had seen the last of the islands. Whilst heaving up the anchor the flukes dropped overboard, the connecting pin having parted consumed by the rust of years. Had not the ship been sold to the Japanese (a nice, new, skilfully disguised *wooden* pair of flukes being substituted), Lloyd's, doubtless, would have been generous enough to supply us with a new anchor!

Mere trifles such as this we now regarded as of no importance. We were quite prepared to see the funnel roll overboard. In fact, during this second part of the voyage we were compelled daily to tighten up the stays that supported the smoke-stack.

We kept fair weather with us till four days after leaving the islands, when, getting into more northerly latitudes, signs of approaching bad weather were soon visible. After one strong south-cast gale had battered us about we decided to sneak away south again. Our course was changed to west by south.

The new steering gear that had been put in was now the source of fresh anxiety; for, being new and consequently strong,

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it threw an unusual and extra strain on the sheaves amidships which, we found to our dismay, were being slowly dragged from out of the decks. Lashings were consequently fastened to prevent this happening and one by one the old bolts were taken out and replaced by new ones. The old bolts, once seven-eighths of an inch, were worn and rusted in their centre to less than three-eighths of an inch ! And yet the *Santolo* was 100 A 1 at Lloyd's !

Once more the ship's decks were littered with lashings. The running bridge which connected the amidship-quarters with the poop—over the aft' well deck—had to be lashed securely to the ship's side, as the seas that continually struck it were slowly forcing it from its supports. At night-time, particularly on dark nights, it was just about as much as one could do to cover the length of the decks without breaking one's neck over the blocks and tackles that lay here, there, and everywhere. About the only parts that were not lashed were the two sides of the steamer.

Steaming south and west we ran again into more moderate weather. A week out from Honolulu we were delayed for a few more hours, our engines again breaking down. But what were a few hours to us already weeks late ? The day following—the 26th—my diary reads : “Did not live to-day ; crossed the 180° meridian !”<sup>1</sup>

During the three following days we ran again into extremely bad weather, a series of gales and violent squalls coming up from all directions to meet the ship. On the 29th we were hove to for nearly twelve hours ; our log for that day registered under ninety miles. We were “standing by” most of that night, as we feared that at any moment something would carry away, or that one of the hatches would be stove in under the onslaught of the tremendous seas that struck the ship. At daybreak the bleak and awful expanse of raging seas that met our eyes, the mountainous waves at which we would gaze up, each appearing as though it would break clear over the ship, struck a chill in

<sup>1</sup> 180° E. is twelve hours ahead of Greenwich time ; 180° W. is twelve hours behind. Hence, from 180° E. to 180° W. the time will be ahead twenty-four hours—one complete day.

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all our hearts. We remained hove to all that day. When the groaning and creaking of beams and stanchions would sound more ominously than usual in our ears, as the ship was riding some of those tremendous seas, the thought that the old tramp might at any moment break her back flashed through our minds. But the *Santolo* behaved splendidly ; she was indeed a credit to her builders. Though nearly three decades old, she was a far better sea-boat than some of the thin-plated tramps designed to-day. Good material was used in the building of the old *Santolo* ; any weak spot would soon have been discovered in the weather she battled with for days on end during that voyage.

Just before dark we passed the U.S.A. transport *Thomas*, eastward bound. She was also, we could see from our decks, labouring heavily in the seas and making but poor progress. Towards evening the gale seemed to culminate in one squall of terrific fury. For ten minutes the wind blew with hurricane force ; torrential rains swept the decks ; vivid lightning flashed and heavy bursts of thunder crashed. It then ceased almost suddenly, and the glass rose perceptibly.

Slowly the *Santolo* struggled on, daily battered by storms and gales, though we kept as far south as we could. Our poor progress now began to raise in our minds the sickening thought that we might run short of coal before we could reach Japan—the nearest land. This thought growing, we experimented with sacks of flour mixed with cinders to see if we could save our coal ; but the result was not promising. On the 5th of February we found ourselves six hundred miles from Yokohama and eight hundred miles from Muroran, the latter port being a small coaling place in the north island of Japan, where the steamer had arranged to bunker. We were in a regular quandary. If such weather continued and we made no better progress than we had in the last ten days, we had barely sufficient coal in our bunkers to reach Yokohama. And to go into more northerly latitudes with the chance of encountering even worse weather to Muroran, some two hundred miles farther off, seemed madness. Yet to go to Yokohama was a course the captain was

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naturally loth to adopt, for there the price of coal would be considerably higher as he had no contract; and it was also much out of our direction. At this juncture the captain fell ill and the mate took command. For a day or two we postponed our decision and kept on our southerly course. The weather seemed to grow even worse. Driving gales and storms came up to meet us from every quarter. In fact, within forty-eight hours a full cyclonic movement of the wind would be completed. The movement would start with a gale from the south-west; the wind would then veer round to the north, from whence it would blow hard. Blowing itself out in this direction it would then shift to the eastward and blow hard from the north-east. A few hours afterwards it would be round again in the south. This is an extract from my diary for the 3rd February: "Wind S.E., moderate gale with high seas. In the afternoon watch—high confused sea running; heavy rainfall, with squalls almost of hurricane force. Stormy night—'hove to' all night from noon." This was nearly a typical day's entry in the ship's log since we left Honolulu. It is hard to convey in a few words a description of the bad weather that we had daily with us then. In no other ocean—whether in the North Atlantic in mid-winter or in a heavy monsoon in the China Seas—have I ever experienced such terrific weather as we met in that winter of 1907-1908 in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> I relate just one instance which may convey a slight idea of the force and height of some of the seas that swept the heavily laden steamer. A big sea struck us on our starboard quarter. It swept the bridge; hurled both the quartermaster at the wheel and myself to the deck which for nearly five minutes was running a foot in water; and half-wrecked the wheel-house smashing the windows to fragments.

On the 8th we had seventy-five tons of coal left, barely four days' steaming power, and we were four hundred miles from Muroran, and half that distance from Yokohama. As the weather seemed changing slightly for the better we decided to risk it;

<sup>1</sup> It is on record that this winter was the worst for twenty-five years.



## A STORMY VOYAGE ACROSS THE PACIFIC

and our course was changed to north-west by north. We were hoping against hope that when under the lee of the Japanese coast we should be more sheltered and make better progress. This was fortunately the case ; for in the afternoon of the day following our change of course we sighted in the distance the snow-clad hills of Japan—a very welcome sight ! Steaming north and west the weather grew very cold, the north wind being keen and piercing. Towards night it grew colder still, snow and sleet squalls blinding us on watch. To be on watch in the tropics is a very different matter to pacing a snow-covered bridge with an icy wind piercing one's vitals, when ropes and rigging are frozen stiff and the decks covered with icicles.

Skirting the sheltering coast of Japan we entered the Straits of Hakodate early on the morning of the 10th, and anchored off the port of Muroran shortly afterwards. We had on our arrival less than twenty tons of coal in the bunkers. Had it not been that we had experienced comparatively good weather since sighting the shores of Japan, I fear to contemplate the position in which we should have found ourselves—adrift in those seas !

The voyage from Ladysmith to Muroran had taken us a period of exactly fifty days, instead of the nineteen days estimated when we started the northern passage. It had brought to all of us one series of incessant troubles and privation and had been to me as startling as the preceding trip round South America had been uneventful. I think I saw more in that one trip than if I had been going to sea steadily for a period of seven years.

As may be imagined it was not without a feeling of regret that I said *auf wiedersehen* to the old ship and my shipmates. When I saw the last of the old *Santolo* fading in the distance I did feel proud of her, of the gallant way she had battled storms and gales for weeks, and had won through the long series of disasters that had befallen her.

With the good wishes of my late companions I set my feet on Japan's hospitable shores on the 11th of February. I had three shillings in my pocket.

## CHAPTER X

### IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE

**B**EFORE the *Santolo's* arrival at the shores of Japan I had planned in sanguine moments to walk to Sapporo, a town in the centre of Hokkaido—about seventy miles or so north of Muroran. Here I remembered that a Japanese friend of mine whom I had known well in London was stationed. The sight, however, of three or four feet of snow on the ground when I left the ship rather damped my ardour, to say nothing of my feet ; but the sight of telephones was a considerable relief, and made me grateful for once to the inroads of Western civilisation in Japan.

I telephoned my friend to borrow ten yen to enable me to get to Tokio, where I counted on a few pounds awaiting me (Christmas letters being due). As I expected, my sympathetic friend did for me all that I asked and instructed the branch office from where I was telephoning to advance me what I needed for my expenses south. The courteous agent at Muroran could not do enough for me. Besides providing me with the funds I required against my I.O.U., he set himself out to entertain me most royally during my short stay ; and I saw in his company the little town of Muroran, where I gained some of my first pleasant impressions of Japan and of Japanese hospitality.

With him I ate my first Japanese dinner. At this first dinner of mine I made a distinct *faux pas*, if that expression really rightly describes it. I must first mention that for most of the time whilst on the *Santolo* I had been in the habit of wearing two pairs of socks under my sea-boots, which let in the water rather badly. These four socks which I would pick up haphazard—generally in the dark—were all more or less of different

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colour. On leaving the steamer I considered, as there was so much snow on the ground, that my sea-boots would be the very things to wear ; but when donning them I forgot to substitute a decent pair of socks for the *Santolo* pairs.

Without any misgivings then as to the correctness of my garb I sailed gaily off to my Japanese dinner. The universal custom in Japan, as no doubt my reader knows, demands that one takes off one's shoes before entering the house to avoid soiling the delicate *tatami*. Of this I was not then aware, or had forgotten—I cannot quite recall now. On my arrival, anyway, my Japanese host informed me of his country's custom in this regard. It was not till I began tugging off one of my heavy sea-boots that the first misgivings shot through me as to whether my socks were *de rigueur* or not. The first sock or socks appeared. They would have just about passed in a crowd with a series of discreet movements, but I had inward qualms that the other ones would not so successfully pass muster. Alas ! my fears were only too true ! For when those socks appeared to light, not only were they of a different colour and texture, but also much of the texture of the socks was not there !

I felt slightly foolish, to say the least ; though I manfully endeavoured to maintain my composure and sense of dignity, which was hard to do with those socks, or parts of them at least, staring me in the face. I endeavoured further to insinuate that it was a hobby of mine to appear thus shod. But the effort seemed to fall somewhat flat ; my Japanese host, to put it mildly, appeared sceptical. I avoided throughout the dinner any unseemly display of those sea-socks, and they in no way interfered with my enjoyment of that very pleasant evening—my first in Japan.

Many things in this part of Japan struck me then as very quaint, Western civilisation having but slightly altered the conditions of life. I was fortunate in obtaining here, just on my entry to the country, a glimpse of the old Japan which is so quickly passing away to give place to the Japan of the twentieth century. I always feel that visitors to Japan should try to enter

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the country anywhere but at the treaty ports in order to obtain true and accurate first impressions of the land they are visiting. First impressions mean so much—at least to my mind—and for strangers to enter Japan at Kobe or Yokohama cannot but give them an untrue impression of the country. It would perhaps not be so bad if the visitor realised that fact and refrained from giving expression to distorted and crude impressions. Unfortunately this is seldom done. Imagine a Chinaman dwelling in Limehouse writing his views of England ; the result would be about as edifying as is the average tourist's book on Japan.

The first thing that struck me was the courtesy and cleanliness of the Japanese. Everyone, from the merchant to the sampan coolie, seemed the essence of courtesy—and, what is more, was so. As for their cleanliness, even the coolie took his two hot baths a day. The subservience of the women to the men was, too, very noticeable.

Everybody, I observed, seemed to smoke, chiefly cigarettes and little pipes that hold a pinch of tobacco and after two puffs of smoke are finished. The sound of the *geta*<sup>1</sup> on the hard frosty roads was continually causing me to turn round, thinking a horse was trotting behind me ; and the sight, too, of strong men and dainty women hopping over the ground was curious then.

A twelve hours' passage across the Straits of Hakodate brought me to Aomori, a little port on the north coast of the island of Nippon. It was very cold and much snow was lying on the ground. All the shops and houses looked very quaint and picturesque in their white coats. My presence in this place attracted a considerable amount of curiosity, the appearance of foreigners in this part of Japan apparently being still an unusual sight. Crowds of little toddlers followed me in bands ; they stopped if I stopped, moved on if I did. Even the grown-ups were nearly as bad as their little ones in this respect. There was, however, no hostile staring ; but just the same curious sort of gaze that a gorilla walking down Regent Street would attract from those in the road.

<sup>1</sup> Japanese footwear.

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As the snow was very thick on the ground sleighs were in much use, my luggage being brought from the steamer to the railway station in one of these conveyances.

The train for Tokio started at ten o'clock in the morning. The view one obtained as the train sped south was mostly of little groups of roofs half buried under the snow. We reached Sendai, a fairly large city, late in the evening. The journey was rather tiring as I was travelling on a slow train on which there were no sleeping cars. I managed, though, to snatch a few hours' sleep during the night, but was not sorry to leave the train on our arrival at Uyeno station—the Euston of Tokio.

To be candid, my first impressions of Tokio were disappointing. It was not the capital's fault I'm sure ; they were due to the erroneous ideas and conceptions I had formed beforehand, my imagination having been fed on the false pictures drawn by writers of the *couleur de rose* school.

In Tokio I gained my living as an English teacher. The task of teaching English in Japan is not a very difficult one. It is, however, a rather tiring occupation. The one qualification necessary is tact.

Discipline in Japanese schools is very lax. It is no exaggeration to say that the student virtually rules the school. His power is ridiculously great. Should a class dislike a teacher, they either boycott him, or they boldly proceed *en masse* to the school authorities and demand his dismissal. And the almost inevitable result is the teacher's dismissal ! To the authorities the only guarantee of the efficiency of a teacher is a full class-room. Needless to mention, I was an efficient teacher ; for my class-room was always full. That is why I say the only qualification needed was tact.

Though my experience was confined to only one term, I was able to gain a fair insight into Japanese educational methods, with which, to be frank, I was by no means impressed. So far as I could see, higher education in Japan meant nothing much more than the successful acquirement of a superficial smattering of

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knowledge. The Japanese universities and higher schools are turning out yearly thousands of graduates in the shape of ignorant and superficially trained young men. Few are younger than twenty-three, the bulk about twenty-six; and more than one over thirty. With but few exceptions all of them go to swell the ranks of unskilled labour.

The task the Japanese student has before him in order to graduate from any of the principal universities and higher educational institutions is not so much that of absorbing the necessary knowledge to pass out as that of *memorising* the necessary data. The former task is seldom accomplished; the latter feat seems the only essential in the eyes of the Japanese educational world. Whilst doing this the student dissipates five or more of his most valuable years—and health!

The sacrifice of health is enormous. The unhealthy appearance of the average student I met in Tokio, so often bespectacled at an early age, testifies only too faithfully to the truth that the youth of Japan is steadily burning the candle at both ends. The early deaths of so many of them, the steady deterioration in the nation's physique, is, I think, mainly due to this high pressure of education, coupled with an insufficiency of nourishing food. In the Conscription Levy of 1911 three hundred and ninety-seven recruits were rejected out of one thousand; and only forty per cent. were passed as physically fit. Consumption is increasing and the death-rate rising.

This, then, is the toll modern education is demanding from Japan, the true meaning of which she seems to have altogether lost sight of in her desire to be up-to-date.

Some extracts from a letter I wrote to my brother from Japan after some months' residence in Tokio may be of interest:

“SAIZOIN TEMPLE, TERAMACHI, TOKIO,  
“15th July 1908.

“MY DEAR ERNEST,—My last epistle gave you a detailed account of my experiences as a sailor in a ‘coffin-ship.’ This

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one is to be an attempt to describe to you my life, my doings and my impressions in the land of the Rising Sun.

“Firstly, as to my residences of which I have had a great number. I have tried most places, from a boarding-house in Kandabashi—the student quarter of Tokio—at Y1.50 (3s.) per day, to a room over a greengrocer’s shop, or its Japanese equivalent, in the outskirts of the city at Y1.00 a day. This of course included food *à la Japonnais*—everything, from stewed octopus to raw seaweed. All, however, were too expensive for my frugal means, for I am saving to go to Korea and Manchuria. Hence my present abode—a Buddhist temple, which when all is said and done is as good a dwelling as any in which I have yet laid my head. And it is very peaceful. I pay thirteen yen a month, which being interpreted into English coin of the realm is 26s. This sum includes a Japanese breakfast (*asameshi*) and supper (*banmeshi*). You may possibly conclude from this letter that I am by now a fluent Japanese scholar. Far from so ; but I have acquired just enough of the colloquial language to get about, and to make my extra stupid *nesan* (servant girl) understand the necessity to take away my dirty linen to the wash instead of sending the few clean shirts I still possess. Some of the lower classes in Japan do not seem too richly endowed with intelligence.

“Well, here am I at the present moment writing you this letter, seated like the Sultan of Turkey, or as near the uncomfortable position as I can get, in the back room of a Buddhist temple, facing a rather pretty little pond in which big goldfish are swimming about. I offended the old guardian of the temple yesterday by suggesting I would like one of those fine, fat fish fried for my breakfast. The sense of humour in some of the inhabitants of the land is not what you would call highly developed. The old priest and I are great pals, none the less. I walk into the temple whenever I please, though of course I pay the same respect that I would to a church. The old chap reminds me of the smug parson at home—has a nice soft job and doesn’t care whether it snows ! Buddhism in Japan to-day seems to me to stand in the same relation to the intellectual Japanese as

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our modern dogmatic Christianity does to the intellectual public of the West.

“I am giving up seeking for romance in Japan ! Only the resonant and sonorous boom of my temple bell breaking on some of my solitary hours affects me sentimentally. It has a practical use, however, as it wakes me up in the early morning. Funeral ceremonies, too, now and then break on the quiet calm of my home.

“Romance in Japan is a false alarm. Lafcadio Hearn in his books supplied himself the romance he attributed to this country from his own acutely sensitive imagination. All his beautifully tinted pictures were false ; and before he died he realised the fact. Fifty years ago there may have been romance in Japan. I cannot find it to-day ; though I am always looking. Instead I find a hybrid land with a hybrid people. Always I am saying to myself now—I am born fifty years too late ! Everywhere I have yet gone I have met the one companion who is ever faithful—Disillusion ! Fancy coming to Japan for romance !

“If you came to this land to learn how to get rich quickly ; if you came to find beautiful spots desecrated by the ugliest specimens of twentieth-century ideals—advertisements ! ; if you came, I say, for such purposes, brother mine, then you will find what you seek—here !

“Cannot you imagine the despair and the almost murderous hatred that must be in the hearts of the old Japan-Japanese towards the West, when he sits and sadly gazes on what is—in the eyes of the West—the material progress of Japan, but in his eyes the slow decay of his country and of his countrymen ; the slow death of the nation's ideals and honour ; the slow passing away of the Japan of which he was a part. I sometimes wonder whether Japan fifty years hence will not curse the day that she chose to become a first-class power and miserable and did not remain a sixth-class power and happy. But I suppose the change was inevitable. Evolution must go on.

“I am now a Professor—we are all professors in this land—a teacher of English in one of the Tokio universities and in some





A GROUP OF STUDENTS IN THE MITSUBI BANK, TOKIO



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of the schools. I am secretly rather proud of a letter I have just received addressed to Professor Arthur Ridger, Esq. That's me !

“To teach in Japanese schools you must not drop more than three ‘h’s’ in one sentence ; further, if your students do not want to work, or to learn English, you must on no account attempt to persuade them. To do so is a breach of etiquette, as they might get quite offended, which would mean an empty class-room, and incidentally the sack—a thing to be avoided. A master’s position here rests on the verdicts of his students !

“I had at first some difficulty in getting a position owing to my arrival in the middle of a term, and I had only three pounds left between me and starvation when I obtained the billets I now hold. I received numerous promises amounting in salary to somewhere near a thousand yen a month. The jobs that materialised from these promises bring me in ¥150 per month—a slight difference ! This is a great country for promises !

“I get on very well with all my students. They are very diligent and hard-working and extremely courteous ; but, poor devils, they are shockingly overworked. The whole country is education mad, and the teachers, system mad ! The schools are turning out thousands of crammed youths, crammed with unassimilated facts and data ; crammed youths, physically weakened and mentally stupefied ! This is what modern ‘Education’ is doing for Japan : modern ‘Education’ that Ruskin says, ‘for the most part signifies giving people the faculty of thinking wrong on every conceivable subject of importance to them.’

“I never attempt to ask the students to prepare any work for me beforehand. I only try, by interesting them, to get them to speak English as much as possible. As it is, the conversation of the class is generally limited to one or two of the clever students, the bulk remaining silent.

“I teach in the mornings only ; and now and then in the evenings. My afternoons I spend in the *dojo* (wrestling hall) practising *judo*, or *jujutsu*, as it is more popularly known at home. I am still as keen as ever I was in London, for the exercise,

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apart from its other aspects, is so splendid. I am now the proud possessor of the brown belt. Oh ! that I were a black belt.<sup>1</sup>

“During my unoccupied evenings I prowl round the streets and byways of Tokio, watching the goings-on and doings of the bees in the busy hive. One gets in this way a good insight into the inner life of a country. One learns thus more of the customs, ideas and sentiments of the inhabitants of this country in six months than does the average resident in Yokohama in six years.

“I have visited Yokohama a few times. Beyond seeing the way the ‘Tired Titans of Commerce’—*i.e.* the residents of that treaty port—spend their time and money I have not seen much to attract me. It is a hybrid town : half-foreign and half-Japanese. It is on these ports that the inane drivel you must have read in so many books is based by their authors. The Japanese, in my opinion, are very unwise not to realise the harm done by these books. They still welcome them ; but they will learn !

“I thought before I came to this country that every other woman was shameless. Having lived here six months I honestly think there is no more immorality in Japan than there is in any other country ; at least, I have not yet observed it if there is. There is, however, certainly far less mock-modesty in Japan than there is in the West. But that is a matter for commendation rather than condemnation. This openness and lack of false shame is a good sign, and one that suggests a healthy moral atmosphere. Another fallacy I have detected is that every geisha is a woman of easy virtue.

“If you were to ask me what I thought of the Japanese I could not for the life of me tell you. At eleven in the morning I might tell you ‘Oh, splendid people !’ At noon I might say : ‘Heavens ! don’t ask me !’ The country is simply full of different types of people ; it is impossible to generalise. You will go along and meet a charming Japanese who will be so kind and sympathetic to you—a young stranger in his land—that you

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XI.

## IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN—THE JAPANESE

will feel ready to guarantee the nation. And you will then go another hundred yards and meet, perhaps, one of the worst types of Japanese the new *régime* has produced—and some of them are pretty bad ! To give you an instance of the latter :

“A little time back I called on one man, an English-speaking Japanese and a teacher of some ability in a night-school, though his students were, I should imagine, chiefly of the 'rickshaw-coolie type. I approached him for a billet ; but all I could extract from him were his inflated ideas of his knowledge of English and of his importance in his own eyes. I let him go on for a little. He showed me some awful doggerel he had written, thinking it poetry ; but when he told me that he had a greater acquaintance of English than had the average Britisher, I lost all patience—and then and there let rip all I thought of him and all I didn't. There are limits ! Between you and me I was half inclined to agree with him as regards his statement about knowing more English than the average Britisher ; for we egregious English know more about football than the intricacies of our language. It was the poetry, however, that got on my nerves. I will give you two lines of it : one though will be more than enough !

‘ To arms ! To arms ! The foemen come,  
The foemen come to make it hum ! ’

“I might just add that I didn't get a billet in that school.

“Thus, you see, life in Japan is such a mixture and so complex that you barely know your mind from one day's end to another. Still on the whole the Japanese are a very human and delightful people ; and, certainly, so far as I am concerned they have been everything that is nice and kind to me.

“Despite this, if ever I write about the Japanese, I will not demonstrate my gratitude for kindnesses received by donning the cloak of Ananias, by lavishing fulsome flattery on their heads and by magnifying their virtues. I will pen what I think is the truth ; and by so doing I shall accomplish some little good—if only by preventing the inevitable disappointment that awaits the visitor, who for the most part imagines Japan to be a

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fairyland peopled by a race of demigods, instead of a very human land with a very human people. No country has been more lied about than Japan !

“That the Japanese are a patient and long-suffering people you would not doubt for a moment if you saw the awful state of overcrowding that daily goes on in the trams of Tokio. I really think that the directors of the tram company must be fossils of the Shogun Age. Day after day, month after month, the same disgraceful state of affairs goes on—a discredit to a large city like Tokio. Trams, mostly the size of hen-roosts, pass by one crowded from the front to the back with people hanging on to the rails by their eyebrows, always leaving behind a little group of weary souls who eventually give up hope and plod home on foot ; or, if they can afford it, by 'rickshaw. But money is not so plentiful to-day in this land of depression and taxes ! The patience of the crowded-up passengers and the smiling courtesy and long-sufferance of the little conductor, as he collects the fares, are so admirable ! If I were one of them it would not be long before I engineered a strike and got those obsolete fossil-headed directors out of their fat jobs. But the worm will turn yet ! God help Japan when it does ; for she will need help ! Bureaucracy and Imperialism<sup>1</sup> are being overdone ; and when the pendulum starts to swing back there will be trouble.

“A newspaper here has paid me £10 for the extract of my diary from London to Tokio, and they are writing up a serial story of which I'm the hero. It swells my little capital, as also my head. The former now amounts to five hundred yen—I don't convert it into pounds as it sounds more in yen. I have not earned quite all of it, for a sporting birthday present from Mr T—— has helped to swell it to the huge proportions it has now attained. It's to take me to Korea and Manchuria.

“A little time ago I passed the newspaper office, where I saw the first issue of the serial story they are making out of my diary exhibited on the placard outside. My photograph was there also. Quite a little crowd of admiring Japanese was around. I

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XI. By Imperialism I mean Emperor-worship.

## IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN—THE JAPANESE

looked at the paper—it was in Japanese so I couldn't read it—and I looked at the people. Then in an awed whisper to myself I said : ' Here is fame at last ! ' Having reached in my mind the point where there seemed nothing much more worth living for, a sympathetic friend informed me of the contents. Thereupon I fled and hid my face for shame. Out of the brief extracts of my diary concerning my departure, which consisted of the date I left England and of the date that I arrived at St Vincent Island, the reporter had written three columns, containing everything from my sobbing in the arms of the captain on leaving home to falling overboard and swallowing a shark, or the shark swallowing me, I forget which. I have practised *judo* from then even more steadily than before ; for I am looking for that reporter.

“ I have received one or two letters from young Japanese from various parts of the country as a result of these newspaper articles. One of these letters informed me that the writer felt himself inspired by the account of my thrilling doings, and suggested that I should take him with me. It was rather an amusing request seeing how I am situated ; but, poor youngster, I fully sympathised with him, knowing myself full well what *wanderlust* will make you do.

“ Strange to say I have not yet felt one earthquake since I have been in Japan. The country is not living up to its reputation. It may be, however, that I sleep through them.

“ What can you make of all this, brother mine ?

“ ARTHUR.”

The last question in my letter I ask my reader also, with the hope that he may have gleaned a glimpse of my doings whilst in the capital.

At the end of the summer term I resigned my positions. Before starting again on my wanderings I spent a fortnight at Hayama, where I bathed and boated to my heart's content. I could write a chapter on those two weeks : on my wanderings in the lovely country round Kamakura just clad in soft kimona ;

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on my swims and sailing trips in and out of the inlets and bays. That fortnight of simple life did refresh me after the trying humid heat of the Tokio summer.

It was the end of July when I left Tokio bound for fresh woods and pastures new. My capital was just fifty pounds.

As many able writers have depicted the sights and scenes to be witnessed in Kyoto and Osaka, I will pass quickly on to Kobe where I caught an inland sea steamer for Moji. After the rains the country was looking very soft and green. Between Tokio and Osaka we encircled the foot of the sacred mountain Fuji San, its snow-crested summit shining white in the sun's rays.

I was the only foreigner on board the Japanese steamer bound for Moji, but I was surprised to find so many of the officers on board had a working knowledge of English. Taken on the whole, I think the Japanese are to be sincerely praised for the efforts they have made and their comparative success in communicating with the English-speaking West. I will not tell my reader that they are marvellous linguists, for they are not ; but in comparison with us English, whose linguistic talents are all but atrophied from disuse, they are.

The officers were all extremely courteous ; and this I have always found to be the case on every steamer, whether a coal tramp or liner, flying the pretty mercantile flag of Japan. On the other hand I must confess that I have observed a rather too lax state of discipline on many Japanese steamers, the quartermaster at the wheel in many instances apparently not thinking it out of place to join in a conversation that may be going on between the captain and one of his officers. The fault, of course, lies with the officers. I have noticed also, that though the Japanese officer is an excellent navigator and a competent sailor he is too often inclined to be careless.<sup>1</sup>

The steamer stopped at the many small places that litter the shores of the Inland Sea—places tourists never see, travelling as they inevitably do in the big liners that steam through these waters without a stop at seventeen knots an hour. The weather

<sup>1</sup> When off the coast of Korea I had a striking confirmation of this view.





JAPAN EN FÊTE



THE INLAND SEA



## IMPRESSIONS OF JAPAN—THE JAPANESE

was perfect, being hot and sunny ; and the miniature scenery of the coast-land was indeed picturesque. It looked its best in the warm light of the sun. Picturesque, however, as is the scenery throughout the Inland Sea, to say that it is the prettiest in the world is to my mind absolutely incorrect. I suppose we must thank some of those hysterical enthusiasts, who sprouted up like mushrooms in the wake of Japan's success over Russia and who even attributed to the Japanese a power wholly to abrogate natural laws, for the extravagant panegyrics on the beauty of the Inland Sea.<sup>1</sup>

At daybreak on the last day of July we anchored off Moji. Moji is essentially a coaling port, yearly growing in importance. Facing Moji is the town of Shimonoseki, the scene of the first foreign treaty with Japan. Many deep-sea steamers, coasting craft and fishing boats lay in the channel as we anchored. The steamers were being coaled. The method of coaling employed is very simple, but yet effective, thanks to the cheapness of labour. Coal, at the rate of thousands of tons a day, is poured into the bunkers of a big liner by the simple process of tiers of men and women passing up, hand over hand, small baskets of coal. It is as picturesque as interesting a sight to watch a large mail steamer being thus coaled.

I made but a short stay in Moji, and on the following evening embarked on one of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha steamers for Korea. I boarded the boat some hours before she sailed and watched her finishing the loading of her cargo, the bulk of which was Japanese bazaar goods. Japanese cigarettes were conspicuous.

A twelve hours' passage across the Tsushima Straits landed me on the coast of the mainland of Korea.

<sup>1</sup> I would rather my reader said, if Fate is kind enough to give him the opportunity of seeing the Inland Sea : " It is far more beautiful than I was led to think." I was unfortunately compelled to say : " It is not a tenth as beautiful as I was led to think."

## CHAPTER XI

### AN IMPRESSION OF JAPANESE SPORTS

I RECALL a Rugby football match in Tokio. It was between the team of Keio University and a "fifteen" from Yokohama, made up of young business men, mostly Englishmen. The Yokohama team, it is almost unnecessary to say, were quite untrained, as the life led by the average business man in the treaty ports of Japan is hardly conducive to keeping fit. The Keio team, on the other hand, were as hard as nails from constant practice, and the majority of them also were either rowing or *judo* men. The result, nevertheless, was a win for the visiting team.

The cause of this, apart from the fact that the Japanese are still more or less tyros at the game, was over-cautiousness. I can recall such a number of openings lost, such a number of opportunities of scoring missed, by the over-cautiousness of the Keio team. Their "threes," comparatively well fed by their "halves," seemed to be possessed of but one idea—of finding touch directly they got the ball. None of them ever attempted a dash for the goal line, and they seldom ran straight or gave their "wings" a sporting chance to do something. They could not see that offensive tactics are the best defence. At the outset of the game the Japanese team settled down to play a losing game, the order of the day apparently being "risk nothing, only try to keep them out of your 'twenty-five.'" The same spirit, if one may judge from accounts of observers, was apparent in the recent war.

Rugby football is, notwithstanding, making headway in Tokio; but I fear that until the Japanese player learns that he must use his head as well as his feet the Yokohama "fifteen,"

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untrained and unfit as it must always be, will never have much difficulty in defeating the best team Tokio can produce.

Baseball is, perhaps, the most popular foreign game amongst the young of Japan to-day. Judging from results the Japanese seem to have a special aptitude for it, as many of the American and Hawaiian teams that have visited Japan have been defeated by the various school and university teams of Tokio.

The Japanese, besides having thoroughly mastered the rudiments of this American game, have, further, well assimilated the American system of college yells and "rooting." To-day the technical terms of football as well as baseball come very pat from the mouths of both players and spectators. The Rugby phrases, "not straight," "picked out," "offside," etc., fall as glibly from the mouths of a Japanese "fifteen" and its supporters as from those of an English team and crowd at Blackheath.

Tennis, too, is very popular in Japan to-day. I was rather surprised, however, to find that it needed almost a Herculean effort to knock the balls out of the court. This is due to the fact that the regulation ball is but seldom used, a thin rubber one being used instead.

Rowing is also popular amongst Japanese students, and many keen contests take place on the pretty Sumida River of which Tokio is justly proud. Unfortunately the result of keen contests is often a free fight. It seems a great pity that friction should enter into play in Japan. Rioting occurs very frequently after a big game in Tokio. Indeed, to such a degree has the bad feeling between two of the leading universities in Tokio grown that the authorities have been compelled to put a stop to matches, or contests of any description, between them to avoid bad blood, free fights and general rioting.

This unsportsmanlike spirit is to be regretted; but I am inclined to think that it is only of a temporary nature. Japanese sense of fair play is by no means deficient, as is clearly seen in the playing of their own national games; for no people could be more scrupulously honourable than the Japanese in these circumstances. The rather unsportsmanlike spirit noticeable

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in the playing of foreign games is, I think, due to the incomplete assimilation of the new with the spirit of the old.

Everywhere in Japan, and in Tokio particularly, an observant resident can see illustrations of the transition stage through which the country is passing. The worst enemy of Japan could not deny that the Japanese, from the aristocrat to the coolie, are a very courteous race, and innately, not superficially so, as is sometimes suggested. I am referring, of course, to the politeness of one Japanese to another, and not to the attitude of a Japanese to a foreigner. On more than one occasion I have had the rather unusual privilege of living in the house of a Japanese family. There I have witnessed the extreme courtesy every member of the family extended to another, the courtesy with which the master of the house treated the 'rickshaw coolie, the courtesy of the little daughter to her playmate next door. Hence, though I know that many do not hold the same opinion but consider the courtesy of the Japanese to be mainly superficial, I maintain that the Japanese are most courteous people. But in a tramcar or in a train, foreign innovations, one sees quite a different state of affairs and witnesses plenty of discourtesy and rudeness. This in my mind is solely due to the incomplete blending of the spirit of the old with the conditions of the new. Unfortunately for Japan the spots where the visitor and tourist obtain their impressions of Japan and of Japanese are where foreign innovations are most in evidence. Few residents and still fewer visitors enjoy the privilege of dwelling in a Japanese gentleman's house as a guest, and it is really only from the home life of a nation that true impressions can be formed.

True Japanese sportsmanship can be seen in any of the national games, such as *jujutsu* (wrestling), *kenjutsu* (fencing), *kiujutsu* (archery). Also in *sumo*, another form of wrestling more popular amongst the lower classes. I have witnessed many competitions in these games, and have had many a bout at *jujutsu*; and have only the greatest admiration for the honourable conduct displayed and for the spirit of fair play that prevailed.



AN EVERYDAY SCENE IN JAPAN



JAPANESE WOMEN





## AN IMPRESSION OF JAPANESE SPORTS

It is in these sports that one can see the true spirit of the Japanese sportsman.

*Judo* is the modern and improved *jujutsu*—the sport of the Samurai. Some twenty years ago a certain Dr Jigoro Kano, after having studied all the different forms of *jujutsu* in various parts of Japan, founded the Kodo-Kwan of Tokio, which is to-day, one might say, the university of *judo*. Kano's style of wrestling—*i.e.* *judo*—was the outcome. Dr Kano was recently decorated by the Emperor of Japan for his services to his country; and no Japanese deserves greater honour.

The Kodo-Kwan still adheres strictly to the old customs and etiquette of the Samurai age, and the degrees awarded to its members are hall-marks throughout the whole length of Japan of their skill in *judo*; and, what is more important still, of their moral character. There are many degrees of excellence. Roughly speaking, there are three distinct classes, each class distinguished by a different coloured *obi* or belt. The highest class is the *yudansha* class. Its members wear a black belt. This class has seven ranks, the highest being *shichidan* (+ 7). Of this rank there are only two or three in all Japan. Of the rank below—*rokudan* (+ 6)—there are not more than a dozen. The lower ranks in this class are *godan* (+ 5), *yodan* (+ 4), *sandan* (+ 3), *nidan* (+ 2). The lowest rank is *shodan* (+ 1). The one who has gained the rank of *shodan* is qualified to become a teacher. Twelve hundred would, I think, more than total all the holders of the black belt. The class below the rank of *shodan* is the *muyudansha* class, which is divided into two separate divisions, the members of each wearing a different coloured *obi*. The higher class wear a brown *obi*, the lower a white one. The *muyudansha* class, like the *yudansha* class, is divided into various ranks, the highest being *ikkuyu* (- 1), the lowest *rokkuyu* (- 6). When the student reaches the rank of *sanyku* (- 3), he discards the white belt in favour of the brown and his name is then recorded on a small wooden tablet affixed to the walls of the wrestling hall, to remain there for the edification of posterity.

I seem to remember a popular fallacy prevalent at home with

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regard to this wrestling—that every Japanese one meets is, more or less, a *judo* expert. This is totally incorrect. Till a student reaches the *yudansha* class, or, in other words, till he gains the right to wear the black belt, he is no expert. Till he gains the black belt he is not even qualified to teach. *Judo* experts are as rare in Japan as expert boxers are in any Western nation. To acquire the skill necessary to become a teacher one needs four or five years of hard practice. There is no royal road, no short cut, to become a skilled *jujutsu* wrestler, as many at home seem to think. *Judo* is no occult secret, though I would not infer that *judo* has not its occult side. It has.

The etiquette of the Kodo-Kwan is very strict. Students in Japanese clothes can never enter its doors unless wearing their *hakama* (divided skirts). No student would dream of starting wrestling till he had made his obeisance before the photograph of Dr Kano which hangs over the daïs of the *dojo* ; nor would he be permitted to start wrestling before he had bowed ceremoniously to his opponent. The greatest respect is paid to any of the *yudansha* class.

On my joining the Kodo-Kwan I had to comply with an old Samurai ceremony of presenting two fans. I had also to sign my name in blood to a declaration to abide faithfully by the rules of the Kodo-Kwan and not to disclose anything I might learn within its walls.

At fixed periods of the year *shobus* (tournaments) are held, when promotion is decided upon. The umpire's decision is irrevocable ; and I do not think there lives a student in all Japan who would dream of disputing any decision. The spirit of *bushido* is seen at its best within the walls of the Kodo-Kwan.

The *judo*-trained Japanese is head and shoulders superior, morally, physically and mentally to the flat-chested, bespectacled, spotty-faced, weedy type of youth who talks glibly of economics and international law and is being turned out in thousands by the schools and universities of Japan to-day. The *judo*-man is a man ; but, alas ! he is scarce. I have met him abroad as a navigator, as a soldier, as a coloniser, and have the

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highest respect for him. Would he were counted in his thousands instead of in his tens. Japan needs more *judo* and less economics in the national training.

I happened once to be on a Japanese coal tramp. On the ship was a young Japanese clerk. We had coal on the decks in abundance. I suggested an hour's shovelling coal every day to keep fit. He replied: "Ah, the principle is good but . . . etc." I shovelled coal; he studied economics. I kept fit, he got jaundice. Exactly the same in life. We Britishers may not be so pat in enunciating principles and theories, but we do keep-fit. Japan's young men will quote you Stuart Mill for an hour and have chronic indigestion!

A rather startling fact came to my notice not long ago. One of the largest commercial houses in Japan lost the huge sum of nearly one million yen in one year through numerous embezzlements at their various branches. When it is further mentioned that this firm recruit all its employees from the highest educational institutions of the country, it should make the thoughtful person stop and ponder. The average clerk in Japan starts his career to-day full of ambition, and very properly so; but too often imbued with the idea of getting on—honestly if he can. In the modern get-rich-quick atmosphere of Japan such a spirit, without the restraining influence of a "play the game" spirit, is a dangerous one to hold. Also the inadequate salary paid to the clerk, in no way commensurate with the ever-increasing expense of living, is another source of danger—an ever-present inducement for the young man to start speculation, his first step downwards. Healthy sport is one of the best sheet-anchors for the young man—of the East or West.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME EXPERIENCES IN KOREA

**I** ENTERED Korea at Fusan, one of the principal seaports of the peninsula. Fusan harbour is really nothing more than a deep indentation in the coast-land, in the middle of which lies Deer Island. It is capacious, being about two miles wide, and with a sufficient depth of water to accommodate the largest vessels.

Korea at the moment of my visit was ostensibly an independent kingdom, though under the protection of Japan; to-day, of course, it is an integral part of that country.

On landing at Fusan I found the traffic on the railway between the port and the capital, Seoul, entirely suspended, as much of the track had been damaged by floods resulting from heavy rains. Korea yearly suffers great loss from floods—the inevitable result of the wholesale destruction of the forests. China suffers, too, in many parts from the same cause.

Two plans lay before me: I could remain in Fusan for two or three days till the railway was in working order again, or reach the capital round the west coast on a small coasting steamer. The latter alternative, though entailing a much longer journey, suited me very well, as the fare was much cheaper. I was ever in the position of having more time than money. This route also gave me the opportunity of visiting some of the small coast ports lying off the beaten track. So I booked a passage in one of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha's coasting steamers, as I had learnt by experience that where the O.S.K. flag flew I should find comfortable quarters and good attendance.

We sailed on the same evening, skirting the south and south-western shores of Korea. For the most part they were fringed

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with rocky islands and reefs, many of the former appearing quite uninhabited. In parts the scenery was very pretty, some of the islands being thickly clad with vegetation.

We anchored off our first port of call—Mokpo—late in the afternoon of the day following our departure. Mokpo is a small port on the river Yong San Gang, which waters the Chulla district—one of the wealthiest in Korea. The town was typically Korean. It was surrounded by the usual city wall and possessed its two settlements—that of the Koreans and that of the Japanese. The up-to-date and cleanly appearance of the latter struck me very forcibly in contrast with the former, in which the result of generations of corrupt rule was clearly seen.

Save for a lady missionary I was the sole foreigner on board. This good lady was kind enough to teach me a few phrases of the Korean language. At this port I seized the opportunity of trying the few words I had learnt, or thought I had, on some of the peasants I met in the fields outside the town. My salutations elicited, however, no response, apparently being perfectly unintelligible to them. Why I know not ! Unless it was my Korean was too *haikara*<sup>1</sup> for them, as the Japanese would say ; or else I murdered with true English linguistic stupidity the few phrases I had learnt. I drew blanks every time, till I gave up in disgust.

At sundown we steamed away, having discharged a few tons of cargo, chiefly Japanese bazaar goods. Another missionary—a doctor—joined the ship at Mokpo ; so there were now three Europeans on board. My two companions I found charming people—much to my surprise ; for I had lived too long in Japan to escape the generally accepted opinion of the worth of a missionary.

By daybreak on the next day we were anchored off Kunsan, situated at the mouth of the Yong Dang. It was at this port that the missionary doctor got off, and he very kindly invited me to visit his mission station whilst the ship was discharging. I

<sup>1</sup> The origin of this word is " high-collar," signifying fashionable, smart, etc. The letter " l " is ever a stumbling-block to the Oriental.

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gratefully accepted the invitation. Shortly after breakfast we made our way to the station which lay a few miles outside the town. Each of us took turns in riding the slow and ancient Korean pony that had been sent down to meet us. We passed through the little town, which was a replica of Mokpo, and wended our way through paddy-fields till we reached the mission, which was situated on high ground overlooking the town. After a rest and a chat I went with the doctor to his hospital. Many Korean villagers of all types were awaiting the doctor's arrival—patients who had come for treatment for every complaint, from a skin disease to a cyst on the eyelid. I watched the young doctor tending his charges. He was an indomitable worker, but withal a cheery one, the depressing atmosphere so often prevalent in such places and in such surroundings being absent. Sympathy and good-will were there instead.

After spending the day at the Kunsan Mission Station I bade farewell to the doctor and his family and rode the mission's ancient quadruped back to the ship. We sailed late in the afternoon for Chemulpho. We expected to reach this port within twenty-four hours. But Man proposed and God disposed, for before reaching this port we all but reached another—that of Davy Jones ! The steamer ran her nose at full speed on a rock—thanks to a thick fog.

A great element of carelessness, however, entered into this mishap. I had been with the captain in his chart-room when he was setting his course, and had noticed he calculated to pass the rocks on which we struck three miles abeam. He remarked to me on what a strong set there was running to the eastward off this coast ; in some cases, he said, as much as four knots an hour. The knowledge of this fact, coupled with a change in the weather, should have been enough to cause any careful navigator immediately to put the ship off the shore so as to be certain that she would pass well wide of the land. Apparently, in this instance, no precautions were taken ; hence the result.

Fortunately we only grazed the rocks. Had we been a few more feet to starboard we should have been a total wreck in a

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few minutes. As it was, the damage was limited to the ripping of a few plates. The ship was immediately anchored and we waited for the clearing of the weather.

The shock of the ship going aground nearly threw me out of my bunk ; it even woke me up. It also woke the Japanese captain ! Rather scantily clad I went on deck and found the crew swinging out the boats. The discipline and order could not have been better. The report that the ship was only making a few inches of water an hour soon convinced us that there was no immediate danger, as the pumps could easily keep such a small inflow in check.

Day broke. It still remained foggy. As the morning grew the weather cleared, and by noon we were able to see our surroundings and realise the narrowness of our escape. The ship lay *between* three large jagged rocks standing well out of the water. Had our steamer struck any of these full, her bows would have been stove in and she would have sank in a few minutes.

When the weather was sufficiently clear we weighed anchor and resumed our northerly course for Chemulpho. On our way we passed a capsized fishing boat, which at first sight looked like a dead whale adrift. The crew mistook it and were delighted, for to tow in a whale meant something in all their pockets. On the whale materialising into a capsized fishing boat their disgust was as great as their former jubilation.

In the afternoon fog again compelled us to anchor. It was a rather strange phenomenon—this heavy mist hanging over the sea notwithstanding the fact that the warm sun was shining brightly over our heads. But this is not an unusual occurrence off the coast of Korea, the cause being the meeting of different currents of unequal temperatures. The seas here need very careful navigation and are rather dreaded, as the surveying is incomplete. The currents, also, are both strong and erratic.

We reached Chemulpho by midnight after having stopped several times on account of fog. The captain was taking no more chances !

Only very light-draught ships can enter the inner anchorage

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of this port owing to the enormous rise and fall of the tide ; the outer one, however, can accommodate ships of all sizes. A large barge towed by a tug landed us in the morning, the ship lying about three miles outside.

Chemulpho, or Jinsen as the Japanese call it, is the principal seaport of Korea. It is also the port of the capital, lying on a small tributary of the Han, or Seoul River. In appearance Chemulpho is similar to the other ports in the south, though on a rather larger scale. Japanese enterprise was abundantly in evidence, and must be still more so to-day.

I caught an early morning train to the capital passing through well-cultivated land. The soil was very red in appearance. Much of the land alongside the railway was very swampy. These swamps, I was told, brought the Japanese engineers to grief when they were laying the railway. American engineers first surveyed the land and marked out the best route, bearing in their experienced minds the very possible danger of floods. When the Japanese engineers took over the proposition they thought they knew better ; they discarded the well-chosen path selected by the former surveyors (who, they forgot, came from a country that knows nearly the first and last trick of the railway trade), and they laid down the track on ground which certainly looked suited for the purpose. The result was periodical demolitions of the track by flood. In the end the Japanese were wise enough to adopt the discarded route.

We passed numerous small villages, surrounded by fields of melons, or perhaps I should say melon patches, that being, I think, the recognised expression. Some of the melon vines (?) were even growing on the thatched roofs of the houses in the villages. Apparently the various owners of these "patches" had no great faith in human nature or in the honesty of their countrymen ; for I remarked in the midst of each separate "patch" there was erected a small porch whereon a watchman sat to prevent any passer-by from wandering amongst the melons and appropriating some.

The high mountains overlooking the capital soon came in



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sight, some of them rising to a height of over four thousand feet. The city, encircled by its old wall, lies at the foot of these towering hills. After a journey of a couple of hours the train deposited us by the south gate.

I had brought with me from Tokio several letters of introduction to residents in the capital. So I spent the first morning presenting my credentials. Amongst those I met that day was the able editor of the *Seoul Press*, and the late Mr Ernest T. Bethell, who was then the editor and owner of the *Dai Han Mai Il Shimpo*.<sup>1</sup> Mr Bethell, with that charming hospitality really only known to residents east of Suez, invited me to be his guest just so long as I remained in Seoul. His invitation I most gratefully accepted and appreciated.

I had intended to make only a short stay in Seoul, but circumstances changed my plans. I was asked to act as foreign reviser to the *Seoul Press*, in order that the Englishman acting in that capacity might take a short holiday. On the day following my arrival I took up my duties on the Japanese newspaper as locum tenens to the foreign reviser.

Mr Bethell's house was the most picturesque bungalow in Seoul, charmingly situated outside the city wall. It stood on very high ground and commanded an extensive and most perfect view of the surrounding mountains and the valley at the foot. At the time of my stay the house was watched by Japanese spies.

The nights in Korea at this time of the year are singularly lovely. Their exquisite calm and softness remain vividly impressed on my memory. I recall the clear starry heavens above us as we lay outside, the lofty mountains silently reminding us of their presence. From the village that nestled in the valley at our feet the distant sound of Korean music faintly reached our ears, the softness of the night rendering less harsh the shrill falsetto notes. As the night grew on these faint noises hushed. Soon the lights of the village twinkling like fireflies in the darkness of the valley were extinguished one by one, and only the deep silence remained.

<sup>1</sup> *The Korea Daily News.*

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Though my stay in Seoul was of only three weeks' duration I had the opportunity of meeting many of the residents there. I was made by my host a visiting member of the Seoul Club, one of the most hospitable clubs I have ever visited in the East. From the members I received the utmost kindness and consideration—consideration for my youth, as well as for my limited finances. I appreciate this to-day as keenly as I did then ; for I was then only twenty-two years old and clubmen as a rule are not eager to indulge in the company of one of such tender years.

During my stay in the capital I made some very enjoyable trips round the mountains and in the outskirts of the city. A drive through the Pekin Pass that guards the old highway to China revealed some most beautiful scenery. A severe thunderstorm, on one occasion, caused my companions and myself to seek shelter under cover of the Imperial graves. There I saw some superb pieces of stone carving. Many pieces, however, were missing ; they had been stolen by greedy inhabitants.

Korea has fortunately not been on the list of countries to be explored by the tourist, but the life of the Korean and the sights of Seoul before the Independence of the Hermit Kingdom passed away have been very ably described by several authors—so well indeed that I will not attempt to add my impressions. The following chapter will give my reader a brief account of a phase of Korean affairs under the Japanese *régime*, with which I was in a small way connected.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IMPRESSIONS OF THE JAPANESE RÉGIME IN KOREA

**A**T the time of my stay the bad feeling between Japanese and Korean pervaded the whole atmosphere. The Koreans alleged, and with much truth, that the work and industries of the country were being gradually absorbed by the Japanese. The control of the telegraph, postal and custom services had already passed out of their hands. The *ginseng* crop (a valuable native drug) had also been taken over by the Japanese. This caused widespread discontent. To make matters worse the country was being flooded by hundreds of Japanese coolies and adventurers of the worst type, these latter being found to no small extent amongst the officials. None of these undesirable immigrants were actuated by any motive other than that of exploiting the Korean and his country. In fact, the Koreans said truthfully that the exploitation of Korea was going on under the guise of a Japanese Protectorate.

From 1905, when the Protectorate was declared, Japan embarked on the fatal policy of introducing a military administration into the country. She followed the example of most military nations and started her rule over the then not-unfriendly country of Korea by adopting the "mailed fist" policy. Instead of coming at the outset with outstretched hands and approaching the Koreans in a spirit of friendship and good-will and appealing by that spirit to the higher nature of the inhabitants, Japan introduced coercive and military methods. She used regiments of soldiers as her sole weapon to colonise the country; and in consequence appealed from the very beginning to all that was base and evil in the Koreans. As a result thousands of Koreans revolted and were shot down as insurgents.

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To put it bluntly, the Japanese *régime* in 1908 stood for wholesale pilfering of Korean soil, ostensibly for military purposes; for the gradual absorption of the industries of the country; and for the vigorous suppression of the insurgents. Through the introduction of this *régime* thousands of Koreans were in arms, and thousands of Japanese troops were patrolling the country "looking for trouble." Judging by statistics, they found it. For over fourteen thousand Koreans have been shot down since the Protectorate was proclaimed; and not fourteen hundred Japanese have fallen in this butcher's work. In the year 1909 alone over three thousand Koreans were killed, whilst the Japanese gendarmerie lost *eleven* men and *twenty-seven* wounded.

Never once has a prolonged appeal been made to the good in the Korean character. Bayonets and bullets have been preferred and have brought in their train only the undying hatred of a race once friendly to the Japanese.

This disastrous result was not unnoticed by right-minded Japanese politicians. The late Prince Ito, whose life was sacrificed on the altar of Militarism, was one of the few who perceived the deplorable state of affairs that had resulted from the military occupation of the country and the very unpropitious start that had been made in his country's first attempt to colonise.<sup>1</sup>

During this unhappy time the Koreans were not wholly without a champion for their wrongs. The late Mr Ernest T. Bethell filled this position down to the time of his death in 1909.

Mr Bethell was the editor of *The Korea Daily News*, a paper published in the country's vernacular and also in English (though the latter section had been discontinued some little time before I arrived in the capital). His Korean edition stoutly championed the cause of the oppressed native.

Before giving a brief *résumé* of the facts leading up to the two famous trials in Seoul—trials that should have opened the eyes of the Japanese as it did the eyes of others to the disgraceful

<sup>1</sup> The irony of it! Prince Ito, one of the best friends the Koreans had, was murdered by them.

## IMPRESSIONS OF THE JAPANESE RÉGIME

scenes and incidents that were being enacted by short-sighted and vindictive officials under the cloak of the Administration of Korea—I would mention that I have reasons for recalling out of the past a drama that reflected, one fears, but little credit on the fair name of Japan. The first is that I cannot fulfil my task and give an account of experiences and impressions in every country I visited if I were to omit this. The second reason I have is completely to clear the name of the late Mr Bethell from whatever stain or stigma might yet remain attached to it—the stain of charges that were made against him and were proved false; the stain of libellous reports that were maliciously circulated, reflecting on his honour and moral integrity. During his lifetime Mr Bethell needed no defender; now that he has passed away I put my pen forward in his defence.

During the years immediately following the Russian-Japanese war Mr Bethell through his newspaper exposed and brought to light many of the questionable methods employed by certain Japanese officials entrusted with the administration of the country. The Japanese authorities in Seoul, as would be naturally supposed, did all they could to get rid of one who was throwing the strong and undesirable light of publicity on their doings; but they could find no cause or just pretext for doing so. Telling the truth is not an indictable offence. It must be further remembered that Mr Bethell was a British subject, and extra-territorial rights<sup>1</sup> were still then in force.

At last, however, Mr Bethell unwittingly gave the Japanese the opportunity for which they had so long been waiting. His Korean editor—one Yang-Ki-Tak—foolishly inserted, without Mr Bethell's knowledge, articles about the assassination of Mr D. W. Stevens, Adviser to the Korean Government. It will be remembered that the cause of Mr Stevens' death by violence in San Francisco at the hands of certain Koreans was occasioned by the prevailing idea amongst most Koreans that he was a traitor, being in the pay of the Korean Government, and yet, they alleged, playing into the hands of the Japanese. The

<sup>1</sup> Abolished when the Annexation took place.

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action of the murderers was lauded by the bulk of the Korean nation as that of patriots and worthy of the highest approbation. This view had been embodied in a certain article, which had been published in a Korean paper in San Francisco ; and it was this offending article that was reproduced in Mr Bethell's newspaper by his editor.

The result of the publication of this article was the famous trial of Mr Bethell in Seoul for sedition : for "inciting to disorder." The case was tried before Mr Justice Bourne, who was sent up from Shanghai by the British Government, who had been approached by the Japanese and the Korean Government to take action against Mr Bethell. As a result of the trial Mr Bethell received a sentence of three weeks' imprisonment, as a first-class misdemeanant, for the political offence of sedition. It was rumoured that the British judge was instructed by the Home Government as to the sentence to be inflicted ; but, as I am confining myself to facts, I will say no more. It was, to say the least of it, highly indiscreet of Mr Justice Bourne to dine with Prince Ito the evening before the trial. One wonders what would have been said by the Japanese if it had been with Mr Bethell that the judge had dined !

At the trial some difficulty arose about the Korean witnesses called for the defence. The Japanese authorities therefore gave an undertaking that nobody should suffer for any evidence given on that occasion. Amongst those who gave evidence for Mr Bethell was his editor Yang, who was even congratulated by the prosecuting counsel for his straightforward and excellent demeanour in the witness-box.

Mr Bethell served his sentence in Shanghai, travelling down the coast *en parole* in a gunboat sent up for the purpose. On the expiration of the period of three weeks Mr Bethell returned to Seoul with the same purpose but more caution, and resumed the unprofitable task of championing the cause of the oppressed Korean.

Not long after Mr Bethell's return his editor was by a trick inveigled away from the premises of the newspaper office where

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he resided, and was arrested by the Japanese authorities. This was not exactly a straightforward action when it is mentioned that the only other method of arresting Yang was by application to the British Consul-General, as the premises on which he was residing were registered in the name of a British subject, and Yang was consequently protected, when there, by the laws of extra-territoriality. The only possible reason why this course was not adopted was that the British Consul-General might have required to be satisfied that there was some valid evidence against Yang-Ki-Tak, and that he was not being prosecuted for political reasons—such as revenge for the evidence given by him in the Bethell trial !

Yang, after his arrest, was subjected to what lawyers call a “ fishing ” examination. He was then formally charged with embezzlement of the money of the National Debt Redemption Fund.

Just a few words as to the origin and formation of this fund. In 1907 the Koreans started a fund which they, in their old-world innocence, thought might grow to such proportions that the amount collected would be sufficient to pay off what they owed to Japan. It was their belief that if this were done Japan would be compelled to pack up her baggage and evacuate Korea. Though the idea reflected somewhat on the intelligence of the Koreans, it demonstrated their patriotism ; for, to raise the sum, men freely gave money they could ill afford and women their valued trinkets and jade ornaments. Mr Bethell's newspaper was selected by the people as the best medium to receive their contributions. Notwithstanding Mr Bethell's wishes that his paper should not be made the medium of these subscriptions, money continued to arrive daily. Being powerless in the matter, he decided to put the fund on a business footing to avoid the squeezing that would otherwise inevitably occur. The amount held at the moment of Yang's arrest was considerable. As Yang was the Korean editor of the paper in question, the Japanese seized this as a pretext for his arrest.

Mr Henry Cockburn, the British Consul-General in Seoul,

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protested from the first against the manner of Yang's arrest, as it was a distinct breach of the assurance given by the Japanese authorities to Judge Bourne at the Bethell trial. His protest was, however, totally disregarded at the Japanese Residency.

This then was the position of affairs when I arrived in the capital. The next day my position became rather delicate, for I started as foreign reviser on the *Seoul Press*—the official organ of the Japanese Residency, and was at the same time the guest of Mr Bethell, who, to put it mildly, was hardly *persona grata* with the Resident-General. Members of the Seoul Club humorously dubbed me as the "spy in both camps." Both parties—my host and my employers—adopted towards me a scrupulously honourable attitude, each appreciating the delicacy of my position and in no way attempting to ascertain any information that I might hear of in the rival camp.

The first change in the situation was made through a foreign resident who obtained admittance to the prison where Yang was incarcerated, and discovered his shocking condition, resulting from the privations to which he was being exposed. The discovery brought another official protest from Mr Cockburn. It was again disregarded. Stronger steps were, therefore, taken. The British Embassy in Tokio was approached in the matter, and finally the Foreign Office in London. Indeed, it took all the resources of the British Consulate in Seoul, the British Embassy in Tokio, and the Foreign Office in London to obtain ordinary humane treatment for Yang whilst he lay in prison—an untried prisoner in the hands of the Japanese.

A remarkable incident now occurred as the result of these negotiations—the mistaken release of Yang by the Japanese. It happened a day or two after my arrival in the capital. Whilst we were at dinner a "chit" arrived for Mr Bethell, informing him that his editor had been released and was at that moment in his newspaper office. Immediately on receipt of this piece of information Mr Bethell went down to the office and there saw Yang, who, when questioned, could only say that he was told at the prison to go. He had needed no second telling, but had





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immediately taken a 'rickshaw to the newspaper office, that in his idea being the safest place.

It was not long, however, before Mr Bethell and his editor were enlightened. A posse of Japanese police arrived on the scene and demanded the immediate delivery of the Korean into their custody as he had been released in error. Someone had blundered! Mr Bethell flatly refused to hand Yang over. He raised the British flag over the doorway and told the police that they had better apply to the British Consul-General for permission to rearrest his editor. Application was consequently made by the Japanese Resident-General to Mr Cockburn for an order to arrest Yang on British territory. Needless to say, the British Consul-General refused to comply with this request, for, apart from the fact of his former protests against the illegal arrest of the Korean having been totally disregarded, he was further convinced that no just cause could be shown for the man's arrest. The Consul then referred the whole matter to the Foreign Office in London and at the same time advised the Japanese Residency-General that he would only act on instructions from home.

As a result of the firm attitude taken up by Mr Cockburn the Japanese journalists in the peninsula commenced a campaign, presumably without official sanction, of wiring to newspapers in Japan grossly libellous and insulting messages about the British Consul-General. Puerile and ridiculous information was cabled to Japan to the effect that Mr Cockburn's attitude with regard to Yang was caused by the fact that he himself, as well as some of his staff, were implicated in the embezzlement of the Korean funds of the misappropriation of which Yang had been accused. Furthermore, local correspondents of Japanese newspapers disseminated discreditable and false reports concerning Mr Bethell. The feeling of the foreigners in Seoul at this moment was unanimous in condemning the attitude of the Japanese Resident-General as undignified as dishonourable.

I myself visited Yang after his escape, or mistaken release, and found him a moral and physical wreck. Having confirmed to my satisfaction the facts of the affair, I attempted to warn

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the Japanese in Japan of what was really going on in Seoul. To this end I wrote a long letter to *The Japan Chronicle*, one of the leading dailies there. It was duly published.

Yang was finally delivered up to the Japanese by Mr Cockburn acting on instructions from the Foreign Office in London, who, however, insisted before he was handed over that the prisoner should be *promptly* brought to trial and be humanely treated.

During the interval between the mistaken release of Yang and his return to the Japanese the Consul-General had been the subject of the grossest slanders in the Japanese Press. When it is remembered that Mr Cockburn's attitude throughout the whole matter was thoroughly in harmony with the honourable traditions of the British Consular Service there is nothing surprising in his open letter to Mr Bethell on the subject of the shameful libels in the Japanese Press. This letter was published throughout the Far East; its concluding lines are worth reproducing :

“ . . . I think that you are entitled to a formal expression of my opinion, which is that the mere fact of a statement being telegraphed to Japan by a Japanese newspaper correspondent ought not to be considered as creating any presumption that there is the slightest basis of truth in it.”

It needed something more than ordinary abuse to extract from the representative of the British Government in Korea such a forcible expression of his opinion of the morality, or lack of it, of Japanese journalists.

Yang's trial took place in the Chief Local Court of Seoul a short time after his delivery up to the Japanese; and the trial resulted, as it only could, in the *complete clearing* of both Mr Yang and Mr Bethell from the charges which directly, or indirectly, had been preferred against them. Yang was triumphantly acquitted of the charge of embezzlement of the National Debt Redemption Fund and was released, after undergoing for several weeks the terrible experiences of a Korean prison in the

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heat of the summer, for which, however, no compensation or even apology was ever made to him. The whole affair from the beginning to the end threw an ugly light on the methods of the Japanese administration in Korea ; and the Japanese Residency-General suffered materially in reputation. It further illustrated how a large part of the Japanese Press was willing to publish any slanderous story affecting those who might oppose Japanese domination in Korea. In the open court Yang received a fair trial ; but is it too much to say that the sight of five foreign consuls alone revived the dormant sense of Japanese justice in Korea in 1908 ?

Much of the forepart of this chapter was written on the African veld and I had hoped that when I returned to the East to be able to conclude the chapter by saying that the harsh spirit of the Japanese *régime* in Korea of 1908 was a thing of the past. To my regret I am unable to do so. Korea is still under military domination. "Conspiracies" and "trials" are still the order of the day. Yang lies rotting in prison ; and Japanese justice in Korea is still the same as it was in 1908 !

## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM KOREA THROUGH MANCHURIA

**T**HROUGH the courtesy of the editor of *The Seoul Press* I was granted a pass over the Korean railway, which runs to Wiju from the capital through the north-eastern part of the country and to the borders of Manchuria. I caught the early morning train on the 21st August, bidding farewell to all those who had been so kind to me during my short stay in Seoul. I also took with me one or two letters of introduction to residents up north.

The train passed for the most part through low-lying ground, crops of millet and rice being much in evidence. Low ranges of hills lay on our right hand, bare, barren and almost entirely denuded of vegetation or timber. In many cases just one tree remained standing sadly in its loneliness—a silent witness to the folly of the Koreans. Korea in parts is practically deforested through the improvidence of past generations, which ruthlessly cut down the trees without let or hindrance and without any attempt to replant districts denuded of timber. Under the control of the Japanese, however, steps are being taken to reclaim great stretches of bare lands ; and I have heard that the Japanese House of Mitsui has secured extensive areas with this object in view.

On our way north we passed over many empty river-beds which, though then dry or nearly so, needed but twenty-four or forty-eight hours of rain to be converted into swollen torrents, which inevitably swept away the primitive wooden bridges. All the soil was of a very reddish colour, almost of a terra-cotta shade, similar to that I had observed in the region between Chemulpho and the capital. Much granite was

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noticeable. A peculiar physical feature of this northern part of Korea impressed itself on my memory. On one side of the river the bank was girdled with high hills which rose almost from the extreme edge, whilst on the opposite bank was low-lying ground; a mile or so down the river these conditions were reversed.

We reached Pingyang—the ancient capital—late in the afternoon, the approach to this walled city being made over a wooden bridge which spanned the river. The ominous creaking and groaning of the timbers and trestles and the swaying of the bridge under the weight of the moving train were anything but reassuring. I heaved a sigh of relief when we reached solid ground again. To-day an iron structure replaces that rickety bridge. It was exceedingly dusty round Pingyang and one's eyes became very sore from the reddish dust which every gust of wind blew up in one's face. By ten o'clock in the evening we reached our journey's end at Wiju, which is situated on the Korean side of the River Yalu facing the town of Antung.

I crossed the river that night—an undertaking far from pleasant, as it was blowing hard, miserably wet and very cold. So strong was the current that I sat in a sampan for over an hour while the coolies rowed me across.

I spent three days in all in Antung; and very profitably too. Antung, or Antung-ken, as the Japanese term it, is the starting-point of the Antung-Mukden railway.

It is a typically Chinese town, a faithful description of which, even if space permitted, would be entirely beyond my powers. It is the Chinese port of customs for Manchuria, the customs service being, as is well known, under the control of foreigners—a part of the masterly system which owes its origin and development to the late Sir Robert Hart.

The Japanese settlement in the town was of no inconsiderable size. The influence of the Japanese was even then very noticeable. To-day it is all-powerful. I caught sight of some of the timber that played such an important rôle in the late war lying on the banks of the Yalu.

The first evening in Antung I spent in a Japanese theatre.

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The plays staged were most appealing and interesting, despite the fact that I was not very familiar with the language. At the risk of wearying my reader, I will sketch briefly the plots—both from scenes of old Japan.

The first act of one play depicted a border quarrel between two *daimios* and their respective retainers. The second act showed us a poor *samurai* wandering about the country unable to buy food for his motherless little child. He placed the child on the border of the two territories and left in quest of work. The last scene illustrated rather touchingly the manner in which the wife of each *daimio* nursed the child on alternate days. Eventually the child became the medium for a reconciliation between the two hostile chiefs, who, in the end, became firm friends. The appeal to the audience, nondescript as it was, was good and wholesome.

The second play demonstrated to what an extent a *samurai* would sacrifice himself in the service of his lord. We were shown a *samurai* of high rank betrothed to the daughter of a neighbouring *daimio* who was, however, a deadly enemy to the *samurai's* liege. This latter sent our hero to spy on the enemy's camp. The last scene showed us the *samurai* carrying out his purpose, though it meant the denial and the abandonment of his betrothed in order to accomplish his lord's will.

The second evening in Antung was spent in a "music hall"; and I am not exaggerating when I say that I saw there as skilled performers and as excellent "turns" as I have ever witnessed at the Tivoli or the Pavilion in London. The programme was excellent. It included "turns" of jugglers, conjurers, trick-cyclists and a most uncanny mesmerist who almost gave one the creeps. The performers were all Chinese and Japanese.

The distance from Antung to Mukden is only one hundred and eighty-eight miles, and the fact that it then took two days to accomplish this journey was the best argument in favour of a speedy change of gauge. I had the good fortune to make this journey before the narrow-gauge line constructed during the war was discarded in favour of a broad-gauge track. I say good



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fortune, for the gain in comfort and time by the substitution of the broad-gauge is at the expense of the beautiful scenery. Many of the hills have now been tunnelled. The former line had, owing to the necessity for haste, been carried round and over the hills, from which an exquisite panorama was unfolded. The journey over this narrow-gauge line impressed me with the skill and resourcefulness of the Japanese engineers in laying down, in the short space of a few months during the war, a serviceable track, without boring a single tunnel—and this in a hilly and mountainous country!

To-day I believe there are more than thirty tunnels, the longest being nearly a mile in length. The boring of these tunnels will rob the present route of much of its charm.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the exquisite panorama of beauty that unfolded itself before the eyes of the traveller high up on those hills. Looking down, one saw the little red-earth track, the course of the railway, winding its tortuous course in and out shady valleys, green with luxuriant foliage, and waving crops of rice and millet through which silvery streams lazily wended their way to the distant mountains, their bluish tints blending with the waving yellow of the ripening grain. Weeping willows drooped in graceful languor over rippling streams, whose waters were dammed at intervals with barriers of stones to turn the primitive water-wheels for the homesteads. Here and there one espied the blue-garbed labourer working diligently in the fields; Manchu carts drawn by teams of all kinds of animals—oxen yoked with donkeys and mules, horses, too, whilst a drove of pigs sometimes followed in the wake.

Amidst all this beauty and peaceful calm there was constant reminder of the terrible carnage that these placid hills and glades had witnessed not so many months before. Little green mounds—the graves of the dead—met one's eyes on all sides. Rifle-pits and trenches, now covered with Nature's cloak, recalled scenes of blood and strife. We passed on our way numerous villages, which consisted of small huts built of stone, held together with mud, the walls plastered with chopped straw and clay.

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The presence of a foreigner seemed to excite a certain amount of curiosity and interest at the villages where we stopped. Small groups of naked toddlers, stolid-faced men, carmine-painted women and maidens with their peculiar Manchu head-dress, would assemble round my carriage and indulge in personal comment. Fortunately—for I was pretty sure that they were not complimentary—I was not able to understand their remarks.

In one range of hills the summits of five adjoining peaks were flattened with astounding regularity, giving the impression of turrets of an old castle. Most of the hills were thickly wooded, their purple and blue tints changing into and blending harmoniously with the green of the verdure and foliage. Slate abounded in some of the districts through which the line ran.

The walled town of Mukden is a long way from the railway station and it took me a full hour's drive in a Russian droshky to reach it. I put up at a Japanese hotel for other reasons besides that of economy, as one is always sure to find cleanliness at such places, if not exactly French cooking. To me, however, the eating of Japanese food was no hardship : my residence in a temple in Tokio had trained my palate to everything save raw seaweed.

I made a short stay of a couple of days in this city and obtained a glimpse into the life of the Manchus in Manchuria. A walk along the top of the massive wall that encircled the city gave a comprehensive view of the town and of the surrounding country. A stroll through the thronged and busy streets, the sight of the pig-tailed gendarmerie and military, impressed me with the great though still dormant vitality of China.

I had in my possession a "chit" to the American Consul from his colleague in Seoul, the wording of which was delightfully crisp and brief. Just the words : "My dear S——, I commend Mr Ridger to your tender mercies. Yours P——." Unfortunately the Consul was absent, so I missed a pleasant chat and a cocktail !

I met one or two very charming Japanese gentlemen in Mukden, and in their company visited Hokringo where the old



MANCHURIA: THE LITTLE RED-EARTH TRACK, THE RAILWAY WINDING ITS TORTUOUS COURSE



## FROM KOREA THROUGH MANCHURIA

tombs of the Manchu kings are situated. A pleasant drive brought us to the thick grove of pines which enclose the resting-place of the dead Manchu rulers reckoned to be many centuries old. Some handsomely carved images of dragons, elephants and horses lined the tiled terraces and courtyard, each image being carved out of one piece of stone. The tiles, though many hundreds of years old, were still in splendid condition, the glaze not a jot inferior to the best that our potteries can to-day turn out. Surreptitiously I appropriated a small piece.

The main line from Mukden to Changchun, the terminus of the Japanese railway, was then in course of reorganisation, and the supply of modern rolling stock was still very limited. I was fortunate therefore in catching a train made up of the newest type of Pullman car. The seating accommodation however was in the form of arm-chairs—very comfortable in the daytime but rather tiring at night, “sleepers” not yet being in use.

To-day all these small inconveniences are a thing of the past, for the South Manchuria Railway is considered to be one of the best-equipped and managed lines in any part of the world—a credit to Japan’s commercial men. Even “chronic kickers” would have difficulty to find fault or any genuine cause for complaint.

When leaving Mukden I caught sight of a vast expanse of little green mounds—the Chinese cemetery of the town. The Chinese bury their dead “topside”—above the ground, not below, as we do.

Well-built Russian houses lined the course of the railway with Russian names still in evidence. Japanese officials inhabited them, though looking somewhat out of place. One felt large-bearded Russians should have stood in the lofty doorways of those solid buildings, instead of dapper and rather consequential little Japanese officers.

Beside this evidence of the change of ownership trenches and rifle-pits, roofless houses wrecked by shells, together with many little groups of graves, reminded one only too forcibly of

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the blood that had been shed and the thousands of lives lost in the struggle that had occurred but three years before.

The crops were looking splendid. Manchuria, which I in my youthful ignorance had imagined to be an almost barren plain, proved to be one of the most fertile territories I visited. Tall waving fields of *kaoliang* (millet), flourishing crops of beans and vegetables, testified to the richness of parts of this country.

Numerous reports were then current about the raids and the damage inflicted by the Hunghutzes—the brigands of Manchuria. Instances of attacks on the train were not uncommon. The great height to which the *kaoliang* grows affords shelter for these robbers, who utilise its cover in their attacks on the villages.

We passed at noon Tiehling Heights, the hills there being pitted and scarred by the hurricane of shot and shell that had swept them during the masterly retreat of the Russians from their position. By eight o'clock in the evening we reached the terminus of the S.M.R.; just a short distance from Changchun is Kwangchangtsu, where the Russian sphere of influence begins. It will be remembered that in 1905 the Japanese acquired from the Russians the main line of the Chinese Eastern Railway from Dairen to Changchun, with its branch lines and the coal mines at Fushun.

A drive in a droshky in pitch darkness over the most execrable roads brought me to the temporary railway hotel, where to-day, I am told, stands one of the handsomest hotels in the East. I forgot to ask my informant whether there are some slightly improved roads. I sincerely hope so! It was not a drive; it was a series of jumps over miniature hills and dales, over young mountains and precipices, into youthful valleys and gullies. I reached the hotel, however, in safety—though breathless! My driver would have made his fortune in a London circus; the way he manipulated the reins and shaved corners and trees was remarkable. A drive through the town of Kwangchangtsu the following day revealed to me even worse specimens of “thoroughfares” than those I had negotiated the previous night.



MANCHURIA: A "ROAD" IN KWANGCHANGTSU





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I marvelled then how in that pitch darkness I had reached the hotel alive! As Oregon is always associated in my mind with picking strawberries so is the Chinese town of Kwangchangtsu with diabolical roads. The illustration produced but faintly conveys an idea of the thick mire and the general state of the ground. The heavy rains convert these so-called roads into morasses and when the winter sets in they are frozen hard in the same mould.

In this town I visited a Chinese theatre. I admired the handsome if somewhat showy dresses of the actors and actresses. I admired the energy of the orchestra. But most of all I admired the wonderful lung power of the principal artists! The chief impression I obtained was that the leading lady was endeavouring to sing to beat the band—not in the vulgar sense—literally! On more than one occasion she won—she drowned the band and I heard her voice. When she lost, or didn't beat the band, I only knew she was singing by observing the veins on her forehead swell almost to bursting point. At any indication, however, of her victory being too prolonged the band would be stimulated to further efforts, and, as Chinese instrumental music is decidedly powerful, a most terrible, deafening noise was the result.

It was in this part of the world that I met my first prince—a Russian. I had been given a letter of introduction by the Russian Consul in Seoul to Prince Mestchersky, the Consul in this town. He was a most charming man and as courteous to unimportant me as though I had been some distinguished traveller. He was also, I think, one of the most splendid specimens of manhood I have ever seen. He very amiably granted my request for a pass over the Russian line to Harbin, and if I had wished it would have extended it to the borders of Russia. I gratefully thanked him and diplomatically suggested that a *return* pass would fully meet my modest requirements. This was granted. Needless to say, this Russian official spoke English fluently and other Continental languages besides his own. I wonder if my reader shares the foolish and erroneous idea, unfortunately still so prevalent in England, that Russia has not her full share

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of accomplished and cultured gentlemen. I obtained, it is true, only a glimpse of the nationals of Russia up in this part of the world—the fringe of the great Russian Empire ; but it was enough to show me how foolish was the anti-Russian feeling that pervaded the British Isles during the late war—as false and as foolish as was the absurdly pro-Japanese sentiment. One fears that the very great ignorance of us British—our ignorance of every country beyond the little islands in which we dwell—is one of the chief causes of international ill-feeling.

I was a godsend to the one solitary European resident of the hotel, a Scotsman representing a Shanghai business firm. We beguiled many hours with games of American billiards, of which game we were both equally ignorant ; consequently we were perfectly matched.

The weather since my arrival in Manchuria had been very lovely—hot and sunny ; so taking advantage of the fact my companion and I on the following day, Sunday, took a stroll round the outskirts of the town. We obtained a good glimpse of the agricultural methods, as also of the products of the district. The crops looked very healthy. Melons, millet, beans—all were in a flourishing condition. Tomatoes grew well but no trouble seemed to be taken to tend them, much of the fruit simply rotting by contact with the soil ; doubtless the ubiquitous pig thrived on them.

A ten-hours' ride on the Russian line brought me to Harbin. Though only a few miles separated the Japanese railway terminus of Changchun from the Russian starting-point at Kwangchangtsu, the transition was almost that of Asia to Europe.

In the train to Harbin there were many Russian officers travelling north, and against their towering bodies my five feet eleven inches of fragile frame seemed quite eclipsed. In conversing with them, or in my endeavours to do so, I murdered the German language, as most of them knew no English. This part of the world is about the only place I have ever visited where English has been of little use. I had to blunder along with bits

## FROM KOREA THROUGH MANCHURIA

of Japanese and twisted Chinese and odd phrases of French and German. The fact that English is so universally spoken, or at least known, is, I think, the main cause that the modern Englishman's talent for learning any other language than his own has nearly atrophied.

The sight of some of the fine buildings of New Harbin and the general European tone of the town were very refreshing after months of Oriental atmosphere. The buildings looked finer than they really were.

Prior to the Russian occupation of Harbin and the building of the Chinese Eastern Railway, it was the site of nothing more than a small and unimportant Chinese village. The construction of the railroad, of extensive workshops and warehouses soon produced a change.

In Seoul I had been warned that Harbin was one of the "toughest" places in the East, or in the West for that matter, as the town was suffering from the slump that had set in—the aftermath of the boom during the war. The condition of things was certainly no better than that of which I had been told. My friend Mr Harrison's opinion of Harbin's morals, or lack of them, coincides with mine. He says <sup>1</sup>: "A word of friendly advice to the stranger in Harbin. Steer clear of dark corners! The Grouzin, or Georgian, is abroad in the land more especially when the sun has gone down; he is a walking arsenal of Brownings and poniards; is constantly on the lookout for lost sheep; and the belated wayfarer who is not punctual in his response to the sudden invitation 'hands up' (rookee vverkh!) as often as not never gets any further than Harbin. For unfortunates of this description there is certainly a ghastly appropriateness in the esoteric meaning of the word Harbin which is said to be derived from the Chinese 'Hoahin' meaning a 'big tomb.' These Georgians are the curse not only of Harbin but of all North Manchuria and East Siberia. They are never known to work and they are rarely without a good supply of hard cash."

Nevertheless living up to my motto of "not to look for trouble

<sup>1</sup> "Peace or War—East of Baikal?" (E. J. Harrison).

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

but be always ready for it," I roamed safely round the town, visiting in the evenings the cafés, listening to the music and watching the comings and goings of the many well-dressed Russian men and women. The sound of a violin was very refreshing after the unmusical *samisen* of Japan. Cinematograph shows were numerous, as also were the *demi-mondaines* that frequented them.

The town of Harbin has three sections : the New Town, Harbin Old Town, and Harbin-Pristan. The New Town is, one might say, the European or Russian part of the city ; in this part are the railway offices, banks and churches, etc. The Old Town is a poorer though more animated edition of the New ; whilst Harbin-Pristan is the real business quarter. The bean is the staple commodity. Harbin is also becoming yearly more important as a convenient export centre for flour and corn.

After an enjoyable stay of three days in Harbin, a stay made doubly pleasant by the kindness shown me by Russians and Japanese alike, I returned over the line to Mukden. Travelling south, I passed Liaoyang and Ta-Shih-Chiao, memorable scenes of some of the bloodiest fights that have ever shamed the world, and reached Dairen at daybreak on the following day. I was not at all sorry to leave the train.



MUKDEN: THE TOMBS OF THE MANCHU EMPERORS



HARBIN



## CHAPTER XV

### IMPRESSIONS OF DAIREN AND PORT ARTHUR

**I** FEAR my brief stay in Dairen, or Dalny, as it used to be called, was one on which I do not much care to look back. Save for a visit to Port Arthur and a brief moment of interest when the Chinese Viceroy of Manchuria arrived in Dairen, I barely moved from the hotel doors. I was both physically and mentally run down, and suffered from a black mood. Here I first realised that even a young man could suffer from overwrought nerves. Three months of nearly steady travel since leaving Tokio, including some twenty-one days on the railway, during which period my brain had been ceaselessly engaged in absorbing information, impressions and ideas, had quite tired me out. I was also beginning to feel the strain of twenty months of wandering in various countries in my unorthodox way, more or less penniless ; and to realise that I was burning the candle at both ends.

The garden-party given in honour of the Viceroy's visit, to which I was courteously invited, was a very pretty and successful fête. The Japanese are certainly ideal hosts. This raises a point to which I would refer. I have frequently heard it alleged that the Japanese are hospitable to strangers only from interested motives, ideal hosts only when it suits them. I do not deny that Japan is fully alive to the necessity of entertaining sumptuously and of being very agreeable to distinguished strangers from purely interested motives ; but what nation to-day is not equally alive to this necessity and does not do the same ? Japan can no more be accused of ulterior motives on this score than can England, Germany or the Argentine.

My travels through Japan, Korea and Manchuria testify to

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

the falseness of the accusation of insincerity in hospitality directed against the Japanese. Although I was merely an unimportant stranger in their midst, with no power to do them good or harm and unable to requite their kindness, I was generously treated by all classes, both official and private.

After my fifth day in Dairen I pulled myself together and visited Port Arthur. The sun was shining brightly. Everything looked very fresh. The hills, with the mountains in the background, appeared rich and green and the shining waters of the bay brilliantly reflected the sun's rays. But notwithstanding the peaceful aspect of everything, and though it was full three years since this celebrated fortress was in the awful throes of war it was not difficult to imagine the bay covered again with war-like craft vomiting showers of shot and shell ; to see again the hills draped in smoke through which could just be discerned thick masses of struggling and fighting humanity ; to hear again the shrieking of the shells, the booming of the guns, and the moans of the dying. Stern realities in the shape of roofless and dismantled houses, buildings with gaping holes, walls in ruins, supplied the necessary stimulus to one's imagination.

I first visited 203 Metre Hill, the scene of some of the bloodiest fights the world has ever seen or heard of. An hour's carriage drive over terrible roads, but through pretty country, brought me to the foot of this famous, or infamous, hill—the highest eminence in the chain which protected the west side of the town. The top of the hill was destroyed by the terrible fire that was poured on it ; its former shape is no longer recognisable. After nearly an hour's climb I reached the summit. The sides of the hill were everywhere scored and furrowed with shell-marks.

Nearly all the gruesome relics of the terrible conflict had been gathered up, though here and there I came across a fragment of a soldier's coat, a few bones and some rusty cartridge-cases. On the top of the hill stood the remains of one of the Russian guns, the stock of which had been shattered to pieces by a shell. The carriage consisted of only a few twisted and rent fragments





PORT ARTHUR: A JAPANESE MEMORIAL.



A FORT AT PORT ARTHUR AFTER BOMBARDMENT



## IMPRESSIONS OF DAIREN AND PORT ARTHUR

of iron riddled with shot. Tons and tons of powdered and splintered rock were strewn on the summit.

The hill commands a view of the whole of the western and most of the eastern part of the harbour, and looks down on all the fortified hills adjoining. Commanding as it does an extensive view of the surrounding country, the hill was the veritable key to Port Arthur. Its occupation by the Japanese sealed the doom of the fortress.

It was bad for the Russians that they neglected to build defence works on this hill ; for it was not till the two adjoining hills—174 Metre Hill and Takagaki—had fallen that they started fortifying this position. Lines of trenches and two lines of wire entanglements were then immediately made, the trenches being strongly protected with iron plates and rails. All the world knows of the desperate efforts made by the Japanese to occupy the ground : how they were repulsed time and again, leaving behind them companies of dead mowed down by the Russian fire ; how it was not till after weeks and weeks of terrible and madly heroic fighting, weeks of bombardment, and attack after attack, that the hill at last was captured. I was told by some Japanese officers that many of the Russian gunners went raving mad. All the Russian guns were trained on certain sights carefully measured. The flickering rays of the searchlight would reveal to the defenders a company of Japanese marching to attack. The deadly white ray of light would dwell on a mark, and when the attacking force came within the fatal zone the Russian guns would belch their hail of shot and shell. When the smoke dissipated there was revealed to the eyes of heaven just a mass of writhing mutilated humanity—*and another company of Japanese soldiers marching to their death over the dead bodies of their brothers and friends*. Fifteen thousand men fell on that bloody hill, eight thousand of them being Japanese. No wonder men went mad !

I next visited the north fort of East Kei-Kwan-zan. This fort was the strongest permanent works in this line of defence. Here it was that General Krondrachenko and most of his staff were

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

killed by one of the first eleven-inch shells used by the Japanese in their bombardment of Port Arthur. Terrible indeed must have been the fire and the force of the dynamite employed to break down the massive stone parapet and defences. Surrounded by a huge ditch the fort was all but impregnable. A mass of ruins, gigantic blocks of masonry lying here and there, twisted and torn girders, tons of debris and shattered stone, met one's eyes on all sides. Nature now has covered a great part of the wreckage with her peaceful cloak of green as though to hide from view the pitiful work of Man.

Returning, I passed the chain of forts adjoining, showing trenches and hills scored all over with deep holes caused by the bursting shells. These holes in the hills, viewed from a distance, presented a most peculiar sight. At the foot of all the hills could be seen little green graves banked with stone.

I concluded my visit to Port Arthur by inspecting the War Souvenir Museum. The building is surrounded by defence works, trenches, wire entanglements, etc., and gave one a good idea of how some of those redoubtable forts I had just visited must have appeared before being reduced to the condition in which they are now. Models also of all the forts can be seen by the enlightened visitor who wishes on his return home to talk glibly of abattis, parapets, etc. Captured guns and cannon, various weapons and war materials of all kinds, including scaling ladders, bomb-proof shelters and hand grenades (some made out of condensed milk tins)—in short, everything which the devilish ingenuity and perverted intelligence of Man has invented for the destruction of Man, gave one a vivid idea of the horrors of war !



THE HORRORS OF WAR



## CHAPTER XVI

### DOWN THE CHINESE COAST

I LEFT Dairen for China on the 14th September, sailing on the *Kobe Maru*, one of the new steamers that had just been put on the run to Shanghai by the enterprising South Manchuria Railway. On the morning of the 16th we entered the Yangtse.

One could hardly describe the Yangtse as picturesque, for its banks are low and flat and the water is very muddy in appearance. We anchored off Woosang shortly after noon and docked in Shanghai just before sunset. Woosang lies at the junction of the Hwang-pu and the most southern arm of the Yangtse.

Whilst in Shanghai I endeavoured to arrange a passage in some westward-bound freighter ; for I had now decided to make my way home by way of Boston, as I had pledged myself to visit my Alaskan friend there—and what was an extra two or three thousand miles to me then ? As my efforts were unsuccessful, I decided to return to Moji, in Japan, where I thought I should have a better opportunity of accomplishing my object, Moji being a much frequented coaling port. Furthermore, the greater part of my baggage still remained in Japan, where I had left it prior to visiting Korea.

On the evening of the 24th I left Shanghai in a Japanese coal tramp. After a smooth trip of two days we arrived off Kuchinotzu, where the steamer put in for orders. Receiving instructions to proceed to Miike to load a cargo of coal for China, we steamed for that port and berthed in the new Mitsui dock early in the morning. I spent a few profitable hours in Miike, gaining an insight into the coal industry. Miike is the Barry docks of Japan.

Travelling north I passed some very pretty scenery, the land

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

being in its autumn cloak. In the evening I reached Moji. I spent a few days here—fruitless days as regards the fulfilment of my object, but far from so in respect to the pleasant and restful time I passed in the quiet household of a Japanese family. And I appreciated the change after my tiring wanderings in Korea and Manchuria.

On the 5th October I said farewell to Japan. Early in the morning of the 12th the high Peak of Hong-Kong appeared in view, and by daylight we were anchored in the harbour. Disembarkation was decidedly wet work, as the north-east monsoon was blowing hard and a typhoon had been signalled the preceding day in the neighbourhood of the colony.

Perhaps a word about typhoons—the scourge of the Eastern Seas—may not prove out of place here. In the Far East typhoons are most prevalent during the months from July to October, that of September being the worst. From December to May they seldom occur, though a few have been reported during this period. Typhoons are most frequently met with in the vicinity of Luzon and Hainan Island (Philippine Group) and off the south-east corner of Japan—roughly, between latitude  $9^{\circ}$  N. and  $45^{\circ}$  N. As a rule the typhoon originates in the east to the south-east of the Philippines and travels in a west to north-westerly direction, at a rate of anything from five to thirty miles an hour. The force of the wind near the centre cannot be in any way accurately estimated; somewhere between one hundred and twenty to two hundred miles per hour. It generally seems to blow with the greatest fury when near the land.

To the navigator at sea the earliest sign is the appearance of a fluffy, feathery kind of cloud, of the *cirrus* type,<sup>1</sup> travelling from the east in a northerly direction. This, coupled with a rise in the barometer, and a clear dry day, is generally sufficient warning to the observant sailor. The usual ugly and threatening appearance of the weather which heralds the approach of most

<sup>1</sup> Caused, it is considered, by a rising column of moist air from the centre of the typhoon, or cyclone, condensing in the higher levels of the atmosphere.





HONGKONG : THE AFTERMATH OF A TYPHOON



## DOWN THE CHINESE COAST

storms then follows, with a confused and tumbling sea coming from the direction in which the typhoon is approaching. Within its immediate vicinity—the danger zone—there is great barometric disturbance (the barometric pressure sometimes falls to as low as 28·50 inches and subsequently rises as the centre recedes).

It is not customary, however, for a mariner to feel any great curiosity about the centre of a typhoon. If he be wise, directly he notices the indications that one is approaching, he goes full speed out of its track; and in these days of high-powered steamers it is not a very hard task, given sufficient time, to avoid the course of these disturbances. In the days of the old windjammer it was a more difficult task.

The United States Hydrographic Office issues monthly pilot charts of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and these charts are of immense assistance to the navigator in these waters. They give him a mass of valuable information regarding the prevailing winds for the month, their force and direction, the track of typhoons or other depressions, the force and direction of the currents, the last reported position of derelicts, etc. These charts are furnished free, as an equivalent for service rendered, to mariners who assist by filling in the daily weather forms issued by the United States Hydrographic Office in its work of collecting and distributing data.

Hong-Kong is one of the prettiest spots ever designed by Nature. The harbour is one of the finest in the world. It consists of a sheet of water between the island and the mainland of China and has an area of ten square miles. With its diversified scenery and shipping, it always presents an imposing spectacle. The town is picturesquely situated, the houses rising tier upon tier on the face of the Peak to a height of many hundred feet. The slopes of the island are now covered with young forests, the result of an excellent afforestation scheme of the Government, which has wonderfully improved the climate of the colony. At night-time, however, Hong-Kong is seen at its best, and affords a sight not readily forgotten.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

The climate of Hong-Kong to-day is as healthy as it formerly was the reverse, the improvement being due to the system of drainage, and the afforestation scheme referred to. In England the prevailing idea is that Shanghai and Hong-Kong are simply graveyards on account of the so-called deadly climate. That might have been true of these places fifty years back, but it is far from so to-day. If those who hold that opinion could but see some of the hale and hearty residents of these two ports, who have lived the best part of their lives there and have, besides, managed to raise very healthy offspring, they would, I think, very speedily change their erroneous idea. There is, however, one disease, with the germs of which the blood of all who have resided for any length of time in Cathay is inoculated. It is a disease that cannot be cured ; once inoculated, the blood is ever tainted. The disease is one known to the Eastern world as *maskeetis*. Its chief symptom is the victim's more or less complete indifference to the trivial worries and troubles of this world. It is the demonstration of the true Eastern mood. The young "griffin," hale, full of vim and vigour, is at first aghast at the inroads of this disease. In his youthful strength he despises it ; he next begins to respect it ; then fights it ; eventually, he succumbs to it. One example : the "griffin," after his first month is over, comes up against his first molehill, erected by an almond-eyed Chink. He fumes, he threatens, he blusters and swears ; then finally confides his trouble to one of his elder friends, who merely remarks laconically : "Well, maskee !" Disgusted at this lack of sympathy the "griffin" growls and withdraws. Another few months pass and his almond-eyed "boy" one morning blandly remarks : "Master have makee give away his one piecee watch ?" "What do you mean ?" ejaculates the startled "griffin." "Me no savee," calmly remarks the "boy." "Me no can see ; me thinkee you makee give to No. 1 nice girl." "D—n you !" bursts out the infuriated "future-taipan." "You catchee or I knock h—l out of you !" "Can do," replies the boy. "Me again makee look see." The watch is, of course, not forthcoming ; so again the young man



A MALAY VILLAGE



## DOWN THE CHINESE COAST

pours his tale of woe into the ears of one of his seasoned friends, who only replies: "Oh, maskee! Your boy's stolen it; sack him!" "No! I'll run him in. I'll go to the police now! I'll——!" His friends smile (they know the Hong-Kong police<sup>1</sup>) and remark: "Oh! maskee!" At this the goaded youth bursts out: "D—n! Life seems all maskee!" Quite right! youngster, you're wiser now than you were six months ago. Life is, indeed, all maskee!

I was fortunate in arranging from Hong-Kong a passage to the West. I struck a bargain with the captain of a westward-bound tramp to work as his purser to Boston and to pay the sum of twenty pounds. This saved me a good twenty pounds. There were now left only a very few pounds out of my initial capital of fifty; just enough, with careful handling, to get me home. The ship I joined was a spar-deck cargo boat, loading a general cargo for America. She had already part loaded in Japan and had yet to load in the Straits Settlements before starting her voyage westward.

When we were on the eve of leaving Hong-Kong, the approach of a typhoon was signalled. The typhoon cones were raised early in the morning. Towards afternoon the wind increased, and more ugly and threatening became the weather. The whole harbour was now emptied of its small craft. A few lighters lay alongside our steamer, from which we were quickly loading the last remnants of our cargo, the coolies working against time so as to get away. Pitiful almost was their fear that they would be detained too long! At last they cast off their lines, willy-nilly, although some of the cargo was not yet on board. All the steamers lying in the harbour had steam up; an uncanny air of suspense pervaded the atmosphere. All were waiting for the typhoon to strike. When the sun sank, it sank amidst clouds of fearful shape, all tinted with that ominous orange-gold hue, devilishly beautiful, but with a beauty that speedily puts the

<sup>1</sup> Hong-Kong is the worst policed city in the East. The babel and pandemonium at all hours of the night, its three-times-a-week robberies, would make a Moorish city blush.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

fear of God into one at sea! Towards midnight the wind increased into a gale. Our second anchor was dropped.<sup>1</sup> From then, however, the wind lessened in force. In the morning we learnt that the typhoon had passed to the eastward, Hong-Kong having just escaped from being in its track. Therefore only stormy weather had reached us.

By noon we had left Hong-Kong and were steaming south for Singapore. A smooth passage of six days brought us to that island. We anchored off the town shortly after daybreak and it was not long before the hatches were off and the winches busily hauling up cargo.

It took us eight days to complete loading. During this time I had plenty of opportunity to visit the town and its outskirts, though, apart from some beautiful tropical foliage, there was little with which to occupy one's attention.

We left Singapore on the evening of the 28th and steamed through the Malacca Straits for Penang. On the morning of the 30th we sighted the island and anchored off the town shortly after noon. The entrance to Pulo Penang needs careful navigation, owing to the mudbanks that lie close to the deep-water channel. Many fishing stakes also have to be avoided.

It rained for a good part of the time that we lay off Penang, and this considerably delayed the loading of our cargo, as much of the produce was perishable. The rainfall of the island is fairly heavy owing to the influence of the regular monsoons, and rain falls more or less during all seasons of the year. The climate is nevertheless not unhealthy, being somewhat similar to, say, that of the Canary Islands. The climate of Singapore, though lying just a degree north of the equator, is also good.

Penang settlement includes the island—about one hundred and seven square miles in area—and a strip of land on the opposite coast, known as the Wellesley Province; also some small islands, the Dindings. A narrow strait, varying from

<sup>1</sup> In the typhoons of '06 and '08 full-powered steamers lying in the harbour were *dragging* their anchors—and yet steaming full speed ahead!





SINGAPORE

INFORMATION DEPARTMENT  
OCT 3 1917

## DOWN THE CHINESE COAST

two to ten miles in width, separates Penang Island from the mainland. This settlement has been in British hands since the days of the East India Company, having been ceded to them in 1786 by the Rajah of Kedah. Penang soon eclipsed the settlement of Malacca, one of the Straits Settlements, and was elevated to the rank of a presidency. In 1826 Penang and Malacca were incorporated, together with Singapore, and all designated by the title they to-day retain. The increased prosperity of Singapore, however, correspondingly decreased that of Penang; so the principal seat of government was transferred to the former settlement.

Penang has a certain amount of importance as a convenient coaling and naval station. It is also the virtual seat of government for the Province of Wellesley, which must always remain an important centre of British influence. Penang's produce for export is not inconsiderable. Spices, cocoa-nut and tapioca are sent away in fair quantities and the island has also some trade with the Dutch Settlements in Sumatra. The betel-nut (the name "Penang" being the Malay for betel-nut) is also largely grown in the island.

We finished loading on the morning of the 2nd November, and by noon had started our voyage to America.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FROM THE STRAITS TO EAST AMERICA VIA SUEZ

**S**TEERING a course N. 85° W., we passed Pulo Perak at nine o'clock. The following day we had left the island of Sumatra in our wake. When out of the Malacca Straits we steamed due west. The weather was lovely, hot and sunny, yet cooled by the south-west monsoon, which was all but at an end.

As we were not going to coal until we reached Perim Island (at the entrance to the Red Sea), we had taken on board a large quantity of coal in Singapore; not only in the bunkers but also on deck. I used, therefore, to spend one hour every afternoon in the self-imposed task of shovelling coal from the deck into the bunkers. It was excellent exercise and also made me appreciate a good bath. I spent my mornings with the ship's papers—manifest, crew and custom lists, etc.—which kept me nicely employed. I fear by now much of the novelty of life on board a freight steamer had worn off; the old *Santolo* had helped considerably in that direction. Still anything in connection with the navigation of the vessel attracted me just as keenly as ever, and I spent many hours with the captain in his chartroom and with the officers on the bridge. It was not long before my purser's job was interpreted as that of fourth officer. Many evenings we practised the Morse Code, signalling to each other and to passing steamers. P. & O. mail steamers now and then condescended to answer us; we were only a tramp!

On the 8th we passed Point de Galle, the most southerly port in Ceylon, now quite outrivalled by Colombo. We ran in near the shore and signalled the ship's name and number to Lloyd's station there, with the request to be reported to our owners.

## FROM THE STRAITS TO EAST AMERICA

It was full moon that night. It had risen after a very beautiful sunset. There is a great peace and calm in the nights on the Indian Ocean.

After a week of lovely weather we sighted Sokotra Island. We kept well clear of the shore, as the currents are strong and dangerous, skirting the northern part of the island. It was not long before the African coast came in view. The north-east monsoon was blowing fairly hard when at daybreak, two days afterwards, we sighted the high mountains behind Aden. We passed within sight of the town, the sandy soil being clearly visible from the deck of the steamer. With the Arabian coast in sight all day we reached the island of Perim at sundown.

Entering Perim we had a very narrow squeak of going full speed on the rocks, owing to the steering gear jamming at the critical moment. When just about to enter, the captain gave the order to the quartermaster at the wheel to put the helm hard over. At that moment our attention on the bridge was attracted by certain signals that were being morsed to us from the shore. But only for a moment; for the fact of the ship's course not altering drew the notice of all. Turning to the quartermaster, the captain snapped: "Hard a'port—I told you!" The stupid helmsman—a Malay—replied: "No can turn, no can turn wheel!" In a flash it dawned on all of us that insufficient steam had been turned on; hence the wheel was jammed. I was the nearest to the companion-way, and almost before the words were out of the captain's mouth I was rushing aft, barking my shins badly in doing so, to turn on more steam on the steering-engine. The captain, immediately he saw the position, rang down for the engines to go full speed astern. Three times—four times—in his anxiety he rang for extra full speed astern. The ship's way slowly decreased—but oh! so slowly—and by the time the helm could be put over the steamer only cleared the breakers by a few yards. They were very anxious and trying moments! I can still hear the captain's heartfelt cry: "My God! I've lost my ship now!"

Perim, at the best of times, is not an easy port to enter, as a

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

very strong current generally runs athwart the entrance. The island is a British possession. It occupies an excellent position as a coaling station and from a strategical point of view is also important. Otherwise it is of small value; the soil is poor and sparsely covered with coarse grass and stunted shrubs. The island is of coral foundation, the subsoil being sand. All the coal stocked there is Welsh, imported by the Perim Coal Company.

By midnight we had finished coaling and shortly afterwards steamed out. Our course now lay through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, which are no more than fourteen miles at their greatest width. Just before daybreak we passed Mokha, one of the chief trading ports on the east coast of the Red Sea, in the Yemen province of Arabia. This is one of the Turkish possessions.

The Red Sea is of great depth—in some places being over one thousand fathoms—but is studded with rocky islets and hidden coral banks, even in the channel used by steamers. Cautious navigation is therefore essential. This is rather more the case in the southern than in the northern parts.

We passed one large group of rocky islands, the Zebayir Group, in the afternoon, and when dark we sighted the light of Jebel Teir—another high rocky island.

The shores on both sides of the Red Sea are flat and sandy, high ranges of mountains stretching behind on both sides. The Red Sea and its littoral might be almost termed a valley between two high ranges of mountains—the lofty tablelands of Arabia on the east and the mountainous heights of Africa on the west. The Red Sea is not exactly the colour the name would suggest. The origin of the name is familiar to us all—on account of so much red spawn of fish at times noticeable in these waters. Only once did I catch sight of patches of this spawn.

The weather was then fresh and cool. During the months of July and August it is not uncommon for the thermometer at night-time to register  $105^{\circ}$ ; indeed, the Red Sea during these months is, not even excepting the Persian Gulf, the hottest place in the world.

At noon of the fourth day we passed the island of St John and

## FROM THE STRAITS TO EAST AMERICA

a little later the large reef of the *Dædalus*. Early morning the day following we entered the Gulf of Suez. On the promontory that lies between this gulf and the Gulf of Akaba is the mountain group of Jebel Musa, which includes Mount Sinai. As no river of any description discharges itself into the Red Sea, it is not surprising that much of the region around is a rainless desert.

We anchored off Suez at noon of the 23rd, the passage through the Red Sea having occupied five days. The distance from Perim to Suez is about twelve hundred miles. Since the opening of the Canal the port of Suez has suffered considerably in importance and in trade. It used to be the seat of transit for the bulk of the trade between the East and West ; to-day but little commerce passes through its hands. Within a stone's-throw lies Port Tewfik at the entrance to the Canal. This port might almost be termed the port of the Canal, as all the Canal offices are situated there.

Having obtained *pratique* we entered the Canal. It was then sundown. We carried our usual lights in addition to a powerful searchlight installed by the Canal authorities at a cost to the ship of ten pounds. The powerful rays of the searchlight guided the pilot in charge of the steamer. At times this reminded me of steaming up the Yukon.

Suez Canal dues are a big item in the disbursement account of a ship passing through. Passenger dues are ten francs per head (adult), whilst cargo dues are charged on the net tonnage, by Canal measurement (crew-accommodation, engine-room space, etc., being excluded). The takings of the Canal Company for the year 1911 amounted to 134,010,000 francs.

After steaming for two hours from Port Tewfik we tied up at the first *gare* to allow a southward-bound steamer to pass by. No ship is allowed to steam through the Canal at a speed greater than five and one-third knots per hour ; otherwise the wash would soon destroy the banks, as the width in parts is under two hundred feet. No ship is allowed to pass another without one of them tying up. The pilot in charge alone decides which ship has the right of way. Mail ships have preference over all

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others—even warships. Consequently they fly a special signal—during the day a distinguishing flag at the foremast and at night a white light. No ship, except in the most urgent circumstances, is allowed to anchor; nor under any circumstances are ashes or refuse to be thrown into the Canal.

When we had tied up our searchlight and course lights were extinguished, four lights instead being shown on the side where the channel was clear. The outward-bound vessel passed within stone's-throw of us hugging the bank. Pilots have orders to run their ships aground rather than risk a collision, and the resultant damage has to be borne by the ship at fault. Though a captain is bound by the rules of the Canal to take a Canal pilot, the responsibility of the ship is still with him; for the pilot is only there to give the captain the benefit of his knowledge of the rules of the Canal and to advise him as to what to do. The pilot does not hold himself responsible for the steering of the ship, the correctness of which is of vital importance.<sup>1</sup>

Tying up once or twice, we passed through the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah and reached Ismailia shortly after one o'clock in the morning. Ismailia is the central station of the Canal; here ships may anchor.

From Ismailia we steamed through Lake Ballah, a lagoon, to Kantara; the banks here are lined with low sandhills. From Kantara the Canal runs through the old bed of Lake Menzaleh to Port Said. On the east side of the bed of this lake lies a dry, flat sandy plain, scarcely higher than the level of the water; the ground on the west is even slightly lower, banks of firm mud alone separating the Canal from the flood of this lowland consequent on a "high Nile."

We were moored off Port Said by nine o'clock in the morning. The passage through the Canal had taken us fifteen hours. Shortly after breakfast we began to coal.

<sup>1</sup> The Suez Canal being, as it is to-day, without a competitor, the authorities can frame rules on the "Heads I win—Tails you lose" principle. It is doubtful, however, whether this will continue to be the case when the Panama Canal is open.



## FROM THE STRAITS TO EAST AMERICA

Port Said has a very strict rule that steamers are not to sound sirens in any part of the port, except as alarm signals in case of danger. The ubiquitous warship even is requested not to indulge in salute firing. Salutes have frequently extinguished the light in the buoys, and on more than one occasion seriously damaged them.

We left late in the afternoon, passing on our way out the monument erected to the creator of the Canal—De Lesseps. Entering the Mediterranean we found a big sea running. For two days we had bad weather, squally, with strong winds blowing. Leaving the North African shore we sighted Candia Island early in the morning of the 28th. The sun was just rising as we passed abeam of the island and its early rays fell on the snow-clad hills, presenting a very picturesque scene.

The following morning we sighted Mount Etna. To avoid the strong current we steamed close in to the shores of Sicily, catching sight of pretty vineyards and white buildings, which recalled to me romantic stories of Sicilian life.

At midnight we passed Cape Bon and in the afternoon of the following day we had left in our wake the Fratelli Rocks. Towards sunset of the next day we sighted the town of Algiers. The nearer we approached the more beautiful it looked. By day Algiers is a most beautiful sight, the city, built like an amphitheatre, shining white in the sun's rays. By night it is—well, it is a second Hong-Kong! I cannot pay it a higher compliment than that.

As the day dawned it was a lovely sight to see the lights of the town paling in the light of growing day, till one by one they were all extinguished.

During the day I roamed about the town and was charmed with its beauty, as also with that of the country round. I came back to the ship in the evening, vowing that when I had made my fortune I would retire to Algiers.

Algiers seemed to me to be the meeting-place of the East and West; the life there is cosmopolitan and yet Oriental. The gay Frenchman and the dark-visaged Arab live side by side.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

I wandered through the native part of the town, peeping into the pretty courtyards of the residences. Numerous dark-eyed maidens would pass by, and though one could only see their eyes they were well worth gazing at. I spent the day murdering the beautiful French language and I can still recall the look of bewilderment on one tram conductor's face at one idiomatic (or idiotic?) phrase of mine.

When coaling was finished we steamed away. It was late in the evening and the lights of Algiers fading gradually in the distance were my last impression of that town.

At eleven o'clock that evening we crossed the  $0^{\circ}$  meridian, and I knew that I had completely encircled the globe. During my wanderings I had always gone west, never turning my face to the east for any length of time.

The day following our departure was very hot; the waters of the Mediterranean were like glass. In the morning watch we passed a small bark lying becalmed, not a breath of air moving her lifeless sails. Never was one more convinced of the progress—if only material—of Man in the last few decades than by the example given us in that poor old windjammer lying helpless at the mercy of the elements.

Skirting the coasts of Spain, we caught sight of high mountains covered with snow. The Rock of Gibraltar was passed just before sundown. We kept close in to avoid the strong current and so obtained a clear view of the fortifications and guns, and of the town a little distance away. We reported ourselves to Lloyd's station as we passed.

It was dark when we had passed Cape Spartel. We were now in the Atlantic, and our course was changed to west by north. After two days' steaming we began to feel a heavy swell from the north-west, which told us of approaching bad weather. The fiddles were now attached to the tables in the saloon and remained a permanent fixture till we berthed in Boston.

On the morning of the 9th we sighted and passed the Western Islands, better known as the Azores.

That evening I witnessed—for the first and only time—a rain-

## FROM THE STRAITS TO EAST AMERICA

bow in the *moonlight*. It was a very picturesque and unusual sight !

For the next three days we had moderate weather. We then ran into a strong south-west gale and the steamer shipped some heavy seas. Thenceforward we encountered very stormy weather—typical of the North Atlantic in mid-winter !

Strong westerly and nor'-westerly gales, many of hurricane force, met us daily, our run some days being very small. That of the 17th was one hundred and twelve miles against the normal run of two hundred and forty. The farther north we got the colder became the weather, hail and sleet squalls being frequent.

On the morning of the 18th we got out of the Gulf Stream. Its force, coupled with that of the strong seas against us, had greatly impeded our progress ; so much so that we found we were running short of coal and that we had not sufficient to take us into Boston. It was consequently decided to replenish our bunkers in Halifax, and the ship's course was accordingly altered. On the 18th a heavy snowfall whitened the ship's decks and riggings ; the whistle sounded continuously, so obscured was the weather, the danger of collision being accentuated by the fact that we were now in the regular track of shipping.

By night-time of the following day we sighted the lights of Halifax, having passed Sable Island early in the morning. No one on the ship had entered this port before ; so, when it was found that the flashes of Sambro Island light disagreed with the direction book for some reason or other, the captain decided to wait for daylight before approaching the land. The ship was consequently turned about and we " stood on and off " all night till daybreak, when a pilot vessel came out to meet us.

We were compelled to steam in slowly as a heavy snowstorm was blowing. The day of our arrival was Sunday, which meant we could obtain no coal that day. I obtained only a glimpse of the town under its snowy cloak, as I preferred to hug the fire in the saloon.

Coaling commenced at midnight and by daybreak we were under way again. We steamed south-west, skirting the coasts

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

of Nova Scotia ; by midnight we were abeam of Cape Sable—the extreme south-western point of that territory.

We had the worst possible weather with us till we picked up the Boston pilot off the lightship ; even then it was blowing a gale, which, however, hardly worried the staunch whale-boat that brought the pilot on board. As we entered the harbour we met many fishing trawlers outward bound, and I thought of what a hard and perilous occupation such must be in the winter-time, when gales and snowstorms are the rule and not the exception. So cold and so biting was the wind that the steam from our whistle, as it condensed into water, froze immediately into icicles ; all the steam pipes on deck were frozen, small fires underneath having to be kindled to thaw them out. Fancy fishing in that weather ! I thought that I would prefer to be a purser on a tramp rather than a captain of a fishing trawler in the North Atlantic.

By noon on 23rd December we were berthed in the docks in Boston, our voyage from the East of fifty-one days being at an end.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EAST AMERICA AND RETURN TO ENGLAND

OUR arrival in Boston was just two days before Christmas, so we were all hoping that we should celebrate the day on dry land, especially as our steamer had a good deal of cargo for this port. But no! with true commercial spirit the owners kicked us out late on Christmas Eve for New York, to avoid the waste of one day through the ship lying idle at the docks. I fancied I could hear the worthy shipowner in church on Christmas morn mumbling with unctuous voice: "We have done those things which we ought not to have done" and at the same time wondering whether the boat cleared in time.

I spent, however, quite a pleasant Christmas on board the *Asomihs*, with plenty of nice things to eat. It was certainly a much more festive Christmas than the preceding one, which was spent, it will be recalled, under the hatches in the old *Santolo*.

Our trip to New York was uneventful. It was early in the morning of Boxing Day when we picked up our New York pilot off Sandy Hook. Shortly afterwards I set eyes on the Statue of Liberty that protects so well the dishonest pork butcher and bank embezzler but not too well the poor waifs of humanity like you and me, reader. As we approached, the huge skyscrapers of New York in the distance looked like a row of tombstones!

We anchored off Staten Island after breakfast. Here I signed off the ship's articles and received my discharge; but, unfortunately, nothing more! I had to do considerable manœuvring to avoid paying head tax. Many were the seemingly casual

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

questions put to me by sundry immigration officials : " Are you quitting the ship here, eh ? " " Why, no, guess I'll do another trip in the old tub " was always my innocent reply. I had learnt my lesson well in 'Frisko.

Deep as are America's immigration officials, deeper still are her custom officers. What the latter do not know of " bumming " in general is not worth knowing. What a number of feelers were put out to ascertain from the purser of the *Asonihs* the dutiable goods there were on board ! And how kind it was of one custom officer to go to all the trouble of carrying through the gates the purser's kit bag with Japanese silk inside !

At first sight New York struck me as a very merciless place. I would not care to find myself stranded in that city. There seemed such a homeless aspect about things. Of course, New York's size rather tends to give a stranger that impression, particularly if he be not too well endowed with this world's goods.

Everybody in New York seemed to be very busy, especially those who were doing nothing. Really I think the much-talked-of " hustling " of Americans is just a big bluff. A man in the U.S.A. flies down at a breakneck speed in an elevator to save time, only to waste it with the " guy " in the cigar store at the bottom. He bolts his meals at a " quick-lunch " counter to idle an hour in a barber's shop. He tears out of the theatre before the curtain drops to fritter away half-an-hour in an adjoining saloon. I have an idea that more time is wasted in America by hustling than saved. A man who always looks busy is generally a slacker !

Barring meeting an Australian who spoke decent English, nothing very thrilling happened to me whilst in New York. I roamed round the city and got a glimpse of both its dark and bright side. The crowds everywhere were most cosmopolitan. However, in more than one street I caught sight of an Anglo-Saxon name over a shop ! What rather astonished me was the sight of horse-trams in one part of the city ; this was due, I was told, to some municipal technicality. I had one very good

## EAST AMERICA AND RETURN TO ENGLAND

luncheon in New York. That was in the Down Town Club. I felt quite like a New Yorker after it.

After a week I returned to Boston. Here I met my Klondyke friend, S——.

Of Boston I took away very pleasant recollections. It is a most homelike town. Other things than the worship of the Almighty Dollar occupy the minds of the inhabitants. The Bostonians are very cultured—and beastly aristocratic! One half of them owns ancestors who came over in the *Mayflower*; the other half possesses tombstones in Surrey and Hampshire villages. The *élite* call the town Borston!

One of the chief topics of conversation with visitors, who hail from a land where all are thought to drop their “h’s” and turn up their trousers, is the War of Independence. It is still fresh in the Bostonian’s mind, while that small episode of the dumping of tea-chests in Boston harbour wears the air of a comparatively recent occurrence. This latter incident my host, out of delicacy to my patriotic feelings, decided to call “a regrettable incident.” I did endeavour to suggest that we on our part regarded it as an ancient and forgotten joke—but I was not permitted to continue. I was certainly helped in thinking I was right after a chat with the mate of a steamer that was lying in the harbour. She was an English boat and the mate was a Yorkshireman. We were yarning on sundry subjects when I suddenly asked him: “Tell me, where is the spot the tea-chests were dumped overboard?” My companion gazed vacantly at me for a moment; then replied: “What tea-chests?” *Verb. sap.*

I spent New Year’s Eve at a smoking concert. To the strains of “Auld Lang Syne” we fraternised and forgot all past “differences.”

The weather in Boston was very cold, though bracing. I felt the cold extremely after the heat of the tropics. All the houses were steam-heated and sometimes became unbearably hot. Particularly was this the case with the offices. It is not surprising therefore that American doctors reap every winter a good harvest with cases of “grip.” “Grip,” I would mention for the

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

benefit of those uninitiated in the mysteries of the American language, here means a species of influenza ; and not a Gladstone bag (as I informed the reader on an earlier page).

My stay in East America was too short for me to gain any very deep impression of either New York or Boston. But both towns gave me the desire to visit them again ; and I could express this wish with regard to few cities I have visited. I particularly want to live in New York again—to beat it ! By that I mean to conquer that weakness of feeling at a loss there. With Boston I want to renew my acquaintance, if only to meet again my charming hosts and other kind friends.

On the 10th day of January 1909 I boarded the *Carthagina*. After ten days of snow, rain and wind, I reached England and landed on its shores with ten shillings in my pocket.

I was very tired, physically and mentally. The *wanderlust* that had been so strong in me was all but dead ; the fires that had once raged so fiercely had nearly burnt themselves out. The desire to rest was strong ; but it was not yet that the young adventurer was to become a staid citizen of the land that gave him birth. Fate decreed that he was still to wander—and to learn !



**PART II**



## CHAPTER I

### BOUND FOR THE TRANSVAAL

ON the morning of the 10th of April 1909 I made my second departure from England.

It was about noon when the *Goth* slowly swung out of Southampton docks. The day was lovely—one of the real English spring days ; about the first, however, I had experienced during my brief stay. After friends on the quay were out of sight, all of us on board began to size each other up. There were on the ship the usual number of returning South Africans, and many like myself bound for the Transvaal and Rhodesia, driven from our own country by the stagnation of trade. Of these there were half-a-dozen who were going out to join the B.S.A. Police ; though none of them, I would wager, are still in the corps. The police life of the old African days is gone—never to return !

We had a delightful trip out and enjoyed lovely weather, which was very welcome after the bleak, raw days most of us had spent in England. We sighted Table Mountain early in the morning of 1st May, and berthed in the afternoon at Capetown. I made a three days' stay here, whilst waiting for a steamer to take me to East London. I spent my time in making pleasant trips to the outskirts of the town, some of which are very beautiful.

On the 4th I left by the *Walmer Castle* for East London, where we arrived after a three-days' passage, having stopped for a short while at Port Elizabeth, in Algoa Bay, to discharge some cargo. At this port the steamer lay out some distance from the shore, as we were unable to cross the bar at the entrance of the harbour. A big sea was running, so the few passengers who landed here were transferred to the steam launch in baskets—

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

the usual method in use along this coast when the weather is too bad to allow of the ordinary way of embarkation.

East London lies on the River Buffalo and is the shipping port of Kingwilliamstown. It is the chief outlet for the produce of the Eastern Province of the Cape Colony and also for a portion of the Orange River Colony. Wool, ostrich feathers, hides, etc., are exported in yearly increasing quantities from this port.

A short train ride took me to Kingwilliamstown, better known to the inhabitants of Cape Colony as "King." In "King" I made a week's stay with my brother. "King" is a *dorp* to all those who do not live there. Those who do elect to call it a town, and to them the lights of East London on a Saturday night say the last word of splendour and magnificence. Johannesburg is regarded by them as an unknown world, full of traps for the innocent. The smaller the *dorp* in the colony the more particular are the inhabitants. Old Mrs B. will not speak to Mrs H., because Mr H. when alive was an insurance agent; and was not Mr B. when alive a retired gentleman? Old Mrs B. conveniently forgets that when her poor departed husband married her he was but a penniless Transkei trader and that it was only by years of patience and systematic swindling of the natives that he had amassed a small fortune. Such is Vanity Fair in Cape Colony!

After a week's stay in these exclusive circles I caught the train for Johannesburg. I passed through great stretches of grassy plains in the Orange River Colony, crossed the Vaal River, and shortly was made aware of the proximity of the great mining industry of the Rand by the gleaming headlights of the mine shafts. When nearing Germiston (a few miles from Johannesburg) the roar of the pounding stamps of the batteries sounded like the booming of the sea on a rocky shore.

My train journey from the south was uneventful save for the loss of my felt hat, which I had had for so many months that it had become quite a good friend to me. Its disappearance certainly did credit to the sleight of hand skill of one of the

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occupants of my compartment, *all* of whom helped me most industriously to look for it.

One old Dutchman a short while afterwards poured into my youthful ears reams of advice to beware of the guiles and of the deceitful ways of that wicked town Johannesburg. I kept thinking that if he would give me up my hat it would be more to the point.

My first impression of the mines and their terrible-looking shafts, through which the damp foetid air came up from below, was not very cheering. My thought then was that not for one hundred pounds a day could I ever compel myself to go down those shafts. If anyone at that moment had told me that it would not be many weeks before I was going underground daily in that cage, the descent of which suspended by its one quivering wire rope I was then watching, I should have told him bluntly that he was a liar.

I had brought out with me a few letters of introduction. I ought to have known better; of course they proved to be useless. Johannesburg with its type of successful business man was at first sight not flattering. I formed the opinion, which with but slight modification I still retain, that there is no town where a man can starve more satisfactorily than in Johannesburg, or where the iron of non-success can more quickly enter his soul. However, my talents (?) found an opening at last, when I was about to part with my last sovereign. One of the mines just outside the town—the Robinson Deep—had a temporary vacancy for an assistant storekeeper at twenty pounds a month. This billet I was fortunate in securing. The sum of twenty pounds a month may sound a fortune to out-of-works in England; but I have never yet met the man in South Africa who has for two consecutive months saved anything out of that salary.

I obtained a room, quite unfurnished, in the single men's quarters after waiting two or three weeks. I remedied deficiencies by introducing two empty fuse-boxes from the mine store, a bed and a red lamp-shade. The latter gave quite a *distingué* air to the room, its rays softening some of the too apparent "chips"

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

in my furniture. My room became a show room ! When I purchased some cretonne to cover up one of the fuse-boxes I was solemnly warned by a pal not to go any further, as one of the manager's friends would " come, and see, and covet " ; and this last would mean the sack for me.

After holding the position for a little over four months, till its rightful owner returned from leave, I found myself facing the alternatives of starving or of going underground. During my term in the store I had, so far as my poor efforts could, left no stone unturned to obtain some position of permanency, however small, on one of the mines, or in Johannesburg ; but so tight was, and is, the market for " intellectual labour " (as we unskilled labourers without capital term what others irreverently term " pen-pushing ") that all my efforts had been quite unsuccessful.

I chose underground mining in the end, having a foolish notion that the familiar expression so often heard amongst young men on the Rand that " it is better to starve than to go underground " was ill-founded. Hence, the end of December saw me a " learner " underground. But I left the Robinson Deep before my three months' apprenticeship was up, as the mine was too unhealthy. The damp and dust tried too severely my not over-strong throat.

A period of two or three weeks' inactivity intervened between leaving the Robinson Deep and joining the Geldenhuis Estate—an " outcrop " mine, consequently a more healthy one. This period of inactivity I again devoted to trying to secure a surface billet in some mine office or in town. Again I failed ; and I remained a miner on the Geldenhuis Estate till the end of April 1910.

## CHAPTER II

### LIFE IN JOHANNESBURG

**J**OHANNESBURG is the New York of South Africa in point of modernity and cosmopolitan character of its inhabitants. It is, further, in its meteoric rise the Dawson City of Africa. Founded on the discovery of gold, it has grown from a few tin shanties to a handsome city in just over a quarter of a century. Where, less than three decades ago, was a small mining camp with hard beaten tracks over which long teams of oxen laboriously pulled their loads, to-day stands a well-built town with excellent roads, over which run the latest models in motor cars.

The dwellers in Johannesburg and its outskirts along the Reef hail from every corner of the globe, though the Far Eastern representative in the shape of the much-missed Chinaman is no longer to be seen. Every nationality, from the Polish Jew in all grades of success and cleanliness to the backveld Boer, goes to swell the human hive in Johannesburg. Every type of Britisher, from the unpopular Cornishman to the "slim" Australian; every type of American, from the rough Colorado miner to the up-to-date Boston engineer; every type of coon, from the raw Matabele to the Lovedale-Christianised nigger, is to be met with in the streets of Johannesburg. The town is popularly known as Jew-burg, because the Chosen wield such a vast power in the mining world of the Rand. I would add, however, that it is generally acknowledged that a Christian is far better treated by a Jewish firm than he is in a Christian house in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg obtained its reputation for wickedness, which to-day it struggles to retain, during the war and the few rosy

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months that immediately followed. This unenviable reputation dies hard. I may, perhaps, be guilty of libelling the town and its citizens when I say that I have always considered Johannesburg not so much a wicked city as a mock-moral one. Johannesburg is more tight-laced in its laws than any town of which I know. Liquor laws are more rigorous than those in a country village in England. The town is well equipped with places of amusement, clubs, churches and saloons. The saloons are the most popular and are consequently numerous. Of clubs the Rand and the New would put into the shade many similar London institutions. They are, however, out of the reach of the average man who was not in Africa during the diamond days of Kimberley. The Union, which is one of the town's most popular institutions, is his club ; for is it not the only place where he can get a whisky and soda on a Sunday ?

There was a boom in "dime" shows, or cinematographs, in the years of 1909 and 1910 and it did no little harm to the Empire—the local London Pavilion. Johannesburg possesses two theatres, where the not over-fastidious audiences are charmed with the reproduction of second-rate London comedies.

Of hotels there are plenty, some first rate and others not so. The Carlton is considered the hotel of the town. Once a white elephant, it is now earning dividends, though on a much reduced capital. The building and its fixtures would certainly not disgrace a European city. The Carlton monthly dance is quite a popular feature. One is the guest of the management for the evening and has to pay no more than the price of supper and drinks. The dances are always gay and popular and much heartburning is felt by the uninvited. I have seen there some marvellous frocks and creations, and some very nice girls.

In Johannesburg one can get all sorts of dances—from a five-shilling "hop" in Braamfontein to a select private dance in Parktown. Of the former I am competent to speak ; though not of the latter. In the Transvaal I have always been one of the submerged hundred. In the five-shilling "hops" the only



## LIFE IN JOHANNESBURG

restriction was that dancers must not use their hobnailed "King-Miner" boots.

Food is very cheap in Johannesburg. You can get a good meal there for a shilling, with a glass of beer thrown in. You can also get exactly the same—perhaps a little worse—for five shillings. "Blackings" will serve you the former, whilst a few swagger restaurants offer the latter. The Trocadero is a very popular resort, particularly on Saturday and Sunday nights when the town is full. Music, prettily shaded tables and quite a good menu persuade you, if only for a few minutes, that you are a gentleman and not a miner, who, of course, could not possibly be one ! The Anglo-Austrian Café is another very popular resort where one can hear excellent music, and is, indeed, the only place of the kind that I know of in Africa.

Saturday night in town is the night of the week. Pritchard Street is the Saturday night meeting-place for men from all parts of the Reef. From Boksburg to Randfontein workers on the mines flock here to meet their friends. It is with an effort one makes a way through the crowds. There are only a few women but men of all ages and descriptions. Snatches of conversation are overheard from little groups of men talking together. "What ! have you left the Simmer ?" "Yes ! that son of a —— of a mine captain fired me" is the reply you have just time to catch before you are in the midst of a little group of yongs (*i.e.* young Colonials) who are heatedly discussing the merits or demerits of the football match that afternoon on the Wanderer's ground. Having heard a few of the opinions of these young football experts (and young South Africa does know how to play Rugby) you elbow your way through a group of typical miners. One hears : "I 'knocked out' seventy last month, but I shall be —— lucky if I make thirty this." "Cut you ?" "Of course, they did, the ——." Words quite unintelligible to a stranger in this little world of mines and miners ; but not to the man who is part and parcel of it.

You go on elbowing your way, catching stray remarks of those

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who are "fired," are "shiftbossing," are "tramming," and are "fed up," the latter type being by far the most in evidence. During this stroll down Pritchard Street you have glanced up once or twice at the tea-rooms to see if anyone you know is there. Strains of the fiddle reach your ears above the noise and chatter, and as it sounds attractive, in the distance you decide to have a drink. You select the "Balcony" tea-room. You ascend the stairs and walk into a tastefully decorated room, full of little tables, round which gossiping groups of men are seated. Only one or two of the fair sex are present. On both sides, overlooking the lively streets, runs a balcony, also full of crowded tables. You stroll leisurely round, nodding here and there to those you know, till you find a seat disengaged. This is rather a hard job at times. After a few minutes—more or less—a haughty young lady arrives at your table and demands your order; sometimes she asks what you would like. You are, however, at that moment fascinated by a brilliant pair of—no! not eyes—but socks, of which you have just caught sight. You trace them to their owner; and, should one be a stranger in the town, he may rest assured that he has set eyes on one of the gilded youths of Johannesburg. His salary is easy to appraise. The stranger will think that it must be at least that of a mine secretary, possibly that of a mine manager. No! stranger, you have not yet the key! Learn that—in Johannesburg—the lower the salary the more gorgeous the socks! Those socks over there are "worth," perhaps, fifteen pounds a month in a lawyer's office.

On withdrawing your fascinated gaze, you are horrified to find the haughty young lady still standing beside you, with a martyr-like air and a sort of don't-let-me-hurry-you-sir expression on her face. You apologise and order a lactobaciline. Quite a non-intoxicating drink, don't think it is a new cocktail! Lactobaciline is only sour milk, an imitation—and not always a very successful one—of African calabash milk. Your drink and bill arrive simultaneously. Johannesburg's motto is: "God we trust; all others cash." Ignoring the bill, you take a swig of

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the concoction, after having given it sugar and nutmeg. The band has now started playing again. You know it has, for from your seat you can just catch sight of the fair 'cellist's head. The queer noise that reaches you occasionally makes you doubly certain. In the Balcony no one listens to the music ; but at times it helps to drown the conversation of a noisy party near, when you are trying to impress your fair companion with the truth that but for hard luck you ought to be filling the shoes of a manager, who is, of course, a fool ! The clear atmosphere of Johannesburg must contain a germ of dissatisfaction, for nearly everyone who lives there is at times fed up. If a man gets sacked, it is because (so he says) he was fed up with the job. If a lawyer loses his case, it is because he, or the judge, was fed up at the time. If a miner, stopping in an " outcrop," blasts down half the manager's garden and the henroost, it is because he was fed up with the manager or the hens—more likely the former ! If the secretary of the golf club loses a match, it is because he was fed up. I was nearly always fed up myself when in Johannesburg, and considered that I had every cause to be so. But the strange thing about it is that all the others are equally sure of their hard case.

Having sat in the Balcony for half-an-hour or so—it is now nearly nine o'clock—you stroll out again into the street. The crowd is thicker. You direct your steps to the Anglo-Austrian, where you will be bound to meet someone you know. There's also the chance of meeting the man who owes you a sovereign. You push your way through the crowd and reach the café. You go downstairs, hastily glancing at the mirrors that line the staircase to see if you are looking as much of a wreck as usual, or whether the new socks suit your complexion. You go in by one of the swing doors and are possibly detained because a polite youth is doing acrobatic feats in attempting to hold open one of the swing doors, while the two majestic ladies he is escorting are endeavouring to pass underneath his arm without spoiling their gorgeous hats. When this scene is over, you nearly get your face smashed in by the youth who, thinking he has done all

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politeness demands of him, slams the door behind him. You have just time to avoid it, and silently, though fluently, bless the youth, who is now guiding his two flushed charges in their search for an empty table.

You stroll in and find a seat without much difficulty, as your needs are small. Should you be a stranger you will gaze round and think that you have possibly entered a Turkish bath establishment instead of a café. It is not so much the atmosphere, though that is thick enough with smoke from numerous pipes and Natal cigars, as the white-tiled walls which so forcibly remind you of a bath-house. Though ugly, the Anglo-Austrian is one of the most popular resorts of Johannesburg, and is, as I have already said, the only place in the town that provides an opportunity to music lovers to hear some really good music. The orchestra only consists of two violins, a 'cello, a flute and a grand piano ; but notwithstanding the limitations, one can hear some of the finest music ever written. Music is provided every afternoon and evening, but on Tuesdays and Fridays solos are added to the usual programme.

You have by now found a seat and sit down ; not comfortably, for the wire chairs of the Anglo-Austrian are notorious for their discomfort. I think they must have been designed for the express purpose of keeping you from outstaying your welcome, or, in other words, your sixpenny drink. A lady, whose coiffure is a special feature, approaches and supplies you at your request with a *café mélange*. You pick up the programme and find the next item is " Poet and Peasant." A sympathetic audience applauds when the piece is over. An awful din and clatter of spoons on saucers further denotes the audience's appreciation. The musicians smile and look pleased, but do not respond to the cries of " Encore " as it is Saturday night. Whilst waiting for the next item, you gaze round to see whom you know. The place is very crowded, as it nearly always is on Saturday and Sunday nights. The stream of people coming in and out is an attractive sight to a student of human nature. You espy a family man who is taking out his wife and kiddies for an

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evening's enjoyment. You nod to him, for you know him as a shift-boss from your mine. Presently you notice a young fellow, whom you know very well, coming in. You catch his eye. He comes over to your table and sits down opposite, having just forestalled another man who was going to take the empty chair. We exchange news, or "swap lies," as is vulgarly said, till the next item is played by the orchestra.

Presently two Italians—Dagos they call them on the Rand—come and sit opposite us. It is easy to surmise their occupation from their worn and white faces. They are developers in the mines. A developer's life is worth about ten years—*c'est tout*. It is now half-past nine, so we stroll out and discuss on the kerbstone our next movements. We notice absently the flaring lights of a moving-train cinematograph show on the other side of the street, and are jostled by passers-by, till at last we decide to go to the Carlton and have a drink, as lactobaciline and *café mélanges* are not stimulating enough for a Saturday night. We reach the Carlton and edge our way to the bar, which is now crowded with theatre-goers, "half-time" being on. We order whisky-sours—the latest thing in cocktails—which, like some of its brothers, has a nice red cherry. We exchange a few words with men we know and in the crush you lose your shortwhile companion. You stroll out shortly afterwards alone and wander back to Pritchard Street, which you find fast emptying, most of the respectable citizens having now gone home. You make your way to Market Square and find it is nearly eleven o'clock; so you decide also to go home. You catch your car, which leaves every fifteen minutes, to Turfontein—and one more Saturday on the Rand is passed!

. . . . .  
A Sunday in Johannesburg is a thing to be avoided! It is the slowest, and, incidentally, the driest thing in Africa. Should, however, circumstances elect that you live in Johannesburg, you will probably sleep well into the Sunday morning, unless you are feeling energetic enough for a round of golf or a game of tennis. You will be dressed and out by eleven o'clock,

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

when you will wander to Market Square, there to get a "shoe shine" and to wonder what the deuce you will do with yourself. If you are a member of the Union Club you will decide to go and get a drink. If you are not you will try to find a pal who is. If you can't do that, you will, as a last resource, decide to go to the public library and there skim a few of the home papers till you feel hungry enough to have some lunch. This idea is as suddenly dismissed as it came; for you remember that the library is only open when the busy man can't get there, and that on Sunday—when quite a few might avail themselves of it—it is shut!

Your boots are shining, your tickey paid, and the question, "Where shall I go?" is still unanswered. You eventually decide to go to the Wanderer's ground and see if there is any tennis worth watching, after which you will go and bask in the sun (which always shines in the Transvaal) in Joubert Park. This you do; and the green grass and luxurious flowers are a welcome contrast to your usual surroundings during the week—the mine dumps! Here you decide that you will go out to the Zoo in Eckstein Park in the afternoon and see some more green things. You return to Pritchard Street and go to "Blackings," where you get quite a good meal and a glass of beer for a shilling. After finishing your alfresco meal, you catch a car marked Parktown. It is a perfect day and so you take a top seat. You pass down Eloff Street and, however much you think you have a grievance against the town, you cannot help remarking on the number of well-built houses. Turning round by Park Station—the station of Johannesburg—you pass through Braamfontein, one of the growing suburbs of the town. If you are of an observant turn of mind you will remark on what a vast amount of galvanised iron must have been used to build up the town, not to mention the thousands of tons used on the mines themselves. I cannot recall a house in Johannesburg, whether it was the mansion of a mine magnate or the dwelling of a miner, that possessed anything but a galvanised roof. Most of the houses you pass in Braamfontein are small five-room dwellings,



JOHANNESBURG *en fête* AT THE TIME OF THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT'S VISIT





## LIFE IN JOHANNESBURG

though of a rental value of seven to ten pounds a month. With this in mind, it is not much to be wondered at that a living wage for a married man residing in Johannesburg—not on a mine—is at the minimum of thirty pounds a month. When a man has to pay about one hundred pounds a year for a small house, for which he would only pay thirty pounds a year in any suburb of London, it is not hard to realise the expenses of life in Johannesburg. A “tickey” (threepence) is practically the smallest coin in use, its purchasing power, roughly speaking, being that of a penny in England and a nickel (five cents) in the States.

With these thoughts in your head you immediately dismiss the idea of a plunge into matrimony which the sight of two happy-looking lovers had suggested to you, and turn your gaze upon Ohlsson’s Brewery, which the tram at that moment is passing. It seems a far more sensible object on which to concentrate wandering thoughts. It is not long before the tram descends into the valley round which Parktown lies. Here one obtains a lovely view. Houses of every style of architecture, mostly of the old Dutch type—very picturesque—lie here and there in graceful confusion, their iron roofs painted in dark colours, some red, some green and some black. In the distance can be seen the great clumps of Australian blue gums, which thrive so well on the Transvaal soil, forming a very picturesque background.

You alight at the Zoo and wander contentedly about, listening to the band and to the roaring of the lions in their cages. Lying lazily on the ground amidst the shady trees in some quiet spot you pass some restful hours, till the setting sun and an empty stomach remind you it is getting late. You catch a return car, and, by the time you are once again in the heart of the town, it is nearly seven o’clock and quite dark. You decide to go to the “Troc.” and there have dinner. As you are alone you are bound to find there some kindred spirit equally lonely. If you haven’t been there for a month or two you will make a sporting bet to yourself as to whether the waiters have been

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

changed again or not ; whether the Indian waiters are still there, or some " democratic," consequently insolent, white waiters in their place. Entering, you find the place full.

A look at the waiters tells you that you owe yourself a half-crown. The waiters are unchanged ; and it is over three weeks since you were there last ! As you expected, you know many of the people. A first glance produces two lawyers, with whom you have—fortunately—only a nodding acquaintance. There are, *on dit*, more lawyers than criminals in Johannesburg. Uncharitable folks do add that it is hard to discriminate between them. You further notice a shift-boss dining his fiancée at one table. You ignore him, however, with a contemptuous look, as he sacked you a few weeks ago ; of course, quite unjustly ! No man since the Reef was discovered has ever been sacked for any fault of his own. You further espy your whilom companion of last night toying with a monocle and some claret. As you also notice that he has with him two pretty girls, whom he is entertaining, you deduce that his state of funds will be at a very low ebb by the 15th of the month. You envy him nevertheless, and nod.

You are in flannels ; many are also. But the opposite seat to you is suddenly taken by a splendidly dressed youth who hurls at you a withering glance. He has quite a pretty girl with him, so you do not wither up but just take a glimpse at his socks and her left hand. A quick mental calculation tells you—an engaged couple, youth worth seventeen pounds ten shillings a month ; probable date of marriage—never !

Presently in strolls a man in flannels with golf clubs slung over his shoulder. He has won his match, it is easy to see, as he is looking so cheerful. You beckon to him as you know him rather well (he is your brother), and he joins you at dinner. The music has been playing at intervals. The rays of the pretty shaded lights falling on the cheerful Sunday crowd, coupled with a bottle of Hermitage (the brother has won his match) recall to mind scenes of London, memories of the Savoy.

After dinner you stroll over to the Anglo-Austrian and find

## LIFE IN JOHANNESBURG

it packed like a herring barrel, the atmosphere here being worse than a London fog. The martial strains of the Overture to "William Tell" greet your ears as you enter. They nearly always play this masterpiece of Rossini on Sunday evenings. The fog is the smoke of the finest smoking tobacco in the world—Boer tobacco. After an hour's stay in the café, chatting with sundry, you stroll down towards Park Station.

A more energetic Sunday on the Rand can be spent in a morning's round of golf on one of the many sporting courses in and round Johannesburg. An afternoon of tennis on the fast red-earth courts, followed by a lazy evening in the Mine Recreation Hall, playing a game of billiards—this is, perhaps, a more typical Sunday in the Randite's life.

Church does not enter his programme, though it is on record that two brothers once met each other, accidentally, one Sunday evening in a Johannesburg church! A dweller on the mines, however, feels he needs a little more stimulant than a discourse on the dispensation of the Mosaic Law.

## CHAPTER III

### MINES AND MINING ON THE RAND

**T**HE gold-mining industry of the Rand is as well organised an industry as can be found in any part of the world. To-day the Rand is the largest gold-producing centre, for it has had at its disposal for many years the greatest engineering intellects the world could supply. The result is evident in the modern methods and up-to-date machinery now in use for the extraction of the gold from the reef at the minimum of cost. The reduction of working-costs is the question to which all the energy and skill of the mining engineers have been directed. Year by year a noticeable reduction has been effected, till the low figure of eleven shillings per ton, and in some cases a figure even lower, has been reached.<sup>1</sup> To obtain this result, however, the ruthless cutting down of expenditure has been necessary, chiefly in the reduction of staffs and of wages ; and the use of the latest labour-saving appliances and up-to-date machinery has brought about the last word in economical working. It might be truly remarked that at length the shareholder's interests are being regarded, that the investor has at last come into his own. The days when the mines of the Rand were run for the benefit of a select few are gone—never to return ! The days when handsome salaries were paid to underworked staffs, when miners earned their cheques of one hundred and fifty pounds a month, and then grumbled, are also gone !

One of the great handicaps to the satisfactory and cheap working of the mines is the shortage of native labour—the unskilled labour of the mines. The repatriation of the Chinese hit

<sup>1</sup> The average cost per ton on the Rand is, however, higher than eleven shillings ; roughly, eighteen shillings per ton.

## MINES AND MINING ON THE RAND

the Rand industry severely. To those unacquainted with South Africa this fact would appear a very remarkable one at first sight, in view of the millions of blacks in Africa. But when one looks a little closer into the matter this factor of shortage of native labour is not so surprising as would first seem. Several causes combine to create this state of affairs. The chief cause is the native's natural fear of going down into the " deep hole " in the ground. Tales of death, by the dreaded mine consumption and by accident, reach the native's ears in whatever far-away district he may live, and are magnified in transit. Another important factor is the native's natural laziness. A Kafir does not like regular and systematic work. If he possess a sufficiency of wives, enough to till his lands and provide him with his few wants, he is content. Lastly, it must be recalled that the mining industry, though the chief industry and at present the mainstay of the Union, is not the only industry that needs the labour of the country. Already the agricultural section of the community is crying out that its labour is being absorbed by the Rand.

The one great drawback on the Rand is the uncertainty of employment and the instability of a white man's position. Men in subordinate billets are more or less sure of holding them, so long as they do their work properly ; but those in higher and more responsible positions have daily the fear of dismissal hanging over their heads. A change of management is generally the forerunner of numerous dismissals. With the ever-present fear of being any moment out of a job it is only natural that men hesitate to marry or to bring their families out from home. This insecurity of tenure is the bugbear of the mines. Till it is removed it is useless for politicians to consider or talk about making the Rand anything but a place of temporary settlement.

To my personal knowledge one mine manager foolishly boasted that it would not be long before all the old hands were gone—sacked at his instigation—when he took over the control of the mine in question. He started steadily filling the high

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

and responsible positions with his friends, many of whom were grossly inefficient. These friends eventually lost for him his own position—he was hoist with his own petard; the reduced output of the mine brought about his dismissal. Men, after holding for some years a responsible position on a mine—the very fact of the length of their stay indicating satisfactory work—will be dismissed at a moment's notice at the whim of some manager. Length of service "cuts no ice" on the Rand mines.

Another unsatisfactory method on the mines of the Rand to-day is the underhand system of "measuring up" or surveying the fathomage of ground broken by a miner in the stope where he is working. In numerous instances the correct fathomage is not allowed, a lower estimate being substituted. If the miner comes out in debt, however—*i.e.* if he does not break sufficient ground to pay for the stores he has used and the native labour he has employed—the mine honestly allows the correct estimate to stand. An experienced miner, though not as a rule in possession of even the first rudiments of surveying, has a pretty shrewd and accurate idea of what he has "knocked out" by the end of the month. Such a fraudulent system should be rigorously stamped out.

Notwithstanding the fact that a miner's life on the Rand is not "all beer and skittles," there is no shortage in the supply of white, or skilled, labour for the mines, though wages to-day are much lower than before the war. Large cheques to-day are the exception rather than the rule.

To-day a miner working on "day's pay" (*i.e.* on a daily wage and not by contract) earns roughly 16s. 8d. to 20s. a shift, night or day, for "hand-stopping" (that is, in charge of a gang of natives drilling by hand). For "machine stopping" he will earn roughly 20s. to 25s. a shift, whilst for "lashing" or "tramming" (*i.e.* superintending a gang of natives shovelling the broken ore and its conveyance to the ore-bins ready for hoisting) 12s. 6d. to 15s. a shift. For contracting it is very hard to state anything but an approximate average month's earnings,

## MINES AND MINING ON THE RAND

as so much depends on conditions, such as the skill of the miner, the efficiency of his "boys" and the state of the stope in which he is working, etc. Roughly speaking, a miner will earn on contract anything from £20 to £35 a month "hand-stoping"; £25 to £50 a month "machine-stoping" and £70 to £100 a month "machine developing." These figures are only approximately correct; for one miner will come out in debt where another will make £25.<sup>1</sup>

Developers are the best paid miners, as their life is short. This work of developing is the dustiest, consequently the deadliest. Miner's phthisis soon claims them as victims. Italians are chiefly engaged in this class of mining. Mine consumption is the curse of the Rand mines, the deadly dust of the rock claiming innumerable victims. Much attention has been, and is being, concentrated to-day towards lessening the deadly effect of the mine dust, but not with much result. The use of respirators is encouraged, though they are but little adopted, as it is quite hot and stuffy enough working underground without breathing through a sponge. Strict injunctions are given, and are meant to be observed, to use water freely to keep down the dust whilst drilling with machines; but so careless and almost childish are many miners that they will frequently disregard this very necessary precaution. The habits, too, of the average Rand miner do not tend to help him to resist this disease. His almost rabid dislike of water, fresh air and a hygienic mode of life makes him very susceptible to consumption. Greater encouragement is being given to-day to the miner to indulge in open-air recreation; though the average miner does not take very kindly to golf, or tennis or such sports. Whippet-racing is his chief hobby, whilst horse-racing is also popular. Both are fairly sure means of helping him to get rid of his money. Pneumonia is also prevalent on the mines, chiefly from chills contracted and neglected underground.

Numerous accidents occur on the Rand, though the number is really very small in view of the magnitude of the industry

<sup>1</sup> These words were written before the strikes of 1913.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

to-day.<sup>1</sup> Carelessness is most often responsible for these accidents.

However careful a miner may be himself he still takes his life in his hands when he enters the cage to go down to his day's work ; for, apart from the gradual undermining of his health, he runs the daily risk of getting killed or disabled by a fall of rock or "hanging," by being "gassed" by dynamite fumes, or by being "blasted" through someone else's carelessness. Even when in the cage, descending at the rate of nearly a mile a minute, his life depends solely on the staunchness of the one steel hawser, which has broken more than once. Still, much is being done, though perhaps not from very altruistic motives, towards the improvement of the lot of the miner on the Rand ; and certainly it can be safely said that in no time has the Rand mining industry ever been on such a sound footing as it is to-day.

After the gold ore is mined below it is hauled to the surface to be crushed. The ore is then sorted, the auriferous reef being separated from the waste rock, the one being easily distinguishable from the other. The reef is then conveyed to the battery, or mill.

By means of a conveyer belt the ore is raised to the large ore-bins ; from here the flow of broken rock into the stamp-boxes is regulated and under the tremendous stamps, which work night and day, is crushed into small fragments. The crushed rock, mixed with water, is now almost like mud. It next passes, through narrow-meshed screens, over mercury-coated plates, and undergoes what is known as the "amalgam process." Here the first extraction of gold takes place. Roughly speaking, seventy per cent. to seventy-five per cent. of the gold is retained on these plates. The muddy stream of crushed ore then passes through the "tube-mills," which consist of big revolving cylinders, in appearance like boilers, filled with small pebbles. Here the ore is completely crushed. It then passes over the

<sup>1</sup> 194,328 natives were employed on the Rand during April 1911, and the accident rate in 1911 was only 4.1 per 1000. In view of the large proportion of semi-savage labour employed, the rate is small.





A LARGE MINE PROPERTY



THE BATTERY, SHOWING THE MERCURY-COATED PLATES



## MINES AND MINING ON THE RAND

“shaking-tables,” another set of mercury plates, vibrating to and fro to retard the flow of the auriferous stream over them. A further percentage of the gold is retained on these plates. The ore now undergoes the cyanide treatment.

The solution is pumped up, or raised by the “ tailing’s-wheel,” into launders (wooden sluices), which convey it to the cyanide works. Here the “ sands ” are separated from the “ slimes ” (the latter are the very finely divided material). The former sink, whilst the latter, suspended in the liquid, run over. Each is treated separately.

The “ sands ” are pumped into great tanks, where they are allowed to settle ; they are now in a suitable condition for “ leaching.” A solution (0·35 per cent. Potassium Cyanide) is then pumped on and percolates through the sands, absorbing most of the gold. Further weak solutions (0·15 per cent. K. Cy.) are pumped on, absorbing still more. The “ slimes ” are similarly treated ; first with one strong and then with various weak solutions which extract all the gold possible. The auro-cyanide solutions are then conveyed to the “ extractor-house.”

The sands, when completely treated, are left to dry, and are then conveyed to the huge white dumps that daily grow larger. The slimes, when free of gold, go to swell the large dams which slowly harden in the air. To-day a very small percentage of gold escapes, perhaps 3 per cent. only, in striking contrast to former years when the “ tailing-dumps ” had as much as 10 per cent. of gold still unextracted.

In the extractor-house the cyanide solution, with the gold in suspension, passes through boxes filled with freshly cut zinc shavings (which contain a small percentage of lead, pure zinc being less efficient), on which the gold is deposited in the form of a black slime. This slime contains all the gold which the cyanide absorbed ; the latter is then free again for use.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The cyanide solution is weakened somewhat by decomposition by the reactions in the zinc boxes, but the presence of large quantities of the double cyanide of zinc and potassium is not prejudicial to its solvent action when used again, after being brought to standard strength.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

These boxes then undergo a process, which is termed in mining parlance, the "clean-up." The zinc-gold slimes are collected and are charged into vats for treatment with sulphuric acid (bisulphate of sodium is sometimes used also) to effect an elimination of the zinc and other base metals. Violent chemical action ensues, the fumes given off being highly poisonous. After this treatment with acid, which dissolves the zinc, the slimes are settled, washed and separated, and are then ready to undergo the process of smelting.

The gold-amalgam from the two sets of plates (*i.e.* those in the battery and those on the shaking tables) is retorted in a furnace. The bulk of the mercury is driven off (but recovered by condensation), leaving the gold behind practically free of the mercury, though a little remains until smelting takes place.

The smelting process employed on the Rand is similar to that in use in other countries. The auriferous slimes are baked, turning into a clinker mass. This is broken up, placed into a crucible and mixed with a flux (chiefly of sand, carbonate of soda and borax). The crucible is then placed in a furnace under intense heat; after a certain period, the gold collects in the form of a button covered with a thick slag.

The gold recovered from the amalgam is similarly treated, the intense heat driving off what little mercury is still retained. The slag retains only a very small percentage of gold; this is mostly recovered by periodical fusions of accumulated quantities of slag with borax and lead. Twelve gold buttons go to form one ingot bar, being annealed under intense heat with more flux, the molten metal being then poured into a mould. The gold ingot is approximately 99.9 per cent. pure gold, a very small percentage of baser metals still remaining.

Much of the rapid progress which has been made in lowering the cost of the extraction of the gold from the ore is due to the introduction of the cyanide process—in 1890—and its subsequent improvement.



THE SURROUNDINGS OF A RAND MINE



VIEW OF CYANIDE WORKS

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
OCT 8 1917

## CHAPTER IV

### LIFE UNDERGROUND

**D**ULL breaks the morning light on the Rand.<sup>1</sup> The engine-driver, with his eyes on the clock, stands by his lever in the brightly lit engine-room waiting for six o'clock to strike. Once the hour is reached, he grasps the hempen cord and gives the hooter one long sustained pull, with the result so well known to all residents along the Reef. To the town man or the office man, this awakening blast may mean nothing beyond a notion of the time of day; but to the underground worker, whether he be a miner, trammer or anything else, it means everything. It means the beginning of a new day, of one more shift to be put in.

Loath to leave my couch, which by the wildest stretch of imagination could not be designated as downy, I snatch just another twenty winks and then bestir myself. Perched on the edge of my rickety bed, I don a minimum of clothing and make tracks for the boarding-house to enjoy, or to bolt, breakfast, according to the hour. Two warning blasts at the half-hour tell me to "get a move on." Gathering up a bottle of cocoa and bundle of sandwiches—my midday meal below—I hasten off to the headgear. Here the change-house is to be found. Ranged along the room on all sides are lockers, and I unlock the door of mine in order to exchange the few clothes I have on for others more suited for the labours of the day. My previous day's work underground begrimed my mining clothes, but, thanks to the rows of hot-air pipes in the building, they are now in a more or

<sup>1</sup> For the framework of this sketch I am much assisted by an ably-written article which appeared in *The Transvaal Leader* in July 1909.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

less dry state. Hastily doffing my surface garments, I don my "diggers" and in a few minutes am ready to go below, garbed for my toil in an attire which almost completes metamorphosis. An old cap, worn and covered with mud, is perched on the back of my head, whilst my jacket is such that no dealer would even consider it for a moment in relation to a purchase. A good and thick, if grimy, undervest peeps out from the neck of my stout woollen shirt, while my trousers, showing signs of better days, are tied below the knees with a piece of string (a strap costs money), lifting them up well over my "King-Miners," which weigh five or six pounds each. On my way to the headgear I recognise a few here and there with a nod or cheery word, according to the state of my liver. Spotting my boss-boy, I go with him to the store to get what I may want in the way of fuse, caps, candles, etc. All except the caps I hand to the native, who plunges them into a big sack and hurries off below. With a roll of old newspapers in my hands, afterwards to be used for "tamping-paper," I proceed to interview the shift-boss to see if he has any special information from my partner, who is this week on night-shift.

Long ere this the huge wheels on the top of the headgear have begun to work, and the cage, loaded with its living freight, has been busily ascending and descending with a regularity of motion that speaks for quiet vigilance on the part of the banksman on duty. In some cases the cages are double-deckers; then the natives occupy the top section and the whites the lower.

I clamber into the cage. Two bells are rung and down we go, slowly at first, but gradually increasing the speed till the maximum allowed by the mining regulations is reached. The cage slows up and stops at the level on which I am working. I scramble out of my temporary prison, light my lamp and with my boss-boy proceed to my working-place.

On reaching my "stope" I go to the box, which contains fuse, a few spare hammers, etc., and deposit my coat and lunch inside. I then lock it. Lunch is more important to me than all the rest of the contents put together! I then proceed to inspect



## LIFE UNDERGROUND

the stope. My gang of hammer-boys follow me (if they are not there first). When I am satisfied that the "hanging" is safe, the natives begin to clear away from the "face" the splintered reef and debris, result of the previous blast. When the face is clean, I examine it to see if there are any misfires (*i.e.* any charges of dynamite unexploded). I also direct that the sockets of old holes should be plugged, to avoid as far as possible any chance of their still containing dynamite and being drilled into, with fatal results. When I am satisfied that all is in order, I give my hammer-boys the directions of their holes—their task for the day; and here it is that the skill of a good miner shows itself! I have got to break as much ground as I can with the least expenditure of powder. To achieve this my aim is to get in as good "benches" as I can; or, in other words, to get, say, two or three feet hollows in the face at regular intervals. In the direction in which the holes are drilled lies the accomplishment of this end. I must not put them at such an angle as will give the powder too heavy a load to lift, or too light a one; in both cases this means a waste of dynamite. In the former the dynamite, having too big a task, fails to break the rock, whilst in the latter its breaking power is not utilised to its full extent. Experience teaches the miner to find just the happy medium. Flaws in the rock, slips, faults, etc., must be taken fully into account. The observant miner, the one who uses his brains as well as his hands, is the one who earns the biggest cheque when on contract, as he takes full advantage of the assistance given him by Nature in the shape of these peculiarities in the strata of the reef.

Some of my gang are safe to adhere to the direction given, which is usually indicated by marking the hanging with candle smoke. Others, however, require constant supervision, as the slightest deviation from the direction given spells frustration of the miner's best intentions. When all my "boys" are started, I return to my box, having collected their tickets. I then start to fill in what particulars I can at the moment. The task of filling up the tickets of the gang is to some miners the hardest task of the day, for there are many on the Rand more used to

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

the hammer and drill than to the pencil. Whilst I am thus occupied, enjoying a pipe at the same time, my boss-boy is cutting up the old newspapers into square pieces, rolling them round a "tamping-stick" and then sealing them with candle grease, the papers when completed being tube-shaped. They are then filled with finely sifted earth, or sand.

By this time it is eleven o'clock. Shortly afterwards I espy the light of the shift-boss, on his round of inspection, shining in the drive. I look busy and await his arrival. He is a Cornishman—one of the old school; but what he doesn't know of mining isn't worth knowing.

"Well! Arthur, how is everything? I see the hanging of your main reef is looking kind of shaky."

"Ay! you're right, Ben," I reply. "I've put a couple of boys on making a waste-pack there, though it's almost too dangerous to work in."

"That's right, Arthur. Keep a good eye on your boys; if the hanging looks bad any moment, get 'em out of it! Arthur, you're mining that leader-stope a little too high; keep it low. They are kicking up on top that there's too much waste going up!"

"I am doing my best, Ben, to keep it low; but you can't bring it away with one hole as the foot-wall is as bad as the hanging."

"Well! Well! Keep an eye on that main-reef-stope."

"Right-o, Ben!"

On the departure of the shift-boss I take another look at my boys working to see if they are drilling correctly. With another glance at the hanging-wall of the stopes I return to my box. It is now noon and I begin to think of my lunch. A timberman working near by joins me. We exchange the latest news and gossip on the latest dismissal or on the stupidity of mine managers in general. This ceases about one o'clock, or at the sign of the approach of anyone in authority; the light in the drive gives us ample warning. I have now to go to the station to get the dynamite I ordered. With my boss-boy I bring it



A SHAKY "HANGING"



TRUCKING THE ORE TO THE SHAFT



## LIFE UNDERGROUND

back to my box, preceding with the light the native carrying it. Then I start to make up the charges for the day. First the fuse is cut into suitable lengths, each generally of six feet (if you are on contract and so paying for your own stores, four-foot lengths will meet the case). The fuse is then inserted into the caps, which are firmly tightened round it with nippers. If your cap nippers have strayed, you use your teeth—a rather risky proceeding. The dynamite is produced and each stick is opened, the cap with fuse attached being inserted into each premier cartridge. All is now ready for “charging up,” except that the holes are not all finished. Presently one boy then another comes up and asks for his ticket, stating that he has drilled his thirty-six inches. In some cases you may go and satisfy yourself that the native has done his work by measuring up his hole. In most instances, however, you hand the native his ticket ; he knows quite well you will soon find out when you start charging up whether or not the hole has been fully drilled. When the native gets his ticket, off he marches with drills on his shoulder bound for the compound and “skoff.” Between half-past two and three o’clock I get up from my reclining position, where I have been dreaming of life in every other country except in Africa, and with my boss-boy, who carries the “tampers,” and my piccanin, who carries the dynamite, I proceed to my first working-place to commence charging up. Starting from the bottom of the stope, each hole in succession receives its dose of dynamite and tamping, the whole being driven well home. Charging up a narrow stope with some twenty or thirty holes is good exercise, and one needs a moment’s rest on completion.

The boys who have not fully completed their tasks are only allowed the inches they have drilled ; and those who have not drilled at least eighteen inches get a “loafer” ticket instead of the ordinary one, which is worth to them two shillings or thereabouts.

The hours for blasting vary. Four o’clock is about the average hour on the Rand ; and ere that time I have booted the last con out of the stope, as well as any others in the vicinity. This done, I

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wait for the welcome cry of "Chesa!" from the level below. This is shouted in every mine before lighting up and is the signal for those on the upper levels to follow suit, as well as being a warning cry. At the sound of "Chesa!" I start lighting up, assisted by my boss-boy. A minute suffices for the operation. One doesn't want to be too sleepy on this job. All that remains to be done now is to clear out and get up on top again. With the mine quivering with the concussion of the shots going off, above, below, behind, and in front, I wend my way along the drive to the station, where already there is a crowd of miners assembled waiting for the skip.

After a short wait you get a place in the cage and up you go. Soon the gloom of the mine gives place to a grey light in the shaft. God's good air fills the nostrils once again, and sky and clouds greet the eyes once more.

On reaching the surface I give in my envelope, in which are enclosed the tickets of my natives, and am once again at liberty to don apparel more suitable for the surface. After ten minutes I emerge from the change-house clean—and once again in my right mind!

Before one becomes a full-fledged miner one has to gain a blasting certificate by serving an apprenticeship as a learner for three months. It is possible to get a miner's licence in a shorter period than that regulated by the Chamber of Mines. Years back one could obtain a licence without even going underground, but now things are quite different and a miner in possession of a blasting ticket to-day at least knows how to handle dynamite, even if he is not much class at mining. During learning days one is attached to various miners doing different work, on a wage of five shillings a day. The months on this wage are very lean ones for the learner. It is a case of the simple life with a vengeance.

I was first attached to a boss-trammer—one superintending the cleaning up of the stopes and the tramping of the ore to the shaft; afterwards to a hand-stoper—a miner with hammer-



UNDERGROUND SURVEYING



MACHINE-STOPING





## LIFE UNDERGROUND

boys ; then to a machine-stoper—a miner stoping with machine drills.

I remained a learner till the opportunity arose—in the shape of a miner getting sacked—of getting a stope of my own. I was then handed a Provisional Licence, and one month afterwards my permanent certificate, for which I paid five shillings. I was now a qualified miner.

During learning days I accompanied the miner in his various rounds, using my eyes to watch and my mouth to ask the why and the wherefore, when the miner set his boys drilling or rigged up his machines. Soon I tried my own hand, learning by my mistakes. It was not long before I was charging up, under the watchful eyes of the miner. I don't know whether I was specially fortunate in the miners with whom I came into contact, or whether my democratic life in so many parts of the world enabled me to keep on good terms with them, but all the miners with whom I learnt showed me everything I wanted to see and answered anything I wanted to know. I was always on splendid terms with them. I found the Rand miner, whether he was a Dago, Cornishman or German, to be a real good fellow at heart, and in many cases far more of a Nature's gentleman than some of the lavender-socked gentry of the town.

I can recall very vividly the extremely gingerly way I first handled sticks of dynamite, the great respect I paid to detonators, and the unholy funk I was in when I first lit up a stope. The method of lighting up charges, as directed by the Chamber of Mines in the Transvaal, is by means of a "cut" fuse. I would, however, dearly love to watch one of the committee lighting up fifty or sixty fuses—quite an ordinary number—by this means. His wife would be a happy widow long before he was half-way through with the job. The only method—illegal, I believe—employed on the Rand is with the "chesa-stick." This latter is a thin wooden stick—of, say, half-an-inch in diameter—with thin strips of dynamite wrapped round and mud smeared over. The stick, when lighted, spits out a flame, which is, however, checked by the damp mud, but for which the

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gelatine would flare furiously. The "chesa-stick" further acts as an excellent torch when the concussion of the mine during blasting extinguishes your mining lamp or candle, as is inevitably the case.

Handling dynamite and detonators, and lighting up a stope with thirty or forty fuses and perhaps numerous "popholes" (small charges in large rocks), is nervous work to the tyro, but a mere trifle after a few weeks' experience. One then gets perfectly accustomed to such work; *too* accustomed, in fact, for familiarity breeds contempt, and contempt is a dangerous sentiment to hold in regard to dynamite. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that a good fifty per cent. of the accidents, fatal or otherwise, that occur in the Rand mines are occasioned solely by carelessness—by disregard of the ordinary necessary precautions when handling high explosives. You will catch yourself complacently smoking—and Boer tobacco too<sup>1</sup>—sitting on your dynamite box whilst putting detonators on your fuses, as though you were in your mine room. You will find yourself almost unconsciously using your teeth on the deadly, but so harmless-looking, detonators when your cap-nippers have strayed. You will find yourself lighting up half-a-dozen charges and then taking out your knife to cut a small piece off one fuse, quite oblivious—well, I will not say "quite oblivious," "aware" is the better word—of the fact that six little jets of flame are steadily burning their way towards huge charges of dynamite. You will gauge to a nicety—to a couple of seconds—the sixty or seventy seconds your fuse will burn ere it reaches the charge. You will do this a thousand times; but there is always the one time possible that you will cut it too fine. And then one will hear in the mine boarding-house: "Did you know poor old Tom got blasted on the twenty-seventh level last night—over in number two—smashed to hell." A miner will bite a detonator with his teeth a thousand times; the thousand and first time it will blow half his jaw away. He will kick open with his hob-nail

<sup>1</sup> Most South African smokers have little holes in their clothes through burning pieces of tobacco falling from their pipes.

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boots—not with the wooden mallet supplied—a box of dynamite a thousand times ; the thousand and first time will see him and the natives around him being picked off the face of the drive and put into buckets.

Some miners in their utter folly will even tamp down dynamite with a steel jumper, if their “ charging-stick ” happens to be too long to get into the hole—literally plucking the beard of Providence ! A miner may do it once, might do it twice, but the third time will surely see him and his boss-boy getting a quick despatch to Kingdom Come ! It is more than a sporting chance that he will do the trick the first time, and successfully, which means a loss to the mine of a jumper—and, incidentally, a miner !

My boss-boy was once nearly blasted through his confounded vanity. Having been lately promoted to the dignity of a boss-boy, he had purchased out of his earnings a pair of miner’s boots (most of the natives go barefooted in the mines). As I had many working-places it was impossible for me to do all the lighting up, so the boss-boy did a part. I might remark in parenthesis that if it had been possible I should not have done it all ; for not one miner out of ten lights up himself, as a good boy is as expert at this job as any miner, if not better. Well, this boy, owing to his new boots being about four sizes too big for him, in clambering up the stope went up one step and slipped back two. He had barely reached the drive in this Irish method of ascent before the first shot went off. He finished the last dozen or so yards cheered and encouraged by some of the profanest language that my memory could supply at such short notice. That nigger, while he was with me, never wore boots again !

Perhaps my third day underground was the worst of any I have ever spent there, though it was by no means a typical day in a miner’s life. I was at the time a learner with a miner who was hand-stopping ; and an excellent miner too. We had charged up and were waiting for the signal to light up our stope. Some misunderstanding apparently arose, for the higher and lower levels, we noticed, were already lit up. Soon half the mine was

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

ringing and shaking with the concussion of the blasting. We then commenced hurriedly to light up our own stope without further delay. By the time we had finished and were speeding along the drive to the station the whole mine was thick with smoke denser than any London fog. What with this choking smoke, the banging of the charges exploding, the crashing of rocks, and the rattling of flying pieces in the box-holes, I felt, as we passed along the drive, that underground mining was not exactly the happiest occupation in life. Even the miner himself cursed freely and swore he would quit the mine directly he got above ; but, like a sailor in bad weather, his bark was worse than his bite. We reached the shaft with our hair and eye-lashes as white as snow—from the thick smoke through which we had passed !

It is very easy to lose one's way in a large mine and for the first week or two I was continually losing myself. But I always found some good Samaritan to put me in my right direction again.

Mining in a narrow "leader-stope" is splendid exercise, as one has to crawl over the boulders and rocks which litter the foot-wall of the stopes, some of which are not four feet high. I generally managed to crack my head or scrape my spine before the face of my working-place was reached. Doing this a dozen times or more in the course of a shift is as good as a course of Turkish baths. It is, however, so often the case that when in this state one traverses a drive which is comparatively cool, thereby contracting a severe chill, as a singlet is generally the only covering on the upper part of the body.

## CHAPTER V

### PREPARATIONS FOR OUR TREK TO OVAMBOLAND

I HAVE already written about the steady demand of the Transvaal mines for native labour. An expedition with which I was connected had as its main object the recruiting of Ovambo natives in Angola, or Portuguese West Africa. An experienced recruiter—Morgan, I will call him—had trekked from Mossamedes, a seaport in Angola, through Portuguese Ovamboland to Lake Ngami; and from the Lake through Bechuanaland to Palapye on the Rhodesian railway

He reported very favourably on the opportunities of recruiting for the mines hundreds of Ovambo natives, as well as many refugee Damaras who had sought protection in Portuguese territory from their mailed fist “protectors”—the Germans. He said that, as the Portuguese were contemplating an armed occupation of their portion of Ovamboland, the natives were anxious to settle in British territory; for the bloody colonising methods of the Germans on their southern border did not inspire in them any hope of finding refuge in that quarter. It was a very striking fact that this recruiter—an Englishman—had travelled in and through both Portuguese and German Ovamboland, alone and unarmed save for a hunting rifle or two, where no German or Portuguese would dare to go without soldiers to protect him. So trustful were these Ovambos of the name of England—a name in their minds synonymous with justice and protection—that they even allowed one of their headmen to accompany the recruiter to Johannesburg. I would mention I have no national prejudice and hold no brief for England, because by the accident of birth I was born there. I have based my views on what I have seen for myself.

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The natives of Ovamboland are a fine sturdy race of people, unconquered as yet. They are as contemptuous of the weak and lax rule of the Portuguese as they are distrustful and fearful of the harsh and militaristic colonising methods of the Germans, who are the rulers—at present, the nominal rulers only—of the southern part of their country. Their hope was that they might proceed *en masse* with all their cattle, women and children into British territory, where they had learnt that other weapons than rifles were used for colonising purposes.

A Johannesburg recruiting company decided to fit out an expedition to bring these natives to the mines, notwithstanding the thousands of unrailed miles that intervened, and to settle their women and children on farms, in either the Transvaal or the Gaborones district of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The task of equipping this expedition was given into the hands of Morgan. Theoretically, the idea was sound ; practically—and in the recruiter's hands—it was not. The magnitude of the proposition was grasped by none. Sitting in the lounge of the Victoria Hotel in Johannesburg it was easy to regard a trek of a thousand miles as of little consequence, to supply a thousand natives with food for six weeks as a detail barely worth considering. On the veld, however, it was another matter.

Morgan was a man of great ingenuity and perseverance, besides other excellent qualities ; but he was without the faintest idea of business or of the value of money. He had a most persuasive manner ; whilst you were under the spell of his fluent tongue he would convince you that black was white. He was, consequently, an ideal recruiter, never being at a loss for an argument to convince a native that there was but one ideal occupation for him—namely, to work in the gold mines of the Transvaal. Unfortunately—for his employers—his ideas of business were so peculiar that in many cases he would spend seventy shillings in order to contract a boy for his recruiting house, which, in turn, would only receive sixty shillings from the mine. This unbusiness-like method and unprofitable result worried him not a jot, so long as he recruited the native ! Far

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be it from my purpose to underrate the character of my companion, or to dwell only on his weaknesses ; but, in order to sketch from the beginning the course of our strange expedition, I am compelled to throw a clear light on the deficiencies of its leader. Morgan, however, with all his weaknesses was a splendid companion, his stories of a varied career whiling away many a pleasant hour by the camp fire. I have refrained from giving his real name as I have no wish to cast any reflection on a man who, with all his faults, was yet quite a good fellow. If I met our erratic leader to-morrow, the past bitterness being long effaced from my memory, I would conjure up with him the pleasant days and weeks we spent together on the open veld.

Our party consisted of four white men, one of whom was engaged in the Protectorate as our transport-rider. I will call him Brown. For similar reasons to those above I do not give his correct name. My brother, my senior by a couple of years, was the other member of the party. We two were engaged by Morgan, or by the recruiting house in Johannesburg, or both ; when it came to the question of receiving monies due for services we were referred by the one to the other—quite the Johannesburg method ! It was impressed on both of us before leaving the Transvaal that secrecy was essential for the success of the expedition, in order to avoid putting our rivals on the *qui vive*. Consequently we both of us religiously kept our mouths shut, not even mentioning to our friends the destination or object of the expedition ; but lo and behold ! when we arrived at Palaype Road we found that what the Bechuanaland Protectorate did not know of the scheme was not worth knowing. In short, everybody there knew far more than we did. Not only was the trip common knowledge of the Protectorate, but nearly all the traders in the northern territory had received from our sanguine leader wonderful promises of contracts to supply the vast hordes of natives that were to come. If ever there were a case of counting chickens before they were hatched it was in connection with this expedition. The gullibility of the traders was also very amusing, though “ people in glass houses should not throw stones.”

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After our arrival in Palapye preparations for the trek went apace ; at least the lavish expenditure of money did. Morgan was in his element. Hundreds of pounds ran like water through his hands ; nothing was too expensive for the outfit. Stores galore were purchased, including useless Kafir "truck" for trading purposes ; medicines enough to keep a doctor in practice for twelve months ; provisions, from cases of hams to hundreds of bottles of Worcester sauce. Waggon—brand new—were brought from Mafeking ; trek-oxen, quite untrained, were bought at top prices, as seasoned spans.

Perhaps, however, the crowning act was Morgan's purchase of twenty-eight young mares, *in foal*, from the Orange River Colony, to take up to Ovamboland. This alone represented an outlay of nearly seven hundred pounds. The screaming folly of it was that Ngamiland, through which we had to trek, was a very hotbed of horse-sickness ; added to this, there was the recognised danger in taking a party of young mares, in foal, for a long, weary trek of months, part of it through the waterless stretches of the Kalahari Desert and part through lion-infested veld. A "greenhorn" might have been forgiven for such a colossal piece of folly, but that an apparently sane person, who had just traversed the very districts where the deadly ravages of horse-sickness would be noticeable almost to a blind man, should commit such a mad action, passes one's comprehension. In fact, doubts as to the sanity of our leader were raised, and I for one would not like to say whether these fears were unfounded or not ; for to consider him unbalanced seems to be the kindest and most charitable way to explain such a reckless waste of money. Unfortunately neither my brother nor I could do anything to check the foolish expenditure that went on daily. Conditions in Bechuanaland were strange to my brother, who was used to the colony, whilst I, of course, was then quite ignorant of any veld lore at all. Further, Morgan was the recognised leader of the expedition and we were both kept much in the dark regarding these purchases ; most of our information was gained from



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outside sources. Everything was in a pitiable state of chaos ! At last, however, the unending delay and the fast-accumulating outlay raised very natural doubts in the minds of the promoters in Johannesburg as to the fitness of Morgan for the position of leader. A week spent in exchanging abusive and edifying telegrams at twopence a word then ensued ; edifying, at least, to the telegraph officials in the Protectorate and to their pals (from whom one could generally obtain any news telegraphed). As the promoters had gone so far, they could hardly turn back ; so the recruiter won the day.

We had purchased by now three waggons, each with its span of oxen (eighteen in a span), the troop of horses, a case of 450 Martini rifles, with ammunition, besides some shot-guns and sporting 303 rifles. The waggons were all heavily loaded with the stores, the trading goods and a load of saddles for the young horses. After a protracted delay of nearly three weeks in Palapye we were ready to commence trekking to Serowe, which is the capital of Chief Khama's country.

Palapye was not a very exciting place in which to spend three weeks. It was a small *dorp*, a station on the Rhodesian line. It possessed about twenty or thirty houses ; and near it was a small native village. Chief Khama's capital had once been round Palapye, but had migrated—a habit Khama indulged in quite frequently till the tendency was checked by a suggestion from Mafeking that it was advisable to stop in one place. Besides the railway station, Palapye possessed a hotel and one or two trading stores. Beyond that it had nothing much to offer in the way of attractions. Before leaving Palapye I had to ride over to Serowe to obtain the necessary licences for our guns ; though the distance was only forty miles I was fairly stiff on my return. When in Palapye I used to spend an hour or two a day trying to recall the rudiments of horse-riding which the Woolwich Riding School had painfully impressed on me some years back. I succeeded in recovering a little, though not without having given some amusing displays on the horse and on the ground for the edification of the *élite* of the little *dorp*. There was this about

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our expedition that, if it did nothing else, it did at least add to the gaiety of *dorps*.

On the morning of the 19th May (1910) our huge "caravan" struggled out of Palapye; I say "struggled out" because we didn't trek out. Our cattle, purchased from the local hotel-keeper as trained spans, had apparently never before seen a yoke; hence our start was a series of ten-yard movements, and ten-minute stops, to repair broken skeys and strops. In one hour we covered a good five hundred yards, one hundred of which had been trekked without more than two five-minute stops. By the time we were two miles on our way it was time to outspan, as the sun was already high in the heavens.

We were now in the desert. The Kalahari, however, is no desert in appearance, as grass grows abundantly during the scanty rains in summer, and even during the dry months it is not scarce. The average rainfall of the year in the desert is about ten inches. The bush, scrub and stunted trees that cover the Kalahari are more or less evergreen the whole year round. It is generally assumed that there is an abundant water supply not far from the surface, and there is little doubt that if one could but hit upon an inexpensive method of tapping the underground supplies of water in the Kalahari the inhospitable stretches of desert could be converted into a country capable of carrying stock in large quantities. The Kalahari is very flat, consisting of level plains, three thousand feet above the sea, of light, sandy soil, varied at times by undulating sand-dunes. Occasional small hills or low kopjes appear, as at Quebe Hills—not far from Lake Ngami.

There are practically no inhabitants in the Kalahari, owing to the lack of water, though wandering bushmen, who live as near to Nature as is possible for any human being, exist where no white men could. These bushmen will obtain water by sucking it up from the ground with reeds, and can also exist for days on a species of water-melon which grows abundantly in the desert at certain periods of the year. Large herds of game roam in these waterless and inhospitable regions. Giraffe and certain of the

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antelope will find here a safe retreat for many years yet to come. Soon the Kalahari will be the one big game reserve of Africa. Unfortunately, besides being a resort for big game safe from the hunter's gun, it is also an unassailable breeding-place for locusts, whence vast flights periodically invade the adjoining colonies, doing incalculable harm.

When the sun was low in the afternoon sky we inspanned again. I must mention that our erratic leader had at the last moment decided to remain a few more days in Palapye, so the leadership for a time devolved on my brother. It is fatal to have two bosses in one party; disorder and disagreement are the inevitable result. The painfully slow task of inspanning the oxen, due to the cattle being completely untrained, was at last finished. We started trekking again, the oxen pulling wildly as before. Towards sundown they commenced to pull more together, but during this second trek also numerous skeys were broken. After the oxen had been in the yokes for three hours we outspanned them for the night.

Nearly all transport-riders have their own favourite methods of arranging the times and the number of their treks during the twenty-four hours. Much, of course, depends on the circumstances in which you find yourself, the amount of time you have at your disposal for the journey, the weight of your load, the size and condition of your spans of oxen, the distance between water, and so on. In our position we were not pressed for time, our spans were young and untrained and our waggons were heavily laden; so we decided, for a time at any rate, to make but two treks in the twenty-four hours—one in the early morning and one in the cool of the afternoon, each of about three hours in duration. Three hours is the longest time for keeping a span of oxen in the yokes, especially if a long journey lies ahead. You cannot, however, rigidly adhere to any fixed rule on the veld, as so much depends on circumstances—and untoward circumstances too!

It was dark when the oxen were all tied to the yokes for the night. Halley's comet was clear and bright in the starry heavens

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as we lay by the camp fire near the white-tented waggons. Just before dawn we inspanned and pushed on over the heavy sand till we reached water at a small well half-way. It was very cold before the sun rose, as it was winter-time ; to warm ourselves we spurred our horses over a hard stretch of veld. As they galloped over the springy turf the keen crisp air of the Kalahari, the most bracing in the world, made our faces tingle and glow, horses as well as riders experiencing to the full the joy of life. As may be imagined, we heartily appreciated a breakfast of chops, grilled on the burning embers, washed down with good coffee—which we knew was coffee as we had roasted the beans ourselves. The oxen were turned out to graze in charge of the cattle-watcher, our horses also, after having knee-haltered them. To knee-halter your horse on the veld is as essential as keeping your rifle clean ; otherwise you will have to spend a few weary hours in picking up the spoor of the strayed animal. During the heat of the day we smoked and dozed in the shade of the waggon. The natives did the same, when not eating. The cattle, when they had eaten their fill, would stand motionless out of the glare of the midday sun under the scanty shade of some stunted tree.

Inspanning when the sun was sinking, we had not been trekking an hour before the front waggon, through careless driving, smashed its *disselboom* by coming hard up against the stump of a tree. This is not a very serious or unusual occurrence on the veld ; but then it appeared a huge disaster. This sudden introduction to trouble on the veld quite disconcerted us both. Instead of dispatching the driver and the *voorlooper* with axes to cut down a tree and shape it to the required size—the usual course of procedure—my brother and I started to splice the broken shaft with bolts, the natives calmly looking on whilst we worked like Trojans. Our splice was but temporary, as half-an-hour afterwards the strain of the unruly span smashed the waggon-shaft again. Nothing daunted, we renewed the splice by the uncertain light of a flickering candle, strengthening it this time by means of wet strips of hide. The job completed, we once

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again resumed our trek. We were much in trouble during that trek to Serowe, or so it appeared to us then. Our *disselboom* smashed three times. My brother and I each lost our way in the veld. We had, moreover, not the faintest idea how much food to give our natives. In short, all sorts of little trifles worried us then, little molehills seeming in our eyes like mountains. I am sure my brother, somewhere up in the African wilds, must smile as I do when he recalls our first experiences on the Kalahari veld. His knowledge of trekking in the colony was no help to him here, the conditions being so different ; as for me, I had then about as much idea of inspanning an ox as a Christian parson has of Buddhism.

On the evening of the third day that eventful trek came to an end. We outspanned in the stad of Serowe, the capital of Chief Khama's country, the Bamangwato reserve. His village was a large one, consisting of numerous grass-thatched huts, made of reeds and mud, each location being separated by narrow lanes or passages deep in sand. Here and there the whitewashed tin roof of a trading store or the residence of a trader, stood out above the sea of huts. It was hard work for man or beast to plod through the heavy sand round the huts ; and to lose one's way was the easiest thing imaginable. Here and there amidst the locations a solitary tree threw a scanty shade over an open sandy place, on which was erected a semicircle of tree poles, twelve feet or so in height—the judgment seat or *kgotla* of a headman. Early morning would see Khama sitting in his *kgotla* surrounded by his headmen, dispensing justice. When the sun's rays appeared over the walls the court was dissolved.

On the day after our arrival we met the old chief, who, notwithstanding his eighty years, is still a fine, well-preserved man, lean, but straight as a dart. Even to-day he is one of the finest horsemen in his tribe and can ride to a standstill the best of his braves. He is the leading chief of Bechuanaland and was present as such at the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. I saw in his house a signed portrait of Queen Victoria and one of the late King Edward, of both of which he was inordinately

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proud. During the year 1910 he celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his membership in the Christian Church. The old chief is a rich man and owns many herds of cattle. He has, besides, so rumour informed one, a substantial balance at the bank. Khama receives an annual sum from the Government as well as a certain percentage of the hut-tax receipts. The mining rights of his territory are owned by the Chartered Company, from which he receives a certain grant.

My conversation with him was through the medium of an interpreter, as Khama feigns ignorance of the English language, though he has more knowledge than he confesses. The interview was with the object of learning where we might make our camp during our stay in his village. We were told that we could camp at the Mukwe, a few miles outside Serowe ; here the grazing was good and the water plentiful—two essentials for a party with so much live-stock.

The following evening we trekked towards our camping-place. There were one or two nasty hollows for our waggons to negotiate before the regular waggon track was gained ; and with our untrained spans we feared disaster. Fortunately the waggons passed safely through the *shuits*, and when they reached the heavy sand road my brother and I rode on ahead. The night was a perfect one, and a full moon lit up the country round as though it were day. No moon seems to have such brilliancy as that which shines in an African sky !

Riding in Indian file over the narrow waggon track, we reached the Mukwe, where we looked for a suitable place to make our camp, bearing in mind the necessity for high ground and proximity to water. Having found a likely spot we kindled a fire and lay down alongside to await the arrival of the waggons. Our horses, now off-saddled, stood tethered to a tree close by. Everything was very peaceful and still.

Presently the cracking of whips and the shouting of the drivers announced the approach of the waggons which shortly loomed in sight, the poor oxen plodding wearily in their yokes, as the sand was very heavy.



PALAPYE, OUR STARTING POINT



WATERING CATTLE IN THE KALAHARI DESERT

ATION DEPARTMENT  
OCT 8 1917



## PREPARATIONS FOR TREK TO OVAMBOLAND

Next day our natives were kept busy in making *kraals* (bush enclosures) for the cattle and horses, chopping down thorn bushes for the purpose. We then started the task, one of no little magnitude, of branding the young mares. During this operation I sighed for the skill of one of those Californians in using the lasso ; the blundering and crude methods of the natives made me almost weep for my own inability to demonstrate how they should go about their task. However, time being no object, the task of branding was eventually accomplished.

The natives attached to our expedition were nearly all Damaras, refugees from German South-West Africa. The Damaras, or Hereros, as they are more often called, are an intelligent race of natives ; in fact, in my opinion, one of the most intelligent races in Africa. They are very musical, some of them possessing excellent voices. To hear a party of them—men and women—singing on the veld is a positive treat.

The Damara native has excellent material and can be ruled easily if properly handled. He needs firm but just treatment. Rouse the devil in him and he will respond pretty quickly, as many a German knows to his cost ; let him get the upper hand by weak treatment and it is the devil's own job to get him in his place again, as we soon knew. Most of the natives engaged to come on this trek had been with Morgan on his first trip from Mossamedes. Morgan's recruiting methods—chiefly bribery and conciliation—were the worst possible to command in an expedition such as ours, where big and valuable interests were at stake. Natives as servants and natives as prospective recruits for a mine need quite different treatment. From the outset we had trouble with our Damaras. Only two or three days after we had camped at the Mukwe, by which time the recruiter had arrived, several of the natives rode into Serowe, though told only to exercise some of the young horses near the camp. News reached us that our Damaras were carousing on Kafir beer in a kraal in the stadt, and that the horses were still saddled and at the mercy of any passer-by. I was despatched by the recruiter to settle the matter ; this I did by using fairly sharp and vigorous

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methods. I found the natives stupidly drunk ; so I kraaled the horses, leaving them in the care of a trader, and compelled the natives to walk back to the camp. The following day they complained bitterly of this treatment to Morgan, who, though to my face supported my action, behind my back (I learned afterwards) sided with the natives. From the start to the finish the recruiter undermined the authority of the other white men in the party, with the intention of making it a "one-man show." He blustered to our faces and used threats of punishment when any of us reported insubordination on the part of certain natives, while behind our backs he belittled our authority. The expedition was doomed to failure from the outset ; and, had it not been that the trek gave us the opportunity of visiting parts of Africa unknown to us, both my brother and I would have then and there severed our connection with the whole affair.

Our leader now took into his head to return to Johannesburg to explain, or to endeavour to do so, the reason of the unending delay and the excessive expenditure which had now reached the sum of three thousand pounds—a sum more than treble what was actually needed !

It was arranged that I should go ahead with two of the waggons and twenty of the horses, as it was not advisable for all to reach the wells at the same time on account of the scarcity of water in them. The transport-rider whom we had engaged was to accompany me to assist with his knowledge of the veld. His chief trait, however, was that he was a most colossal liar ; though, to do him justice, in no way a malicious one. In African parlance, Brown was a terrible "chancer." The number of lions he had shot was enormous ; the charges he had led in the Boer War were legion ! He had been brought up in the native stadt of Serowe and had imbibed much of the native method of thought and reasoning, and, unfortunately, much of the unreliability of the native too. He was nevertheless a worker, and possessed an excellent disposition. Brown was, indeed, a most amiable chap, never getting the least offended if you went to sleep in the middle of one of his stirring charges in the Boer War. In our

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“ slim ” leader’s hands he was a child ; and the last I heard of the unfortunate chap was that he was a prisoner in Portuguese Africa on a charge of gun-running, one of the waggons with him having more guns than the permit called for.

On the morning of the 5th of June I bade farewell to my brother, who was left in charge of the camp at Mukwe, and with Brown rode away to overtake the waggons and horses that had gone on ahead.

## CHAPTER VI

### TREKKING THE KALAHARI DESERT

WE overtook the waggons not three miles beyond the camp and found one of them already broken down, the "bugle" of the *disselboom* having parted under the heavy strain of the thick sand. Repairing the damage, after an hour's delay—and what is an hour on the veld, where you reckon in days and weeks?—we trekked on reaching water towards evening, after one short outspan at midday. The sand in places was terribly heavy. The oxen sometimes stuck fast, the waggons being far too heavily laden. We outspanned by the water for the night, kraaling the horses and fastening the oxen to their yokes. That night I held an *indaba* with the waggon natives and endeavoured to repair, so far as was possible, the damage already done by our leader. I explained to the natives that if Brown and I told them to do something it had to be done; that it was idle for them to continue telling us what the recruiter used to allow them to do. I told them bluntly that here I was their boss. Further, I arranged their rations. This also caused considerable discontent, as the foolish recruiter had been in the habit of giving them Boer meal, whilst I had on the waggon only mealies and Kafir corn, which is the usual food for natives. I allotted to each boy his duties, making one of them the boss-boy for the horses.

It was late in the evening before things were arranged, for it was a slow task talking to the natives, some of whom were Bechuanas and some Damaras, through the medium of two interpreters. Brown, of course, spoke Bechuana fluently having been born in the country, but he had no knowledge of the Damara language. One needs unlimited patience for *indabas*

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with natives, as they never broach a subject directly but beat all round the bush.

The scene was picturesque. The two white men sitting on boxes with their dogs curled up at their feet. The group of natives squatting round the fire, the flickering rays of which illuminated their ebony faces and the overhanging leafy branches of the *kameeldoorn* under which all were grouped. Close by, in the shadow, the white tents of the waggons stood out in bold relief. The oxen tied to the yokes lay slumbering peacefully. But for the shrill cry of a night-bird, the rustle of a sneaking jackal in the bush, or the far-off howl of a marauding wolf—nothing broke the quiet stillness of the African night.

As we found that one or two articles necessary for trek had been left behind we did not inspan the following day, but sent back a runner to fetch what was needed. Brown went out with his gun towards some neighbouring kopjes to find something for the pot. He returned in the evening with a couple of guinea-fowl, which were plentiful in the neighbourhood. We had one each for our supper. Imagine, dear reader, eating a fat fowl for your evening meal. It would be a hard task in civilised life, but not in the least on the veld. What the natives obtained from the remains of our meal was not very much. After a couple of pipes and a few stirring yarns from my companion we turned in. We slept that night in the waggon, as rain had set in—rather an unusual occurrence for that time of the year.

We spent most of the following day in overhauling our bridles and saddles, shortening girths, and selecting stirrups and bits out of the stock in the waggon. The horse-gear, which we had purchased in Pretoria, was all condemned military stock, the saddles being the old pattern used by the Indian army, particularly suitable for our young and untrained horses, not to mention one untrained rider!

In the afternoon we inspanned and trekked on till the sun had set, making but poor progress over the heavy sand. We camped for the night beside two other waggons which had just come down from Lake Ngami. The two Dutchmen with the waggons,

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

one of whom was a missionary, told us that they had come from the Ghansi veld (which lies on the borders of German South-West Africa) via the Lake. From them we learnt all the news of the road. The first and chief topic of conversation between those meeting each other trekking the Kalahari, whether natives or white men, is water. "Where is the next water?" "Is — pan dry?" "Has — well any water?" These are the questions each puts on first meeting. We learnt here that, though the water in the wells and *vleis* through the desert was very scanty, Lake Ngami was filling up for the first time in ten years, and that the River Botletle was overflowing its banks everywhere; so much so that all waggons had now to make large detours. This was no good news for us, with our heavy waggons and large quantity of young live-stock.

Early the next morning we sent back our spans of oxen and horses to the last water as it was full sixteen miles to the next; and this meant three or four long treks for our heavily laden waggons. Shortly after noon we inspanned as the day was dull. We trekked on steadily till nearly sundown, when we unyoked the cattle to give them a graze. Inspanning again, we pushed on through the greater part of the night, only outspanning for short intervals to rest the oxen. The sand was terribly heavy and our drivers had to make free use of their long whips to urge on the wearied beasts. Trekking through the desert under such conditions is a cruel job.

Just before noon on the next day we reached the Kolokome well, by which we outspanned. We had been trekking for nearly fourteen hours to cover sixteen miles—hardly more than one mile per hour! So heavy is the sand in the desert that the waggons often sink to their axles and stick fast. Most of the veld here is surrounded by low kopjes on which scrub and trees grow abundantly. The ground is covered with thorn bushes of all descriptions, the mimosa-thorn being prominent. The *waacht een beetje* (wait a bit) thorn fully lived up to its name, its hooked spike taking many a thread out of strong khaki clothes.

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The well at Kolokome is sunk in limestone rock, with a crude windlass fixed at the top and a galvanised-iron trough to hold the water. There was no rope so we utilised our oxen-rheims, tied together, to haul up the buckets of water. The well at Kolokome only has water after the rains, for there is apparently no natural spring.

It was a pleasure to watch the poor cattle, parched with dust and thirst, greedily suck up the welcome liquid, swelling before our eyes. When they had drunk their fill, they were turned out to graze in charge of the cattle-watcher.

Late in the afternoon we made another trek to the next well, at Momongwe. Here we kraaled the horses and cattle for the night. Since a messenger we were daily expecting had not yet arrived, we decided to stop by this well to wait his coming. He was to bring on the rifles, which the cattle-watchers would need in the lion veld, as they had not all arrived from Pretoria when we left. As water in the Momongwe well was fairly plentiful, it was a suitable camping-place. The veld around abounded in birds of all descriptions. Namaqua partridge and guinea-fowl were especially plentiful. Consequently we always had plenty of food in the pot. We made good use of this period of waiting to doctor up the horses, some of which had become badly chafed about their heads through ill-fitting head-stalls. It was no easy task to catch them, as they were as timid and wild as they could possibly be. To get them accustomed to being handled, we decided to picket them in future, whenever possible, instead of merely kraaling them. It was, however, much easier to decide to do this than to do it. On the first night we only succeeded in tying up half of them ; and that took us the best part of two hours ! After two days' waiting no messenger had arrived. Being now a little alive to the unreliability of our leader's promises, I decided to send back a mounted native to fetch the rifles. He left in the afternoon ; whilst we inspanned to trek to the next water, which lay twenty-six miles off, in Mukarane Pan. The horses went ahead. We made a long trek till sundown. At dawn we trekked on, till we met two of the

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horse-boys, who had returned to inform us that one of the mares had got lost, having bolted, frightened by a sudden movement in the bush. Fearing that the mare might return to Serowe, which would mean a long delay before she was recovered, we instructed the natives to get on the spoor of the horse and not to return till they had located the animal's whereabouts. Towards evening we approached the *vlei*. Here we outspanned, quickly unyoking the thirsty oxen to give them a drink. We drew up our waggons, one parallel to the other, and between them we fastened the horse-line. We picketed our horses, or, at least, as many as we could catch; and these we only caught by holding out enticing handfuls of mealies. We had but little fear of lions here, though their presence was not unknown. Indeed, on my return trek just before arrival here, a party of lions had travelled right into the desert in the wake of a big mob of cattle, and were successful in securing one or two. Such an occurrence is, however, rare, as lions generally keep near water.

The water in Mukarane *vlei* was plentiful, but very muddy. It was almost impossible to drink it except when boiled with coffee; even then one saw in one's cup a thick sediment of mud. To wash was a waste of time; the water made one, if anything, more dirty than before. Trekking through these waterless stretches of the Kalahari is poor fun.

Some Kalahari bushmen—the Mosarwas—turned up at the waggons shortly after we had outspanned to sell us milk. As our natives had returned with no trustworthy information as to the missing horse, we arranged with the bushmen to go out and find the animal, promising them some tobacco on their return.

The Mosarwas are the Arabs of the Kalahari. In appearance they are short, lean and of poor physique, their prominent cheek-bones giving them almost a Mongolian cast. Two rather peculiar physical features about them are their prominent buttocks, particularly noticeable in their womenfolk, and their crinkled and creased abdomens. The latter peculiarity is due to their periodical feasts and fasts. One day, when opportunity is kind, they will eat to repletion—almost to bursting-point—



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their stomachs expanding to an immense size ; the usual spell of starvation, save for a few roots or berries, will ensue. The consequent contraction is not hard to imagine. The Mosarwas are undoubtedly of Hottentot extraction—pure bushmen are practically extinct—being similar in appearance and having some like customs and words. Their talk has been described as similar to the snapping of a rusty flintlock, being nothing much more than a series of clicks and clucks. One reason put forward to explain the adoption of this guttural mode of speech is that their presence would not be thereby betrayed to the game in the vicinity. The Mosarwas are held in contempt by all other native tribes, as they possess no permanent homes, no lands and no chief. They live as near to Nature as does any aborigine in any part of the world, existing on the wide veld on roots, berries or any animal they may chance to kill. Their weapons are chiefly the spear and the bow and arrow, tipped with a poison which is extracted from a grub and mixed with snake poison and gum. This is most deadly in its action, but very slow ; a giraffe, struck by one of these arrows, takes nearly two days to die.

The veld lore of the Mosarwas is nothing short of marvellous. They are unsurpassed as trackers, equalled by none, unless it be the aborigine of Australia. A Mosarwa will read from a spoor in the veld, or even on the hard sandstone, where it is unnoticeable to the average hunter, what kind of buck has passed, whether going to or returning from water, whether the animal is close by, its intentions—whether just grazing or on its way to another district. He can easily determine the species of animal from the way the grass has been nibbled. In short, nothing is concealed from his keen eyes, so inexhaustible is his knowledge, or instinct for, the habits of the game and birds in the Kalahari. A wounded buck never escapes him. On foot they will *run down* small game, gradually tiring out the animal. With crooked fingers, with an occasional guttural “click,” they follow the almost invisible spoor, trotting steadily for hours. The result is inevitable.

They know of every pan or *vlei* that holds water in the

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region they frequent. They cover almost unheard-of distances over immense stretches of waterless desert. Childbirth, to a Mosarwa woman, is a mere bagatelle, entailing but an hour or two's delay when a party is on the move. I must not, however, dwell more on these Sherlock Holmeses of the veld, save to add that it was a party of these bushmen we despatched to find our missing horse. But a few hours had elapsed before two of them returned with the information that they had found the whereabouts of the strayed mare and that the rest of their party was watching by the horse. It had strayed some twelve miles—but what is twelve miles to a Mosarwa?

As there was little game by the *vlei* at which we were camped we bought a sheep from a native, who was taking down some stock to Serowe to sell. It cost us fifteen shillings, being one of the fat-tailed type of sheep. From the tail alone we obtained many pounds of excellent dripping, which is a splendid "stand-by" when on a long trek. For some days, when game was scarce, bread and dripping would be our staple diet.

While camped here, we employed part of the time in "lunging" some of the young horses to break them in a little, as it was essential that they should be fairly accustomed to being handled before we reached the lion veld. After a wait of four days our mounted native returned with the guns. We thereupon struck camp and prepared to trek on to the next water. We repacked the waggons, taking special care that our *vaatjes* (water-barrels) were full of water, as we had in front of us a long "thirst." It was sixty miles to the wells of Lotlhakane, where our next water lay. Twenty miles before these wells lies the pit of Ditowane; this well, however, we had learnt from natives on the road was dry. We were hoping against hope that the news would not be quite true, that there would be at least a little water in the well, native intelligence being never very reliable, for we feared that, if correct, our spans of oxen would never reach water, as sixty miles of heavy sand was too great a distance for our young beasts to pull such heavily laden waggons. With not very light hearts we inspanned and started

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trekking. Our start was bad. The oxen had been in the yokes for only an hour when Brown, who had gone ahead with the horses with the intention of riding right through to water, returned, informing me that all the horses had bolted and scattered. It seemed that one of the packhorses had slipped its load, and a frying-pan clattering along behind its heels had frightened the whole bunch of young animals out of their wits ; they had bolted in all directions. There was nothing else to be done but to outspan where we were, and, when the horses were collected, to camp for the night ; early in the morning we must send the animals back to water before starting again. This we did. As the following day was dull, we inspanned at noon after the oxen had returned from water. The horses again went on ahead. We trekked hard all that day and through the night also, only outspanning for short intervals. The oxen pulled well in the cool of the night, but towards the noon of the next day they became very leg-weary, and only too often we had to use our whips and sjamboks to urge on the tired beasts. Over mile after mile of waterless veld the poor animals struggled, pulling their heavy loads. All that day and all through the next night we trekked, save for an occasional short outspan in which the tired cattle were almost too done up to eat. Slowly they were becoming exhausted, being young and unaccustomed to these dreaded " thirsts." If the well at Ditawane held no water, then our hope of reaching the water at Lotlhakane was but slight. Hour after hour passed with the same eternal bush and scrub, the same eternal sand ; hour after hour heard the same remorseless cracking of the long whips, the same yells and curses of the drivers, as the exhausted beasts time and again dropped in their yokes panting for breath and for water. Clouds of dust clotted their parched nostrils and mouths ; the heat of the rising sun added to their sufferings. But it was no time for pity—water had to be reached !

Shortly after sunrise on the third day we reached Ditawane Well. To our joy we found that there was just sufficient water for the two spans, though very muddy. The well was half choked up through an ox having fallen in. We outspanned our oxen

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warily and allowed them to drink in couples. More than one span foolishly unyoked all together have made a blind stampede for the water, resulting in one or two falling into the well and being killed. One thought the poor animals would never stop drinking, so parched with dust and thirst were they. They had been in the yokes for over thirty hours without water. Had there not been water in this well, half our spans would never have reached Lotlhakane. Oxen have a really wonderful power of endurance. Seasoned spans are at times able to go without water for as long as five days, though, unless every opportunity possible is given them to graze when the dew is heaviest on the grass, the chances are that they will succumb. At such times everything depends on the driver and on his skill in husbanding, by judicious arrangement of the treks, the strength of his oxen.

There are two pits at Ditawane : one belonging to the Government, the other to a native. The former is nearly always dry. It is apparently left for a native to supply the requirements of man and beast at Ditawane. As it was necessary to rest our spans, as well as our horses, after their long trek, we cleaned out the native well. Horses are more fastidious about their drinking water than cattle. All of us, white men and natives, buckled to, and after three hours of real hard work shovelling soil and hauling it up in buckets, hand over hand, we soon had a fair supply of water accumulating. The work was a welcome change from the rather lazy life led on trek in a veld poorly provided with game.

The surroundings of the Ditawane wells are exceedingly picturesque. Encircling the open space, where the wells are sunk, stand large shady *mopane* trees. Numerous gaily coloured little birds hop round the edge of the well, drinking from the pools where the cattle have been watered. My slightest movement would frighten them away, only to return when all was quiet again. I spent many an idle moment counting the different colours of these little creatures, watching their dainty movements, whilst the sun sank slowly behind the trees. Everything then became very quiet and still. As I sat alone by the edge of the



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well, so far away from civilisation and the neurotic life of towns, a feeling of peace and contentment would steal over me lulling to sleep all the petty ambitions that seem to loom so large on one's horizon elsewhere. I would sit on till my feathered friends sped away, till darkness had wrapped the silent veld in its cloak, wondering whether the wells by the cedars of Lebanon were as peaceful as the wells of the Kalahari.

The moon was full during these nights by the wells, and when it rose the veld was as light as day.

One evening, when the moon had been up for a couple of hours, Brown and I took our guns to try to bag some guinea-fowl which were roosting in the trees not far from the waggons. Try as hard as we could, move as quietly as we did, we were unable to get a shot at them. The clear light betrayed our slightest movement. After being led on from tree to tree, we at last gave it up in disgust, and started to return to the waggons. In returning, I must confess that, had it not been for Brown, I should have been hopelessly lost, as I had been so intent on the birds in the trees that I had not kept my bearings. Fortunately my companion was not the tenderfoot I was.

The Kalahari is one of the most difficult velds in which to hunt. It is as flat as a billiard-table ; every tree is the same as its fellow, every bush the same as another. At times I have left the waggons and, when not five hundred yards off, have experienced no little difficulty in finding them again. One gradually acquires some little veld lore by experience, though it is not learnt in a day. The power of observation develops slowly. One learns, when leaving the waggons or the camp, to note the height and the angle of the sun and the direction of the wind, if any. The latter is a most important point on a dark and cloudy night. The easiest way to do this is by observing the bend of the grass or leaves, or by letting a stream of fine sand slowly flow from one's hand. It is not long either before you begin instinctively to take notice of landmarks, such as ant-hills or dead trees, which stand out conspicuously amidst the green foliage. Ant-hills in the Kalahari are excellent landmarks, if you take the

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essential precaution of looking at them from both sides—*i.e.* when you approach them and when you have passed by—otherwise, they lead you astray. These ant-hills are quite a feature of the Kalahari, some of them reaching a height of twenty to thirty feet. In the veld through which we were trekking we could obtain but little help from the subsoil or from the nature of the trees, as the whole country round was uniform in nearly every particular. Even the natives—the Bechuana, not the Mosarwa—frequently lose themselves, though born in the country. Game spoor in the Kalahari is also most difficult to follow. Owing to the sandy soil it is very hard to determine the age of the spoor, which is never clearly cut, often deadened and partly obliterated by the wind.

Having given up our attempt after guinea-fowl, we returned to the camp and ate a substantial supper of bread and dripping.

We left Ditawane the following afternoon and trekked for the Lotlhakane Well; the horses, as before, went ahead with Brown in charge. Two treks brought us to a well-known landmark in the veld around—the *knoppidoorn* trees, tall and upright, and grouped together just alongside the waggon road. They lie half-way between the two waters. We stopped the best part of the night at this outspan spot till dawn broke; we then continued our trek. Three long treks brought us in sight of the large *kameeldoorn* trees of Lotlhakane valley. When entering the valley, the heavy sand gave place to a hard road, which was much appreciated by the oxen. Brown met us a mile or two away bringing out my horse with him, and we enjoyed together a lovely gallop over the hard stretch of veld to the camp, the gleaming lights of which shone through the trees. The night was cold, but the air was delicious. A thin coating of ice covered the water in our buckets in the morning, but under two or three heavy blankets the cold never affected our sleep in the open air. We were joined that night by a young trader who was riding up to the lake on horseback—by no means a light task. There was plenty of food, as Brown, whilst waiting for the waggons, had spent his time in shooting a young *duyker* and a couple of fat



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guinea-fowl. Venison steaks, with peach jam as a substitute for red-currant jelly, and roast guinea-fowl, with "sourdough" bread, made a feast fit for the gods. We sat by the fire, shielded from the wind by a *scherm* (a rude enclosure made of bush), yarning and smoking till late, the light of the dying fire being paled by the rays of the rising moon. It is easy—only *too* easy—alas ! for my peace of mind—to recall whilst penning these lines the picturesque appearance of our camp that night by the well at Lotlhakane : the bright canopy of the heavens above our bower, the flickering light of the camp fire, the still line of horses picketed between the two waggons, the tents of which shone white in the rays of the moon ; the kraal close by sheltering our weary spans lying deep in slumber ; and the little camp fires of the natives gleaming through the wheels of the waggons. It all comes back to me so vividly ! Those nights on the African veld seem but as yesterday. It is impossible to forget the veld.

We stayed at the well for three days in order to rest our oxen and horses, more particularly the latter, as some of them were showing ill effects from the hard trekking. Three of them had already prematurely dropped foals, and were, in consequence, in poor condition. Oh the folly of bringing those young mares, all in foal, on such a journey ! Each one of them—without an exception—threw her foal prematurely during the journey up to the Lake ; and was it to be wondered at, seeing that, apart from the hardships of the trek, they had different grass to graze on daily ?

Late in the afternoon of the third day we packed our waggons, inspanned and started to trek towards the next water, many miles ahead. My information as to the distance to this water was vague, but I was informed by Brown that by noon of the next day we should reach water. Acting on this piece of information, I gave the order at sundown that the horses should be picketed for the night, little dreaming what a foolish thing I was doing in giving such an order and how grossly I was misinformed. Had I had even a suspicion that water might not be reached by noon of the next day I should have ridden through a

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good part of the night, so as to avoid letting the horses go without water longer than twelve hours, as these animals soon get distressed when parched with thirst. As it was, no misgivings crept into my mind. I knew full well that my companion had travelled this road more than once; and, moreover, he confirmed my order.

I had not then learnt how "native" was his mind, and how, consequently, unreliable was his estimation of distance, a thing no native mind seems to be able to grasp. We saddled up at sunrise, overtaking our waggons which had passed us in the night. On my arrival I found most of the cattle had strayed in the veld—a fact not to be much surprised at, as no white man had been there. Leaving instructions to inspan directly the missing cattle were found, we rode on, driving the little mob of horses ahead of us. We rode steadily through that day till the sun sank; but not a drop of water could we find in the veld. Picketing the thirsty and tired horses for the night, we saddled up again early in the morning and pushed on hard till the salt *vlei* of Chukutsa, one of the smaller Makarikari salt pans, gleamed through the trees. Several of the horses were by now very distressed, two more of them during the night having dropped their foals. The salt pan looked very picturesque from the high ground, which was covered with a thick forest of *mopane* trees. I fear, however, I was then in no mood to appreciate the beauty of the scene, disgusted as I was with the unreliability of my transport-rider's information and worried about the condition of the horses. As I had anticipated, on nearing the salt *vlei* it was more than we could do to prevent the thirsty and parched animals stampeding to drink the brackish water, which meant, in nine cases out of ten, certain death. Despite all our efforts the horses rushed to drink, though I had half a hope that their instinct might warn them not to after they had once tasted the brackish water. Unfortunately their thirst conquered instinct, and it was only by dint of using our sjamboks freely across their flanks that we could get the young horses away from the water. Even the gelding I was riding—an old hunting horse who should have known

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better—tried anxiously to drink, so thirsty was he. Pushing steadily on, we reached Machanin Pan—a rain-water *vlei*—by noon. Here we off-saddled and allowed the horses to get a refreshing drink at last. The distance my transport-rider had estimated as an eight-hour ride took us nearly twice as long. We had covered not far short of fifty miles from Lotlhakane, the horses having been without water for nearly forty-eight hours.

After a long wait the waggons arrived. The oxen also were in a very distressed condition, having been excessively delayed in the “thirst” owing to the carelessness of the driver and the cattle-watcher. One ox had fallen in the yoke and had had to be released, being utterly worn out. This meant the reduction of the span by two oxen, which consequently had thrown extra work on the rest. Fortunately at this *vlei* we met a native in charge of a mob of cattle on their way to Serowe, from which I selected the two best oxen, and so made up a full span again.

By this pan we shot our first duck; and it proved excellent eating. We also caught sight of some *paurw*, but they were too far out of range. After a rest of a day we inspanned and trekked on. We were now almost out of the desert, the sandy soil giving place to more hard and stony ground. Much of the veld here was bare and flat, with here and there a few solitary palms—a species of the *Borassus* palm. In the distance we noticed thick smoke, which, we learnt, came from the reeds of the River Botletle, which had been fired by the natives in the vicinity. Whilst trekking over these bare flats, which are in many cases the beds of dry salt pans, I noticed mirages in the distance—and particularly during the heat of midday. The name Makarikari means mirage.

At sundown on 1st July we reached Mopipi Tree stadt, or “Barker’s Store,” as it is more popularly known in the Protectorate. It had taken us twenty-six days to cross the stretch of desert that lies between Khama’s capital and Mopipi. It is here one first strikes the River Botletle.

## CHAPTER VII

### ALONG THE BANKS OF THE BOTLETLE

**M**OPIPI was a rather desolate-looking place. It possessed one trading store, which was run by the only white man living in the stadt. In front of the store stood the tree from which it took its name. The trader was a most interesting and hospitable fellow, with, however, the same weakness as that of my companion. Briefly, he was a superb liar ! The peculiar part of it all was that neither of them was aware of the beam in his own eye, though fully alive to the mote in the other's. At different times each took me aside to warn me to accept *cum grano* the yarns of the other—a truly humorous situation ! It was quite a pleasant comedy, though at times I must confess to feeling rather insulted when asked to swallow some of the atrocious stories with which they would regale me. Killing six lions before breakfast and shooting duck on a *vlei* at five hundred yards with a rifle, the duck eventually sinking from the weight of the lead, were but small feats for Mopipi's trader.

The chief mainstay of this store was buying cattle and skins from the natives in exchange for cash and goods ; the latter consisted of Kafir " truck," such as blankets, beads, limbo (cotton cloth), knives, pots and pans, etc. The skins and cattle would be sent down periodically to Serowe for sale. Native trading to-day, like most other things in South Africa, is no longer the profitable occupation it was some years back. In Livingstone's time Kafir trading was a little gold mine ; to-day it is a precarious living. Competition is too keen, and the average native is too civilised for the trader to make big profits.

As there was but poor grazing by Mopipi we sent the horses

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and oxen to a small native village a mile or two farther on, where the grass was plentiful and richer. I decided here to make wholesale changes amongst my waggon natives, as some of them had been giving trouble continuously, first with one thing then another. Particularly was this the case by the wells in the desert, where the Damaras would quarrel with the Bechuanas, each party refusing to assist the other in watering their span. The Damaras were nearly always the aggressors. I sacked the driver of one waggon ; he was hopelessly incompetent and had been hired at a most ridiculous wage by the recruiter, who himself knew as little about driving a span of oxen as did the driver in question. In his place I hired a competent Makalaka native at half the wage. I further dispensed with two other loafing Damaras. For a time the remainder became a little more tractable, but the foolishly lenient treatment they had received formerly at the hands of Morgan caused great trouble. I never had to deal with such a spoilt crowd of natives in all my life. They would have been soon knocked into shape by a month or two of hard work in the Rand mines.

From Mopipi there are two waggon roads to Rhakops, the half-way stadt between Lake Ngami and Serowe : one across the river, along the north bank of the Botletle, and the other round the bend of the river on its south side. The latter route is twice the distance, as the Botletle here makes a large bend. The fullness of the river, however, prevented our fording it with our waggons and live-stock ; so we were compelled to take the longer road. After a couple of days at Mopipi we bade farewell to the cheerful, if not veracious, trader and trekked round the bend of the Botletle. We passed by many small villages, each ruled by a headman placed in authority there by Chief Khama. Three treks brought us to a small village in the Kedia district. On our road we ran across a young python, about eight feet in length, which the natives despatched with sticks and, to my surprise, afterwards ate.

The ox which had been overworked in the Kalahari was daily becoming weaker, notwithstanding that it was never inspanned.

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The possibility that the animal might be infected with lung-sickness occurred to us; so I decided to ride ahead with a native to the police camp at Rhakops to report the fact of the ox being sick. Lung-sickness—a form of pleuro-pneumonia—is one of the many deadly cattle diseases with which Africa has to contend; and in Bechuanaland the disease was then rife.

Having this in mind, we were a little anxious about our sick ox. If our suspicions were justified there would be trouble and delay ahead of us, for all our spans would have to be quarantined.

Here again, but for the last time, I relied on my companion's estimate of distances. He informed me that it was only a four hours' ride on horseback from the place where we were outspanned to the police camp at Rhakops. Relying on this information, I saddled up at sunrise and calculated that noon would see the native and myself near our destination's end. I took neither food nor blankets with me, nor beyond a hasty cup of coffee did I worry about any morning meal, as I wanted to make the most of the cool part of the morning. To be brief, I will say that I was in the saddle over fourteen hours and covered fifty miles and more before I reached the stadt of Rhakops. The ordinary distance was between thirty to forty miles and was greatly increased by the many detours necessary on account of the river being in flood.

The country through which we rode was very bare and flat, with small villages and cattle-posts dotted here and there. I espied one or two herds of springbok, though always too far out of range to get in a shot, and there was practically no cover of which to avail oneself to approach within range. Great stretches of the country, only a little higher than the level of the river, were flooded and the water and the swampy ground proved very tiring to the horses. In some parts the water reached our saddle-girths. We off-saddled for a couple of hours during the heat of the day, knee-haltering our horses and allowing them to graze, and were fortunate in obtaining some calabash or sour milk from a cattle-post in the neighbourhood. This drink,

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besides being most sustaining, is also most refreshing. Sunset found us still some miles away from the stadt but fortunately near to a cattle-post, whither we rode, deciding to camp there for the night. My native, a Motawana, had no little difficulty in making himself understood by the Bahurutsi natives in charge of the cattle-post. They discovered, however, that we wanted food. We bought a sheep and it was not long before one was killed, skinned, and its liver frying on the embers of the fire. I was ravenously hungry, and soon but very little remained of that sheep's liver, which I washed down with goat's milk. After a smoke I lay down by the fire with the intention of sleeping, but found it to be almost impossible owing to the swarms of mosquitoes. My saddle also was not as comfortable a pillow as it might have been, and without any blankets I was very cold; moreover, the mosquitoes, attracted by the flooded lands, were numerous so I was not sorry when dawn broke.

After the horses had had a short graze we saddled up and resumed our ride. I left instructions with the natives at the post that the remainder of the sheep was to be handed to the waggons when they should arrive, whereon the whiteman in charge would pay them the sum of five shillings—the price I had agreed on after much haggling overnight.

On resuming our ride we found the usual waggon route was completely under water, and it was only after long detours and much riding through heavy swamps that the trees near Rhakops showed in sight. The veld in places along the river was full of holes—veritable death-traps for horses. In fact, some parts of the ground were so dangerous that we were compelled to lead our horses. Most of the holes were made by the ant-bear, which burrows for great distances. We also came on old game-pits, which were used by the natives for catching game before the advent of the rifle. These old pits, though now partly filled up, are death-traps for the cantering horse, owing to the long grass which more or less conceals them from the eye. They measure, roughly, twelve feet by six feet, with a depth of twelve feet or more. After they were dug by the natives they were artfully

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covered with sticks, leaves, and light soil, giving the surface the appearance of solid ground. A crescent-shaped body of men would then drive the game with deafening and ear-splitting yells towards the narrow outlet, where the game-pits had been dug. The wretched, panic-stricken animals—large-horned buck of all descriptions—would fall struggling into these pits, and a wholesale slaughter would ensue. It is not so many years ago that this unsportsmanlike method of hunting was practised by the natives in this region.

By noon we arrived at the police camp, where I met the N.C.O. of the outpost. With usual veld hospitality I was welcomed with a good meal, to which I did full justice. Afterwards the cheery corporal and I sat down to a long chat; and indeed I was not at all sorry to stretch my legs under a table after so many hours in the saddle. The N.C.O., on hearing my report about the sick ox, sent out one of his Basuto troopers, who, after inspecting the animal, fortunately confirmed our opinion—that the ox had sickened from overstrain. The animal was dead by the time the trooper reached it.

Just before sundown the corporal and I strolled down to the river, about a mile away from the camp. The scenery of the Botletle here was really too lovely for words. I remained for minutes spellbound at the beautiful scene presented by the river flowing by us. The sight of the luxuriant foliage that shaded the banks of the fast-flowing waters, of the tall green reeds bending under the faint breeze that swept over them, of the deep blending tints of gold in the shady trees in the sun's dying rays, was more than welcome after the barren and inhospitable stretches of desert through which we had been trekking for so many days. The sun had long set before my companion could drag me away back to the camp, where our meal, he said, was getting cold. On our way we skirted the village, which was in nearly every respect similar to that of Serowe, only smaller. It is the second stadt of importance, as well as size, in the Bamangwato reserve. On the morning following my arrival, whilst engaged in the exciting task of playing a game of crib with the corporal, I



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received a note from Brown with the unwelcome news that he had been compelled to outspan two or three miles away, owing to the fact that many of the horses were very sick and two of them already dead. This piece of information put a prompt stop to the game of cribbage and caused me to saddle up and ride off at once towards the waggons. I found Brown's information was—this time—only too correct! Seven of the horses were purging distressingly; and we had no colic mixture on the waggons. We concocted a weird mixture out of linseed oil, chlorodyne and painkiller. With this we drenched the sick animals, in some cases with favourable results. To one horse that was nearly dead and in great pain I gave two bottles of chlorodyne. The horse died; whether from the chlorodyne or from the sickness I did not know! On opening the bodies of the dead animals it was easily seen that the alkaline water of Chukutsa pan was responsible for their death, the intestines being highly inflamed. Out of the four that died three had thrown their foals in that stretch of thirst in which I had so unfortunately delayed them. In the case of the others we managed to help Nature in healing the acute inflammation in the bowels by dint of drenches of oil and thin Boer meal. At this juncture news reached me that my brother was within a few miles of us with the other waggon and the remaining six horses. We consequently sent a mounted runner off urging him to hurry on and join us, as we hoped that he might have some colic mixture on his waggon. He arrived the same evening, having been on trek only twenty days, since his waggon was lighter than ours and his live-stock less. But he had no colic mixture! The fact that our expedition had thirty horses and not one bottle of horse medicine reflected little credit on any of us. We managed by continual drenches to save the other sick horses, and as we had to await the arrival of our leader, whose to-morrow was as reliable as the Chilians' *mañana*, we decided to find a good spot near the river where the grazing was better than that afforded by our present outspan, in order to give the live-stock a chance of picking up. We were now in lion veld; but owing to our

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proximity to a large native stadt we did not anticipate any trouble from these marauders. However, when we had selected the spot for our new camp, we drew up our waggons in the form of a laager, enclosing the kraals of our live-stock. Our party now consisted of us three white men, with three waggons; the respective drivers, voorloopers and cattle-watchers; four horse-boys, and a couple of cook-boys; and our live-stock numbered three span of oxen (fifty-four head) and twenty-five horses.

We now enjoyed a lazy period whilst waiting for our erratic leader, who was reported to be on his way to the Victoria Falls, and passed our time in occasional gallops over the flats to the police camp, where we would yarn and play cards with the N.C.O. Now and then we went fishing (I never caught anything), and fishing generally meant lying lazily along the banks of the river gazing at the lovely scenery. We would also go out for an occasional shoot; we generally secured duck, which was plentiful on the flooded lands along the river bank. It was no hard task to bag as many as five in one shot. The mosquitoes were becoming very troublesome at night, owing to the large and daily increasing stretches of flooded lands close by, and so we had mosquito nets rigged up round our beds by the fire.

This period of inactivity naturally started trouble with our Damaras, who wanted constantly to visit the neighbouring stadt to indulge in Kafir beer "drunks." Neither my brother nor I had any intention of allowing them to do this; consequently we arranged with the police corporal to forbid any of our Damaras to enter the village, or any native there to supply them with liquor. This prohibition raised great discontent, as we expected; and we were daily treated to the usual story: Morgan allowed them to do this and allowed them to do that. It worried us not a jot, though troubles and grumbling went on, first over one thing and then another, till one felt like taking a sjambok and laying it well across their backs. In a native protectorate, however, the native is the top dog and knows it. A thrashing to

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an insolent nigger means a five-pound fine, which is hardly good enough.

Whilst encamped near Rhakops, the headman of the stadt died naturally creating some little stir in the uneventful life of the natives. The preparation of the coffin was a curious sight. The stadt's coffin-makers obtained all the empty packing-cases and odd pieces of wood they could beg or steal, and by dint of much sawing and hammering a crude coffin was put together, which caused the spectators great satisfaction and the undertakers no little pride. The fact that the words "In transit to Delagoa Bay—keep in a cool place" were printed in bold letters on one side worried nobody in the least. He was buried at the dead of night in his cattle kraal, according to native custom, and his coffin was followed by a motley crowd of wives and slaves, each of whom vied with the others in the expression of intense grief by giving vent to the most diabolical noises. The grotesque coffin, supported on poles, was carried to the kraal by eight bearers; Christian hymns in the Sechuana tongue were sung regardless of time and key, and after the burial mounted men were despatched to Chief Khama to announce the death.

Days and weeks passed, but still no news of our eccentric leader reached us, beyond some startling yarns which we could not quite credit, although by this time we were prepared to believe almost anything as regards his doings. As the N.C.O. had to make a trip to Serowe on Government business my brother decided to accompany him and ascertain the real position of affairs. He left us on the 27th July, and we inspanned our waggons and trekked a little farther up the river, where the grazing was better. Brown and I made one or two trips over the flats after springbok, but we met with little success, for, although we adopted the usual method of riding round and slowly encircling the herd, the chance to get within range was small, since there was no cover at all to help us. Once or twice under the cover of our cattle we got within range and Brown and one of the natives each bagged a buck, but I only scored misses. To judge distances

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on these flats is no easy task and is only acquired by long experience. I was reminded of the conversation in "Jock of the Bushveld":

"What'ud you put up for that stump?"

"I looked hard and answered confidently: 'Two hundred!'"

"Step it!" was the reply. I paced the distance; it was eighty-two yards.

"It was very bewildering; but he helped me out a bit with, 'Bush telescopes, sonny!'"

"You mean it magnifies them?" I asked in surprise.

"No! Magnifies the distance, like lookin' down an avenue! Gun barr'l looks a mile long when you put yer eye to it! Open flats bring 'em closer; and 'cross water or a gully seems like you kin put yer hand on 'em!"

We used to take a ride over these flats in the cool of the afternoon, if we were not wading up to our knees in the swamps after the wary duck. We also used to take a morning stroll to the river for a wash. The fear of crocodiles prevented us from getting a swim, so we had to content ourselves with pouring pails of water over our dusty bodies. The swarms of mosquitoes in the evening were the only serious trouble and we started taking nightly doses of quinine to ward off fever. It is rather peculiar that one seems far more susceptible to malaria when not on trek. The attacks generally come during long outspans. I suppose the exercise helps on trek. Snakes were very plentiful on these flats, especially the mamba, one of the most deadly in Africa. Its bite is fatal within a few hours and its rate of progression is so speedy that at times only a fast horse can get clear of it in pursuit!

Whilst camping here a waggon with a team of donkeys, owned by a party of Dutchmen, arrived down from the Lake, having trekked right through from Damaraland. They told us that the Botletle was very full and that they had lost two donkeys while fording the river near the Lake; in fact, they said, most of the waggons were trekking right round, to avoid fording the swollen river.

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Our food for the natives was fast giving out through this almost interminable wait, so I was compelled to send one waggon back to the store at Mopipi to obtain more grain, as the store at Rhakops had none. The grazing again becoming exhausted, we moved our camp still farther along the river, this time near to a large cattle-post where there was also a more plentiful supply of timber for our fires. Whilst trekking we passed a small stadt—Khukwe Post—where Sebetwana, the famous Basuto chief, crossed the Botletle some sixty years back on one of his marauding expeditions. A mile or two beyond this place we outspanned and made a fresh camp. The scenery round was extremely pretty, the banks of the river here being thickly timbered on both sides. We had to exercise great caution when taking the live-stock to the drift as the crocodiles were very numerous. From a neighbouring village we obtained a native “dug-out” canoe—a *mokoro*—and in it we spent many lazy hours drifting with the stream or being paddled along by a native.

It was now well in the month of August and this pleasant but inactive life began to become a little tedious. Brown's yarns were now all hackneyed; our scanty stock of reading matter was all exhausted; and we could not quarrel, thanks to the excellent disposition that my companion possessed. To break a monotony which was unrelieved by any hunting, as the game in this region had all been driven back for many miles, I decided to travel along the river to Rhakops in a native canoe. The scenery tempted me. Early one morning I set off in the *mokoro*, in which I was just able to fix between its narrow sides a deck-chair. I took with me a good supply of tobacco, a cold guinea-fowl and some “roaster-cookies.” My gun lay at my feet. The native paddled at the stern, or the bow, whichever one likes to call it, seeing both ends are practically the same. I was rather anxious to get a shot at a crocodile, having heard so much about the impenetrability of their skins. The swollen river made it improbable that any unwieldy hippopotamus would upset our fragile craft—a not very rare occurrence when the river is

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low. I was unfortunate as regards the crocodiles ; however quietly we drifted down stream along the shaded banks I was never in time to get in a shot, a splash a few yards ahead of me announcing that one had just plunged off the bank into the river, being warned of our approach. Now and then I caught sight of one lying on the matted reeds in the distance, but always too far out of range.

The scenery all along the river was charming. The silently moving waters were unruffled save for the plunge of a diver bird. The slender reeds lightly swayed in the faint breeze. The red and white lilies, peeping out their pretty heads above the water, recalled scenes of far-away Japan. And the thick-foliaged trees, in the shady boughs of which little bands of monkeys chattered and gaily plumaged birds fluttered to and fro, added to the beauty of the scene.

Gliding along the river, at times drifting with the fast-flowing stream, at others paddling over the flooded lands adjoining, a little before sunset we reached the stadt of Rhakops and found it practically flooded out. Great stretches of what had been grassy veld when we first arrived were now one sheet of water. I spent a couple of days in the stadt awaiting the arrival of the runners with the Government mail, who I expected would also have some message from my brother. I was not disappointed, for on the following day I received a line from him announcing that it was rumoured that Morgan was just two or three treks away from Lotlhakane Well, where the note was penned. This sounded hopeful, though I did not place overmuch reliance on it. I returned the next day in the *mokoro*, our journey taking us considerably longer, as the native had to paddle against the stream ; so it was not till well after sunset that the camp was reached. On our return trip my native killed a large python and also a lagavaan (a huge water-lizard), on both of which he feasted when he arrived at the camp. The waggon that we had despatched for grain had already returned when I came back ; so there remained nothing more to do but to go on waiting ! To break the monotony I resumed shaving,



A NATIVE "DUG-OUT"



CROSSING THE BOTLETLE RIVER





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having up till then grown a beard of which I was becoming quite proud, as it gave me a most venerable appearance (at least I thought so!). However, only three days had elapsed before the missing leader turned up in company with my brother, having with them another waggon and a Scotch cart. I learnt that, since I had been on trek, the Bechuanaland Government had issued regulations to the effect that no natives or cattle could enter the Protectorate from Angola, the territory in which we were going to recruit, owing to the fear of introducing sleeping sickness. So far as I could see, there was now not the slightest chance that the expedition would meet with any success; yet Morgan assumed that this restriction on the part of the Government was no real obstacle. I do not believe he gave the matter two moments' consecutive thought. I never could gather, nor do I know to this day, what the recruiter had been doing whilst we had been on trek, beyond spending money lavishly, making fabulous promises right and left, and leaving behind shoals of unpaid bills, all of which were stumbling-blocks for me when I returned from the Lake some months afterwards.

We spent five more days at our camp—and what were five days after waiting over five weeks?—during which Morgan shortened and welded a waggon tire on one of the waggons. I particularly mention this fact for it was a most creditable performance when on the veld. He had but a small portable forge and anvil for the job, and some not over-skilful assistants. The recruiter was indeed a most resourceful fellow, and if he had only coupled his many talents with a little stability he would have been a success in nearly anything he undertook. As it was, he would walk with his head in the skies planning most weird and expansive schemes, whilst his feet were in the mud tripping over the stones of unconsidered but essential details.

At last we started moving! Our caravan of four waggons and two small carts inspanned and commenced trekking on the afternoon of the 25th August. The leadership naturally devolved on

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Morgan ; and, so far as I was concerned, I most willingly handed over the reins of responsibility and the control of the spoilt and turbulent crowd of natives which had been mine for so many weeks. The natives were dissatisfied with all the delay, with the rations, and more particularly with the curtailment of their Kafir beer orgies ; so I was quite contented to play second, third or fourth fiddle for some time to come.

A long trek brought us to Rasebaki's stadt, one of the large villages on the river. Rasebaki himself was a Makalaka native and controlled a large number of bushmen from the Heina veld, which lies south of the river—a waterless desert except in the rainy season. Here he grazed many herds of cattle. By the stadt, when we arrived, were two waggons outspanned. With the two Dutchmen who accompanied the waggons were a couple of Germans, both practically penniless, who had come from Damaraland. They told us dismal tales of the conditions prevailing in that territory. Germany, it seems, beyond making very extensive graveyard there, has not much to show for the many millions of marks frittered away. Japan in Korea, and Germany in Damaraland, are the best examples furnished us to-day of how *not* to colonise !

Leaving this village we had to trek over a long waterless sand-belt, away from the course of the river. We trekked all night and during the best part of the following day, only outspanning for short intervals to rest the cattle. We reached the river again by sundown, outspanning at Menoakwena drift (the drift of the Crocodile's teeth). The route through which we had trekked had been cut by a Dutch transport-rider in order to save the many extra miles that had to be covered when keeping to the course of the river. Custom calls it Hendrik's Road, from the name of the transport-rider in question—a good, if rather grubby, old fellow.

We were now in lion veld and natives daily told us stories about the numerous lions seen in the district. As a rule it is a fairly safe plan to believe exactly nothing a native tells you, as the information is hopelessly inaccurate. Though we took little

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heed of these reports about lions, yet the sight of fresh lion spoor was indisputable evidence of their presence. As we had so much live-stock with us, especially horses, which after donkeys are the most toothsome meal for a lion, we decided to make no night treks but to laager our cattle and horses immediately after sundown. With four waggons, this was an easy task, as we placed each at right angles to the other, thus forming a square ; picketing the horses in the centre, our fires were kindled on the outside of the waggons with their spans of oxen attached. The size of our party, further, was a source of protection to us, for lions as a rule do not look for trouble ; and they scent that from a big party. We would inspan before sunrise and with the horses going on ahead would start our morning trek, outspanning when the sun became too warm.

Four long treks brought us to Magoodi drift. We had to do much extra trekking in this district, owing to the flooded lands along the river, which necessitated our cutting through bush over heavy sand-belts ; the old waggon road was completely under water. At one drift we were compelled to ford a part of the river, as the bush was too thick and the trees too big to cut a way through. It was a typical African veld scene ! The long teams of struggling oxen hauling the heavily laden waggons were nearly swept off their feet by the fast-flowing river ; the drivers waded alongside their spans, cracking their long whips, shouting and yelling. The wide expanse of river was on one side and the dark banks of timber and bush on the other ; and over all the cloudless sky with the rising sun shining down. We had to use double spans to bring three of the waggons through !

Beyond Magoodi drift the proximity of lions was unpleasantly impressed on us, by our finding the spoor of two on the track of our horses. We outspanned that night very soon after sunset, as there was practically no twilight, and took all the precautions possible to guard our live-stock. We lit big fires, which each of us faithfully relied on the other to replenish when necessary. I can just remember my sleepy eyes in the early hours of the morning lighting on a few glowing embers—all that was left of

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the big fires ! In the night the distant roaring of lions reached our ears, and the restless movements of the horses told us that they too were aware of the proximity of their natural enemy. We congratulated ourselves that they were at any rate keeping at a respectful distance. Dawn broke without any attack, but the sight in the morning of fresh lion spoor not fifty yards away from one of the spans of oxen made us all look rather blankly at one another. We secretly thanked our lucky stars that the lions had considered discretion the better part of valour ! The greatest risk to us, apart from the possible loss of some of our oxen or horses, would have been from the shower of bullets that would have assailed the visitors from our panic-stricken natives. Not a few hunters, when following up a lion in company with natives, have come very near death by the wild and mad firing that ensued when the lion suddenly turned on his pursuers. It is no unusual thing for the native to turn, run like a hare and, incidentally, fire off his gun over his shoulder, backwards, trusting to luck that he might hit the lion, never worrying about the fact that it is an equal chance that he may hit the hunter.

Trekking on, we reached Kubu (Hippo') drift, outspanning there for the night. This drift fully lived up to its name ; for all night we were treated to a series of grunts from the hippo in the river. We were only a hundred yards or so from the drift, and what with the grunts and the crashing in the reeds and bushes near by I was not surprised that I woke up in the middle of the night and mistook a harmless-looking ox a yard or two away for one of these unwieldy animals. However, by the time I was sufficiently awake to think of reaching for my gun I realised that it was only my imagination at work ! We reached Makalamabedi stadt, where one solitary white man was endeavouring to make a fortune. On nearing his store we passed by a large tree blazed with an ↑ indicating the western boundary of Khama's territory. After outspanning, we cheered up the trader with a game of bridge and broached our remaining case of medical comforts for a bottle of dop (Cape brandy).

We rested our stock for a couple of days, taking this oppor-

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tunity of washing the horses with a " dip " to rid them of ticks which were worrying them. One of our oxen here came to grief by falling into a hole. The ox to all intents and purposes appeared uninjured, but we could not get it to move. We tried all sorts of devices, but with no effect. We even went to the length of kindling a small fire under its body—a useful, if rather cruel, resource with a stubborn ox—but this also had no effect, beyond making us feel like a lot of butchers. We then tried to haul it to its feet by means of a block and tackle—and succeeded ! Of no avail ; its stubbornness beat us. There is nothing in this world quite so stubborn as an obstinate ox. Eventually we had to shoot it—and eat it !

On the evening of the following day, the 6th—we were now in the month of September—we trekked from Makalamabedi into Ngamiland. We were now in Chief Mathibe's territory.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TREKKING THROUGH NGAMILAND TO THE LAKE

**T**WO days of trekking from Makalamabedi along the river, passing on the way a small village by Mamoshweu drift, brought us to the stadt of Piet Sebege, who owned a Government grant of land. Piet Sebege and his son were excellent game shots, and the old man even to-day outrivals many a good hunter, great accuracy in judgment of long distances being his special *forte*.

At all these villages along the river we were able to barter for as much milk as we wanted ; for a calabash full we would give, say, a cup of coffee beans, or sugar, or, in the case where the village was near a store, cash—sixpence or ninepence generally meeting the case. On these occasions Morgan, with a generosity often characteristic of men not using their own money, would overpay the natives, foolishly thinking thereby to get a good name amongst them, apparently not realising that he was only regarded as a fool for his conduct. We others used at times to tell him rather pointedly what we thought of it ; but one soon got tired of protesting, as it was so useless. We let him go on his own sweet way—buying an ox one day for five pounds and selling it a week afterwards for three pounds. This was the principle on which he had worked from the beginning.

In regard to handling natives on the veld there was none of us, unless it was my brother, who had started the right way. Morgan's methods I have already described. He could never see that natives as prospective recruits for the mines and natives servants on the veld need absolutely different treatment. The transport-rider, Brown, was treated by the natives almost as one of themselves ; consequently he had but little authority

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over them. Born and bred in the country, he was more at home with the natives than with white men and did not attempt to maintain the aloofness that is essential. To be familiar with any of your natives is fatal ! As for myself, I had been used to the mines, where the control of the native is very strict ; further, I was too often inclined to be hot-headed and arbitrary in my dealings with them on the veld, and this tendency of mine naturally appeared more pronounced in contrast with the weakness that so characterised the methods of Morgan. My brother's quiet tactics were the wisest. His experience of life in the colony had taught him not to expect a white man's standard from a native ; he knew that on the veld one must pass over many little things, without, however, giving the native the idea that you are not ready to enforce your authority when necessary.

After leaving Piet Sebego's stadt, we were compelled to make long detours to avoid the floods, as the usual waggon route along the side of the river was impassable. There was much big game in this region. In one day I have seen spoor of hippo by the river, of lion on the track of zebra, of kudu and other big buck, not to mention that of smaller game such as duiker and bushbuck. Most of the big game is strictly preserved ; none can be shot without special permit. This, of course, only applies to white men, the natives being permitted to shoot what game they like, with one or two exceptions. It was a rather tantalising position. Plenty of game and plenty of guns, yet unable to associate the one with the other ! An African protectorate is a poor place for anyone but the native.

Trekking on slowly, two treks a day, we reached the junction of the Thamalakan with the Botletle. By the river here were many cattle-posts ; the natives in charge were nearly all Damaras —refugees from German South-West Africa. The Damara are essentially a cattle people and handle oxen better than the Bechuana do. From all these posts we obtained plenty of milk, both fresh and " calabash " variety. The " calabash " milk is prepared by the Damara in a different way from that of the

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Bechuana. Damara "calabash" milk (*omaire*) is obtained by pouring fresh milk daily into the calabash, or dried pumpkin, kept for the purpose, the water being retained; the Bechuana, however, continually drain the water off. The former, therefore, is a kind of victuals and drink, whilst the latter's preparation is purely a food; both are extremely acid and sour. Along the river banks in this region we remarked a fibre-yielding plant growing abundantly; it was a species of *sansevieria*, from which the bow-string hemp is obtained. The natives weave chairs, mats and fishing nets from it. Many large Baobab trees grew along the banks of the river here, the girth of some of them exceeding sixty feet. They are more popularly known as the Cream of Tartar tree, from the fruit of which the medicine is obtained. One tree by the waggon road is, owing to its size, quite a recognised landmark on the road to the Lake.

A trek from this tree brought us to one of the largest villages on this part of the river—Ramonaisa stadt (pronounced with a series of clicks that defies repetition, as well as imitation). We outspanned by this stadt for the night. We were now very close to Totin, the fording-place for waggons about to cross the Botletle. Numerous reports had reached us that the river here was too full to ford, and that, even if one could get the waggons across in safety, there were no boats to convey goods to the opposite bank. An ingenious idea then occurred to Morgan, namely, to construct a boat out of the tent of one of the waggons by covering it with canvas soaked in oil. It was an ingenious and audacious idea, and proved most successful. I have never heard of it being employed on the veld before in such circumstances. It was only the question of a boat that worried us, as we had quite decided to disregard all the reports that the river was too full to ford. It meant a good week and more of trekking round the south side of the Lake Ngami, if we did not cross the Botletle at Totin. Our time when outspanned we now employed in sewing canvas, of which we had fortunately a considerable quantity.

The night before we reached Totin the recruiter held an *indaba* with the natives in connection with his scheme for recruit-





A GROUP OF REFUGEE DAMARAS IN NGAMILAND

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ing refugee Hereros. The idea he was explaining was that he intended to despatch messengers to German Ovamboland to bring away any Damaras who wished to join their chief in the Transvaal. Whilst arguing with some refractory headman (a murderer with a stiff price on his head !) he assumed the rôle of a philanthropist and pointed out to the native what a kind man he was to spend all his money and go to such trouble to bring their oppressed countrymen to the Transvaal. The wily old Damara replied, through our interpreter, Philip, words to this effect : " Chuck it, baas, why waste your money and your kind heart on us ungrateful people ? " We nearly exploded at this retort ; even Morgan seemed a little disconcerted, though not for long. The Damara is a most intelligent native. This old scoundrel knew full well that every native we recruited meant a fiver or so in our pockets. The recruiter used to lie glibly to them and they in turn to him, each pretending to believe what the other said. It was not unusual for our headboy, Philip, to come to one of us afterwards and say : " Is this true, baas, that so and so— ? " We would either have to plead ignorance or unblushingly confirm one of the recruiter's weird and outrageous statements. Recruiting natives in Africa is certainly not the noblest of professions ! After our *indaba* was finished some of the Damaras, now more cheerful at the prospect of soon reaching the Lake and seeing their friends again, began to sing hymns, taught them in their young days by the German missionaries before they were expelled from their homes by the German soldiers. The irony of it ! Taught the love of God by the German missionary, to be hunted down like rats by the German soldiers !

The Damara sings in perfect harmony ; each takes his part most accurately. The Damara is indeed the most musical native in South Africa, as musical as the Bechuana is unmusical. In the quiet night air their rendering of some of the old hymn tunes was very sweet, recalling to one days at school on a Sunday evening when one's greatest ambition was to win the quarter-mile.

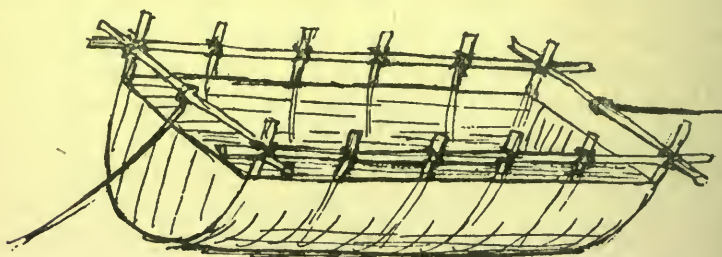
Early in the morning of the 15th we outspanned near the store

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at Totin. We spent our first day in preparing the boat for its launch. We took off the tent from the waggon, and along the bottom, inside, we fastened a heavy beam of wood securing it firmly in its place with reims (strips of hide). This was the keel. Round the sides, near the top, we fastened stout poles. These were the bulwarks. The framework of the tent had a little canvas left on it, though rather torn; over this we wrapped our waterproof sail, lashing it firmly with wetted reims. As a further precaution we smeared the lower part—the part that would always be in the water—with lard, and treated the seams in the sail in like fashion.

We launched our novel craft on the following morning and it floated as buoyantly as a cork. Its "trials" were most successful.

The river here was split into two channels with a narrow strip of land between. We launched the boat at the narrowest part of the stream, which was about seventy feet or so in width; and by dint of vigorously paddling with poles, and much vigorous language also, we managed to effect communication with the opposite bank. Having succeeded in doing this, we fastened lines to the bow and stern of the boat, by which means we pulled the ferry from one side of the river to the other. The following diagram may give the reader an idea of the appearance and construction of our hastily improvised ferry-boat.



We had now a big task in front of us—unloading the waggon, stowing the goods into the boat, and off-loading the boat on the opposite side. The same work had then to be done over again in order to reach the farther side of the river. Loading the heavy

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and cumbrous packing-cases into this fragile craft was a job that demanded the greatest care, as one heavy case allowed to fall would have smashed the framework to pieces. None of the natives would trust their lives in the boat till they saw us white men make several trips across and return in safety. The idea of a boat made of anything but wood, floating, was too startling for them. Our boat held as much as one thousand five hundred pounds in weight, apart from one or two persons in it as well. Its staunchness was remarkable ; it did not leak an inch in a day. Soon news got about of the marvellous boat made of canvas that floated, and we used daily to have numerous spectators, all sorts of ragged and black humanity, gazing with open mouths at its passage between the banks.

After the first stream had been negotiated, we started the task of transferring the goods across the second one. When this was accomplished, and the oxen had been made to swim across, we had to get our waggons over. With the first waggon we were unfortunate. The method we employed was to fasten a line to the bugle of the *disselboom* (*i.e.* to the end of the waggon-shaft), the line being taken over in the boat to the opposite bank. The waggon was then pushed down the sloping banks ; when in the water it was pulled by the oxen across and up the other side. At our first attempt we unfortunately omitted to make the upper part of the waggon fast to the body—it is usually only connected by a pin—the result being that the latter only reached the opposite bank, the other part being left submerged. The not over-pleasant task of diving into the stream to fasten a line to the sunken part of the waggon fell on me, as I happened to be the unfortunate individual in the boat. The river was thickly entangled with reeds, and also full of crocodiles. But the job had to be done, and was done.

The river was very deep—well over fifty feet in midstream. It was a curious sight, and also a rather anxious one, when the waggon completely disappeared from view. We all heaved a sigh of relief—particularly myself, for I was still in the boat—when the white tent appeared above the surface.

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Excepting the one mishap, we transferred safely all the waggons across both streams, our first experience having taught us wisdom. We floated the two Cape carts over. In doing this we adopted the simple plan of lashing to the axles of the vehicles empty water-barrels, which fully answered the purpose of keeping them afloat. After this work was finished we had to get the mob of horses across ; this was the hardest task of all ! Our first attempt resulted in the horses stampeding and getting jammed in the reedy swamp ; to release them from this we had to wade in up to our waists to turn them and drive them back to the bank whence they had come. Another attempt was equally unsuccessful. Finally, by tying one of our hunting horses behind our boat and letting him swim in its wake the others were induced to follow ; and all crossed in safety.

In five days our waggons were all reloaded, our boat dismantled, and we were ready to resume our trek on to Lake Ngami.

All our spans of oxen had to be left here in quarantine, fresh spans having been sent out to us by a trader in the stadt at Tsau. It was arranged that Morgan and my brother should ride ahead in order to make preparations for our camp, Brown and I being left behind to bring on the waggons and horses.

Part of the waggon road lay along the edge of the Lake, which is really no lake at all but a mass of swampy reeds. It was indeed a most disappointing sight. What was in Livingstone's time <sup>1</sup> a fine-looking sheet of water, twenty miles long and ten miles wide, on which could be heard the thunder of the breaking waves, is now a vast reedy swamp with a treacherous bottom impassable for man or beast. In most years much of the Lake is on fire, great stretches of reeds smouldering for months. Lake Ngami is said to fill, roughly, every ten years. In 1899 it was reported to be full, as it was during our visit. To call it full, however, is quite a mistake, as it is never that to-day and never will be again, for its former inlet at the north-western extremity is now

<sup>1</sup> Lake Ngami was discovered by Livingstone and Oswell in 1849.



MAKUBA WOMEN





## TREKKING NGAMILAND TO THE LAKE

quite silted up. When the Okavango is exceptionally full, owing to heavy rains up north, the Lake receives a small extra supply of water from the swamps which lie on its northern bank; in normal times it receives little or no water. In Livingstone's day it received a direct stream from the River Okavango and its tributaries; but to-day, not only is its inlet silted up, but the course of the greater part of the water of the Okavango has also been diverted by the silt.

After three days' trekking we reached the stadt of Tsau. The veld was very similar to that through which we had been trekking before reaching Totin and much of the land was flooded.

I rode in just before sundown and found the forerunners of our party in one of the stores busily playing bridge whilst awaiting our arrival. We outspanned our waggons close to the stadt for that night. It was the evening of the 26th of September. Brown and I had been on trek, or at least on the veld, for sixteen weeks; so neither of us were at all sorry for a short change.

Tsau is the Serowe of Ngamiland, being the capital and the largest stadt of the territory. It is situated on one of the small channels of the Okavango, some thirty miles to the north-west of the lake.

The ruling tribe of Ngamiland are the Batawana, an offshoot of the Bamangwato (Khama's people), though the real owners and the most numerous tribe of natives are the Makuba, who are essentially a river people.

The Batawana are only a small tribe, numbering some fifteen hundred people in all. They are rich and prosperous, well armed and own excellent horses. The average Batawana is, however, of poor physique and is effeminate in comparison with his vassal, the Makuba. The latter is nothing more than a slave, as he does all the household and agricultural work for his owner, receiving in return only his keep and perhaps a small payment in kind. The Makuba, though of sturdy physique, has little heart.

Ngamiland is a large territory. It extends from Damaraland,

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on its western boundary, to Makalamabedi on the east ; from the Chobe and the strip of German territory on the north to, roughly, latitude 23° south.

The territory is nominally ruled by Chief Mathibe, who is a youth of rather an obnoxious type. He was only recently made chief, as his throne had been usurped by one Sekgoma, who was, however, deposed by the British Government.

Stationed at Tsau is a resident magistrate, who more or less pulls the strings, the young chief possessing in reality but little power. Much of the successful administration of native territories depends on the type of man who represents the British Government. Ngamiland is fortunate in this respect, for it possesses a very capable magistrate in Mr A. G. Stigand, who has able control of the affairs of the country as well as considerable influence with the natives.

I never realised quite so much as when in this part of Africa the tactful and peaceful methods employed by the British in their colonisation of large native territories. It is in striking contrast to the blundering military methods adopted by the Germans in the adjoining colony of Damaraland. Since 1885 Bechuanaland has been a protectorate of Great Britain. During that period of a quarter of a century there has been practically no bloodshed in the whole territory. The many native tribes have lived in harmony one with another, and all in harmony with their protectors. The country has prospered yearly ; and, though the power held by the native is slowly but almost imperceptibly passing away from his hands into those of the virtual rulers of the country, when the time comes for the Union Government of South Africa to absorb the Protectorate there need be no fear of any disturbances. We shall not—to quote the words of the Japanese Governor-General of Korea before the Annexation—“naturally anticipate more or less serious disturbances.”

The following statistics speak for themselves :—

The police force of the Bechuanaland Protectorate consists of 180 men all told. Of this number 136 are natives, the remain-

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ing few being Britishers. The annual cost in 1909-1910 was only £37,832.

When it is remembered that the lands of the Protectorate aggregate over 275,000 square miles, and support a population of over 125,000 natives, all more or less half civilised, it speaks highly for the pacific quality of British rule and colonisation.

Glance for a moment at the adjoining colony of Damaraland.

Up to the middle of the year 1905 over £12,500,000 had been expended on the colonisation of that territory, practically every penny on the pacification of the natives, which has resulted chiefly in their extermination and expulsion from the country. There must be in Damaraland more hundreds of troopers than there are single ones in Bechuanaland. Consequently since 1884 peace has never reigned in that territory.

Thousands of the natives have been shot down and such a steady exodus of Hereros has been going on during the last few years that the country is becoming almost denuded of its labour. If there are not already more Hereros outside Damaraland than within its borders there soon will be !

The reason of this is obvious. Germany started ruling the country by putting on the natives ten times the pressure than is even to-day put on the Bechuana, after twenty-seven years' rule. Whilst I was at the Lake and on trek I met many Germans migrating from their colony into British territory, and not one of them had a good word to say for their own colony—Damaraland. And this is the example that Japan thinks fit to copy ! Cannot these nations learn anything from Cromwell's bloody victories in Ireland ?

Portuguese colonising methods are but little better. The only weapon that is in use is a regiment of soldiers ; never tact, or an appeal to the native to develop himself—always the same appeal to the devil that is in him. Where the English erect a few thatched huts and station one white man and a couple of native troopers, the German and the Portuguese erect forts and station regiments—a distinct declaration of war ! Military occupation of a country is not colonisation, as so many military

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administrators seem to think. As in the case of Korea, I do not deny the possible successful exploitation of some of the resources of the country. It is against the spirit of the colonisation that I protest.

I wonder if the Germans in Germany know that a track of bones stretches from the copper mines of Otavú through the waterless deserts to Lake Ngami, the bones of those who preferred death in a desert to life in their own country under German rule. That is what militarism has done for Damara-land !

Another fruitless period of waiting ensued after our arrival in the stadt of Tsau. The Bechuanaland Government's restriction regarding the entry of natives and cattle from Angola practically quashed the whole scheme in everybody's eyes except those of the recruiter. He propounded some weird and remarkable schemes. They stretched from Walfisch Bay to the Victoria Falls. A trek of a thousand miles was to him a detail quite unworthy of any serious consideration. As is the usual case with such men, he was never at a loss for an answer. If suddenly asked by one of us as to where the grain to feed the party on this thousand-mile trek was to come from he would reply glibly and readily: " Ah, that's all right ; I have arranged that ; don't you fellows worry ! " As a matter of fact he had never thought of the matter before. One day it would be arranged that I should trek with a waggon into Barotseland ; my brother into the Congo ; whilst he would join us, or one of us, via Timbuctoo ! He would have forgotten all about the scheme next day. Thus it went on, while all the time our natives were eating their heads off in idleness, their ridiculous wages mounting steadily up. As supplies were all stopped from Johannesburg every now and then a five-pound ox would have to be sold for three pounds cash to pay them. Such a small detail as the salary of the white men of the party was too trivial for our leader to consider. In Tsau, as also in most places, we were regarded as a philanthropic expedition fitted out to hire fool-niggers as expert drivers on double wages, to buy horses and watch



STARTING OUT ON TREK FROM TSAU



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them die. Our actions, in their collective aspect at least, really deserved no better verdict!

However, after ten days of inactivity, or of laying plans, which chiefly consisted of sitting on storekeepers' counters playing patience and swallowing the yarns of every Ananias in the stadt, my brother and I were detailed off to trek north along the Okavango to Portuguese territory. My brother assured me he had only a hazy idea of what he was to do. Being heartily tired of the fruitless and constant confabs, we were only too glad to get away on the veld once again.

We trekked out of the stadt on the evening of the 7th October. After trekking for two hours the driver skilfully smashed the *disselboom* of the waggon by driving the hind wheel into a deep rut. We thereon outspanned, ordered the natives to make a new shaft, and started to eat our supper quite at peace with the world. It might be interesting for the reader to compare our start here with that made by my brother and myself from Palapye. It was similar in one way, but not in another. Experience is a good if hard teacher.

## CHAPTER IX

### ALONG THE OKAVANGO AND RETURN TO THE LAKE

**T**HE rainy season had now set in and thunderstorms were the order of the day. We continued sleeping in the open, though we generally took the precaution of rigging up a canvas awning over our beds beside the waggon.

When the waggon was repaired we resumed the northern trek. The country here is rather flat and sparsely covered with trees. Numerous waterless sand-belts with the inevitable mimosa thorn-bush lie along the swamps of the Okavango and stretch for miles towards the borders of Damaraland. Farther north, the country is more thickly wooded and has richer vegetation. Some of the scenery is most alluring. The grass in places is exceptionally rich and green and affords excellent grazing for stock.

We had received numerous warnings before leaving Tsau as to the number and size of the lions that infested this part of Ngamiland. Had we believed these, we should have expected to meet at least one lion every half-hour. That lions were fairly numerous in this part was, however, evident from much fresh spoor noticeable every day. As we had with us no horses we did not take any special precautions, trusting to luck that no lion would take it into his head to sample our oxen.

With the rains had come the mosquitoes and trekking now was not half so enjoyable as when under cloudless skies in the dry season.

After being on trek for three days our eccentric leader caught us up in the Cape cart. He had apparently changed his plans again; but nothing surprised us much now. His company,



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though, was always welcome on the veld, for he was such an entertaining fellow.

After a week's slow trekking we reached Kurube, a small stadt on one of the swamp outlets of the Okavango. Kurube possesses one store, as it is the centre of the grain district for Lake Ngami, chiefly for mealies and Kafir corn.

Another wait took place here. Further plans were concocted. The outcome was that my brother was to trek on to Andara, a place just on the border of Portuguese territory, to obtain from the Portuguese fort there permission to take one or two guns into their territory. It was a good fortnight's trek for a heavy waggon. Before reaching Portuguese country a narrow strip of German land has to be crossed. It was arranged that my brother should wait at Andara for the recruiter, whilst in the meantime I was to return to the Lake, and, when a number of natives were recruited by the sanguine Morgan, I was to take them down to the Transvaal. This development was expected within a month!

A couple of traders and one of the mounted police corporals on duty in this region joined us at Kurube, so we were quite a big party. We went out for several shoots and bagged enough game to keep us well supplied with venison. Very frequently when on the veld I used a small Mauser pistol (7mm. ·300), the case of which can be used as a stock converting the pistol into a small rifle. On one of these occasions I dropped a large riet-buck ram at eighty yards and it was really extraordinary to see the astonishment of the natives who could not realise the killing power of that little rifle. I found a Mauser pistol a most useful weapon on the veld, particularly when on horseback.

Up in this region I came across a very peculiar tree and one I never recall having seen elsewhere. It was popularly known in the country as the sausage tree, on account of its quaint sausage-shaped fruit. Its botanical name, I was told, is *kigelia pinnata*. It has handsome claret-coloured flowers. The quaint fruit grows to a large size and increases in weight to as much as

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eight pounds ; in fact, cases are not unknown when the fall of this fruit on a native's head has resulted fatally.

Though there was plenty of timber up here, there was none of any real value ; this can be said of almost all Bechuanaland. One or two trees of a rubber-bearing species were noticeable, though the rubber produced was of poor quality. Some of the veld round Kurube had a most pleasant odour after rain, and a walk through the bush in the cool of the afternoon was most enjoyable. Many ant-hills of weird shape and design were in evidence ; fig-trees, also, with their usual habitués—troops of monkeys—were numerous, and birds and game of all descriptions abounded ; while fish was plentiful in the river. The trader was the solitary occupant of the place. He was an ardent follower of Izaak Walton and many trophies in the shape of dried heads of tiger-fish lined the walls of his hut. These tiger-fish require a lot of skill to land, owing to their successive leaps into the air after taking the hook.

A big troop of elephants frequented this district, visiting the *vleis* near the river to drink : their home was in a range of kopjes far away to the westward. One day these elephants provided me with a little excitement, or at least a little fresh experience. I was out looking for something to shoot when I caught sight of fresh elephant spoor, and, being anxious to obtain a glimpse of this troop, I decided to follow up their track. The question of shooting them, had I with me a gun of large enough bore, was not to be considered, as elephant is royal game. To trace their course in the thick bush was no difficult task, as it consisted of a wide path through the veld, broken saplings and trampled bush littering the ground. Recent droppings informed me that it was not so long since the troop had passed. After tramping a few miles I came on to one of their drinking pools, the thick grass which grew around the pan being flattened to the ground under the heavy feet of the elephants. On all sides in the mud the large footprints of the animals were visible. I had been so absorbed in following up the elephants that I had not noticed it was getting late, and so I had finally to give up the idea of

## ALONG OKAVANGO AND RETURN TO LAKE

reaching the troop and started to return to the camp. As not a landmark of any description was in sight—only a sea of thick bush and trees—I decided to retrace my spoor, as I knew I had covered quite a long distance. This task was not easy, as the soft and yielding sandy soil is not good ground to retain a clear footprint. After a short while I became so confused that I gave up the idea of retracing my steps and struck out boldly through the bush. I had an instinctive idea where the camp lay, but nothing more, as there was neither sun nor wind to give me any assistance. For about an hour I kept steadily on without perceiving any sign of the waggon road which I had to cross before I reached our outspan. When I had covered a few miles I began to feel just a shade of doubt as to my direction. This feeling grew, when after another long trudge no sign of the road was forthcoming. I climbed a large ant-hill and looked round from the top. Only a sea of trees and bush met my eyes on all sides, exactly similar to the veld through which I had been trudging for so long; and the nasty feeling that I was lost began to assert itself above the instinctive thought that the direction in which I was going was the right one. I fought the feeling down and started off again. After a while I fired a couple of shots with a period of half-a-minute between—a signal that I knew would be recognised, if heard, by those at the camp. Straining my ears I caught no reply, and, feeling more and more perturbed in mind, I kept on vainly trying to pick up any bearings in the gathering darkness. Suddenly, through the bush in front of me, not five hundred yards away from the ant-hill, the welcome sight of the waggon road greeted my eyes. How glad I felt—and yet how foolish! My relief, though, was greater, as I had no wish to spend a cold and rainy night in a lion veld with only a Mauser pistol with me. I was also thinking of the good meal that was waiting me at the camp. On my arrival there shortly afterwards, my companions remarked, on seeing me return empty-handed: “No luck? Heard your two shots—we thought you had brought something for the pot!” With a composure equal to that of a Russian diplomatist I replied nonchalantly: “No! I

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

missed the confounded brute—think I wounded it though!” The shots being so near the waggons the idea had never occurred to my companions that it was a signal of distress. My truthful remark ended the episode. It was the first time that I had experienced so badly the very disagreeable feeling of being lost in the veld!

The following day my brother started on his lonely trek to the Portuguese border. I trekked with him for a little way, then with just a brief word and a farewell handshake we parted.

The weather was now very hot and steamy and my energy during the day was conspicuous by its absence. After a stay of a few more days at Kurube the recruiter and I started to trek back to Tsau, travelling in the Cape cart. Five days of easy trekking brought us to the camp (in charge of Brown), which was situated about seven miles outside the stadt. During our return trek our luck with the numerous game became disgraceful. I recall one most tantalising incident. I had put up a rietbuck, which ran for some distance, then stopped and stared back. It was not a hundred yards off—an easy shot, even for me, but for the fact that right behind the buck was a mob of cattle grazing. Twice I put my gun to my shoulder; twice I refrained from pulling the trigger. It was not so much the fear of missing the animal (though with the knowledge of those cattle right behind I should not have been surprised if I had missed) as that the high explosive bullet I was using might find yet another billet. Eventually I lowered my gun, deciding that I would not risk it; but that confounded buck remained stock-still staring at me! I believe the animal was perfectly aware of the quandary I was in; and, further, knew that I belonged to a recruiting party and that the last thing to help our plans was to blot out a native ox. At last I threw a stone at the buck in disgust and blessed it briefly, whereon it languidly turned its head and vanished into the reeds.

During this trek back to Tsau I got my first attack of malaria, which was about the only material thing I got out of the trip. Fever is very rife up here during the rainy season, as also a



BIG GAME IN NGAMILAND



LAKE NGAMI: FORCING A WAY THROUGH THE SWAMPS



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virulent form of malaria, the blackwater fever, which is fatal in so many cases.

After a week Brown was despatched with another waggon—together too heavily laden—to follow up my brother. Morgan blandly assured him that he would be at Andara under a fortnight, whereas he took well over a month. The two waggons—the one with my brother and the other with Brown—being now out of sight, they were consequently out of mind also, so far as our leader was concerned. He had quite forgotten the small detail that he had promised my brother to follow him up very speedily. He had not left Tsau when I started my return trip; and that was some two months after.

On Brown's departure the recruiter returned to the stadt, leaving me in charge of the remaining waggons and the live-stock. With the rains had come the dreaded horse-sickness, and one by one our young horses succumbed to the disease. It was indeed the saddest part of my duties to watch these young horses, now in splendid condition, struck down one after another by this deadly sickness. The first mare we lost died in a most sudden manner. One evening just before sundown, when all the horses were brought in from the veld and were receiving their evening feed of mealies, I noticed one mare not eating, but considered, as she looked so fit, that she had eaten her fill during the day. Being generally accustomed to take a short evening ride, I ordered the natives to catch this mare and saddle her up, thinking the exercise would do her good. I remarked then that she gave very little trouble whilst being handled; as a rule she was very skittish and fresh, not having been ridden much. I cantered for a short distance, but, finding her very listless, I off-saddled her. She was perspiring freely, though I had not ridden her hard. However, beyond ordering the native to walk her up and down before tying her up to the line I paid very little attention to this fact, particularly as the mare was looking so fat. She was stone dead at ten the next morning! The foam round her nostrils told us only too truly the disease of which she had died. That was the first victim to horse-sickness, which

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eventually claimed every horse we brought up to the Lake ! Horse-sickness is a form of pleuro-pneumonia and is usually fatal. The percentage of deaths in the Lake Ngami district is nearly ninety. During the dry season horses are safe, but after the first dew or rain the dread disease makes itself felt. Horse-sickness is caused by a germ conveyed to the animals by some insect—possibly the ubiquitous mosquito. The germ seems to be killed by the first frost, and till the next rainy season the horses of the district are immune from attack. The few that recover from the disease are to a great extent immune from a second attack and are so termed “ salted ” ; a “ salted ” horse is worth nearly three times as much as it was before an attack.

Donkeys are quite immune from this sickness, whilst mules are to some extent. It is only among horses that the disease plays such havoc. Inoculation has been tried on both horses and mules, but up to now with little success. A fortune awaits the veterinary surgeon who discovers some successful inoculation against what is perhaps the greatest stock-devastating disease with which Africa has yet to contend.

Whilst disease was decimating our horses, the fittest of them seeming to be the first victims, the recruiter remained in the stadt recruiting. What I did not know ! After a series of false alarms regarding the Makubas who were going to be collected (always in the future tense) one native was gathered in at last. I ascertained afterwards that this recruit had not been inspired by any deep desire to work in the mines, but by the fact that his Motawana owner was looking for him ; and that, as he anticipated some disagreeable moments coincident with meeting him, he had tactfully decided to find another. This one valuable asset was all we had up to now to show for six months' trekking and an expenditure of nearly four thousand pounds. I strongly suggested, therefore, that this recruit should be sent down to Johannesburg to reassure our promoters, who, incidentally, had never replied to any of the marvellous efforts of literature with which Morgan had periodically furnished them. These letters used invariably to inform them of the imminent departure of a



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thousand natives for the Rand (the recruiter never talked or thought of anything under thousands). I can as easily picture the joyous faces of the promoters on the receipt of these first letters as I can picture their anything but joyous expressions when only bills instead of boys arrived. They did realise eventually that the thousand natives existed only in the recruiter's mind. The one native I referred to had his right arm withered, a fact of which he did not trouble to inform Morgan till after being contracted; he was therefore about as much use for a mine as a lawyer is for the Navy. He never reached Johannesburg, however; he eloped one dark night on my return trek. Perhaps the fact that I had that same evening caught him stealing my limited supply of sugar and had booted him emphatically may have hastened his departure.

The conditions prevailing at the Lake were not conducive to any recruiting, as the Makubas, the only tribe from which we could hope to recruit, are more or less the personal property of the Batawana, and these latter were too wise to let their servants, or slaves (the former designation sounds nicer in British territory), out of their hands. The Batawana, though openly passive on the point, circulated all sorts of ugly rumours behind our backs. Consequently a Makuba would almost fly at the sight of us. The chief was sympathetically disposed to the recruiting of some of the Makubas, but his power with the natives at the Lake was practically nil, in striking contrast to the firm control maintained by the former chief, though a usurper.

Nothing exciting occurred whilst I was in charge at the camp outside Tsau, except an occasional ride into the stadt, where I used to spend some pleasant hours at the police camp, which included the R.M.'s quarters and also those of the doctor.

Lake Ngami does not as a rule sport a permanent doctor; the white inhabitants do not exceed twenty in number. The disciple of Æsculapius, who was then resident at the Lake, had been sent there for the purpose of ascertaining whether sleeping sickness was present in Ngamiland or not, certain disquieting rumours concerning the presence of this disease in the territory

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having reached the ears of the authorities at Mafeking. Beyond the fact that the doctor discovered the greater part of the natives, and quite a few of the whites also, had a distinct tendency to this disease in that the symptom of being always tired was strongly pronounced, the result of his investigations was that Ngamiland was free of the microbe *glossina palpalis*, which conveys the germs of sleeping sickness.

The permanent doctor! at the Lake, the medical orderly of the B.P.P., gave up practice whilst I was there, having been engaged by our genial leader, whose hobby it was to hire people at fabulous salaries. I think most of the residents in that part of Bechuanaland received handsome offers from Morgan; in fact, I am not sure whether the R.M. himself did not receive a tempting though ephemeral offer. All, save the Professor, as he was known, had the *savoir-faire* to decline with thanks. The Professor was quite a character at the Lake and possessed a patriarchal beard wherewith to hide a somewhat doubtful chin. He was engaged to doctor the thousands of natives who were to come from Angola, and he condescended to inform me—a mere recruiter's assistant—that it was his intention to set up amongst the Ovambos, failing that—in Harley Street! As he had nearly killed two of the residents in Tsau, I am wondering at the moment whether the Professor or the Ovambos have been more successful in their respective cures. He departed from the Lake amid the mourning of grateful patients.

When not at the police camp I would be in one of the stores, where I was bound to find Morgan. Incidentally also I would be regaled with the latest low-down methods that rival traders had employed, the insinuation of course being that my informant was the only one that would not stoop to such depths of depravity. There are three stores in Tsau, the largest being the Bechuanaland Trading Association. This company has many branches in the Protectorate. The manager in Tsau was conspicuous there as being about the only trader who had a rudimentary idea of business. The other two stores were privately owned, and one of them you would have thought was at least

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financed by the Rothschilds from the remarks that went floating about the store. Bluff seemed to be its foundation stone.

Having located Morgan in one of the three stores, either squatting on the counter recruiting—bills, or playing cards, I would put to him the usual question, "Well, when am I going to get away?" and by way of answer, I would generally be regaled with an account of some weird and marvellous scheme his fertile brain was hatching. At times I would almost become enthusiastic over the scheme, till my common-sense would tell me it was wholly impracticable. His persuasive tongue could even dam the cold stream of reason.

Thus things went on. Days and weeks passed with no change in our position. The horses died one by one, till we had lost more than half our original stock.

When any horse succumbed, crowds of *aasvogels* (vultures) would be on the spot not many minutes afterwards, and, unless the women of the *stadt* got there first, would pick the skeleton clean in a few hours. The remarkable thing about these *aasvogels* is their extreme acuteness of either vision, hearing or scent; it is rather hard to say which. If you shoot a buck it will not be long before the cloudless sky is darkened with numbers of these birds, which will gather round, sitting motionless on the branches of the trees awaiting their share. Even when an animal dies a natural death—with no gun report—it remains undiscovered for but a very short time. This rather suggests that it is the acuteness of their vision that is responsible for their presence. They probably watch the movements of the leader, who is not so high in the heavens. It is hard to say for certain.

*Hyænas* also began to take a more than usual interest in our camp; the dead bodies of our poor horses, so rapidly increasing in number, attracted these marauders whose howls were to be heard every night. Judging by an experience of mine, they too must be gifted with very acute senses. It was shortly after sundown when I heard the distant howl of a *hyæna* coming, as I reckoned, to the carcass of a horse that had not long been dead. As the body lay not far from the camp, I decided to try to get

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a shot at my visitor. I crept silently through the veld and took up a position in the shadow of a fallen tree and waited—and that is all I did! Whether the hyæna winded me or whether some almost imperceptible movement on my part betrayed my presence, I know not. All I do know is that I wasted an hour fruitlessly on the damp veld. Swarms of flying ants came along periodically. They would arrive in clouds, after a heavy fall of rain in the evening, and having dropped their wings—not being at all particular as to where they dropped them—they would then proceed to crawl away. The natives used to eat all they could lay their hands on, a dish of flying ants being considered quite a delicacy. What with flying ants, mosquitoes, doses of fever at intervals, the thrilling occupation of doing nothing but watch horses die, I was getting heartily tired of this inactivity and pined to be on trek again.

Whilst camped here I had the opportunity of proving what I had heard many times—the unerring instinct of a horse to find its way—granting, of course, certain favourable conditions. The occasion was on my return to the camp after one of my periodical visits to the stadt. I had left rather later than usual and it was nearly dark before I started. There were two or three different roads out of the stadt and I took the wrong one, my horse starting off at a hand gallop in her anxiety to get to her evening feed. I must have gone for about a mile before I noticed the road I was on was leading to swampy ground. Instead of retracing my steps, I cut through the bush at an angle to my left. It was now quite dark. I kept on steadily in this direction for about an hour, till I became doubtful as to whether I was not going too far above the camp. I therefore dropped my rein and left it to my horse to decide. Without a moment's hesitation she turned off the small track I was following and went straight into the bush, forcing her way through thorn bush and under overhanging boughs of trees, quite regardless of her rider. Most of the time I had to crouch low on her neck, protecting my face with my arm from the thorns; once I was dragged completely out of the saddle by a branch and had only time to grasp the

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reins to prevent the frightened animal from bolting. When after half-an-hour or more no sign of the camp was forthcoming, I dismounted to ascertain if the horse knew the way to the present camp, as we had recently shifted some little distance owing to the scarcity of water. Mounting, I turned her in quite an opposite direction; then again I dropped the reins. Immediately the mare turned and resumed her former course through the thick bush, ignoring cattle tracks and native paths, which told me she was as equally anxious to get to her supper as I was. It was not long before the welcome lights of the camp fires were visible through the trees and the camp was reached. After seeing my mare busily crunching her mealies, I spent ten minutes picking thorns out of my skin.

On the fifth of December the rest of the waggons with the few remaining horses (which subsequently died) were despatched to Kurube, for the grazing there was richer. I was now homeless, save for my tent and horse. Like a wandering Arab I moved my abode, this time migrating into the *stadt*. I pitched my tent near the police camp with a small river close by. It was decidedly a pleasant spot, if unhealthy.

Our recruiting efforts, beyond the one "coon" already mentioned, had met with not a particle of success. However, at that particular moment news reached us that a large party of Damaras had been successful in crossing the German border and were in the long stretch of desert that separated the Lake district from the borders of Damaraland, waiting for the *vleis* to fill up with the rains which down to then had not been plentiful. To reach them it meant a week's trek through a waterless desert. Morgan with admirable promptitude arranged for a water cart to go out to bring the party through the desert; a good stock of food was also provided, as we heard the refugees were only living on roots and on any small animals they could kill.

After a period of three weeks these natives reached Tsau, and a more dilapidated, nondescript crowd of miserable humanity I never set eyes on before! The poor starved wretches had been

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living for months on roots and ant-bears. They were all practically nude, save for a few rough skins round their loins. What with the fear of the German police on one side and the pitiless desert on the other, they had led a miserable existence and numbers of them had died. They told us the German police on many occasions had not hesitated to cross the border to recapture them. This fact is not surprising, seeing that no one in the Protectorate has any idea where the border is and north of Rietfontein a mounted policeman is never seen.

We contracted forty-seven men of the party for the mines without any demur on their part, as they knew their chief, Samuel Maherero, and others of their tribe were in the Transvaal. Our interpreter, too, had not been born the day before ! As the men would not trek without their families, we had to arrange that the whole party—men, women and children—should trek to Palapye. Some of the men had more than one wife ; so with these we arranged to sort them out, so that each man had only one wife, the expense of trekking for the wife being charged to the appointed husband.

We then started to make the necessary arrangements for my return trek ; and here again the recruiter distinguished himself by purchasing an old broken-down waggon, notwithstanding the fact that there were four sound waggons lying idle in various parts of the district. This waggon is now rotting in the Kalahari desert and was responsible for the dispersal of all those contracted natives. It was about fit for firewood, one of the wheels being in a most precarious condition.

At this juncture I received a letter from my brother at Andara, asking when the recruiter was coming up, and informing me that he was living on native food, all his provisions being exhausted, and that every one of them was down with malaria which was rife in the stadt. He added in a postscript that he was contemplating an immediate return, as he could not justify the unending delay to the natives, who were simply out of hand, and that it was idle to continue wasting one's time in this manner.

(A month after my departure my brother severed all connec-



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tion with the expedition, covered the distance from the Portuguese border to the Lake on horseback and returned by a native waggon to Palapye.)

Notwithstanding that the natives were all contracted, delay after delay occurred. Though we had been in the stadt for weeks, when the moment to leave arrived there was not a bag of grain to be obtained, or a span of oxen for the waggon, although I had been repeatedly assured that everything was arranged for immediate departure.

To cap this, notwithstanding my most urgent recommendations, supported by those of our head-boy, Philip, that the natives should be kept on short rations whilst not trekking, as it was impossible to feed them in a similar manner on the veld, the recruiter, in spite of our protests, supplied them with all the food they wanted, again making a bid for cheap popularity regardless of consequences. The very thing I wanted to avoid was the very thing that happened—discontent, with incessant grumblings, and numerous desertions on trek.

Perhaps the culmination of the recruiter's folly was to engage as foreman for these contracted Damaras the biggest loafer he could find in the stadt, a man with a stiff price on his head for some cold-blooded murders in Damaraland. To make matters worse, he undermined my authority by telling this native, Schmidt, that he was the boss, and that it was a mere Government formality that a white man accompanied the natives at all. Of this, of course, I had no knowledge at the time.

Christmas Day found us still in the midst of aimless preparations. The day I spent at the police camp and in the evening I joined a pleasant party at the Resident Magistrate's quarters, and we all spent an enjoyable time. On the following day—Boxing Day—the Tsau races were held. Besides horse-races, all kinds of other competitions had been arranged by the traders for the amusement of the participators—the natives—and the spectators. Foot-races, bullock and obstacle races, caused considerable amusement. The Tsau handicap was a masterpiece in itself. The chief's horse, ridden by the chief himself in a

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discoloured jockey garb, was hopelessly behind. Nevertheless he won; though not till after some most masterly exhibitions of pulling on the part of other riders. One need not, however, trek to Tsau to witness that. Germiston and Turffontein will provide you with all the illustrations of this you may desire.

I spent my last evening at the police camp, and on leaving I lost my way through the sea of huts. A native stadt is worse than Hampton Court Maze. Even residents of long standing not unfrequently lose their way on a dark night, and not necessarily because a *vaatje* of dop has just rolled up from below.

On the third of January—my twenty-fifth birthday—I inspanned and trekked out of the stadt, the waggon heavily laden with grain. It was followed by the motley crowd of natives—men, women and children—nearly 150 in number. I do not think that the residents of Tsau will forget in a hurry that long line of dilapidated humanity streaming out of the stadt, the men armed with spears, the women carrying pots and pans of all shapes, from the relic of an old bath tub to the remains of a kerosene oil tin—their loins girded, but nothing more.

It was with a full presentiment of the troubles in store that I started on my lonely trip to civilisation.



DAMARA BELLES



REFUGEES FROM GERMAN S.W. AFRICA

OCT 3 1917

## CHAPTER X

### TROUBLES ON MY RETURN TREK

ON outspanning I sat by the fire long into the night. The little fires around me died out one by one and soon the noise and chatter of the natives gave place to the all-pervading stillness. Though glad to be once again on trek, I was in no cheerful spirits. Contemplation of the disastrous failure of the whole scheme of which at one time I had been so sanguine, the presentiment of the innumerable troubles and worries ahead and a general feeling of lassitude, the result of periodical attacks of fever, combined to create a feeling of deep depression. It was not far from dawn when I slept.

We inspanned early in the morning and made a long trek to Moopooti Drift. As the interpreter engaged to accompany us had not yet turned up, I had some little difficulty in making the foreman, Schmidt, understand my wishes—namely, that all the natives were to go ahead, my idea being that if any should become sick they could be picked up by the waggon. The natives, however, seemed to be possessed with a dogged spirit of contrariness in this respect, being loath to get out of sight of the waggon by going ahead, though perfectly ready on any pretext to straggle behind. The foreman apparently interpreted his duty as that of sitting on the waggon and doing nothing but add his weight to the burden the oxen had to pull. The driver of the waggon had been hired by Morgan at the ridiculous wage of three pounds a month (having been before in the employ of a storekeeper in Tsau at a wage of fifteen shillings a month, and well paid at that). He managed to smash the tent of the waggon in the second trek. If it had been the dry season I should not have minded so much, but the rains were now more or less steady ; so I was

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pretty wroth at this act of carelessness and promptly dismissed him, returning him to the recruiter with a brief note to the effect that again I could not congratulate him on his selection of drivers. This, the reader will recall, was a repetition of my former experience when leaving the Mukwe.

A long trek brought us to a native cattle-post shortly after sundown. Here the foreman came to me with a long yarn that certain sick natives were behind and that it would be better if I stopped a day to await their arrival. Knowing, however, by now the trickery of the Damaras, I perceived clearly that the real pretext was to gain another day to loaf at this cattle-post among their friends; so I turned a deaf ear to this story and strongly reprimanded Schmidt for not carrying out my instructions to keep the natives ahead of the waggon. At daybreak I inspanned and pushed on, leaving the natives to follow on, knowing full well that empty stomachs would soon draw them after the waggon which contained their food. I reached Totin in the evening and outspanned by the police camp. I spent a pleasant evening with the N.C.O. stationed there. He was a most entertaining fellow, having been in his younger days a member of the London Metropolitan Police. Many a West End café we visited that night.

I learnt that just before my arrival a lion had been shot in a small village close by, so I went out during the day to try to secure the skin, but found it, as is generally the case, completely spoilt by the spears of the natives. A bullet had killed it, but the natives in their triumph had stabbed away at the fallen beast till the skin was in strips.

The River Botletle had now sunk to its normal level again and I had no difficulty in fording. The bags of grain were taken from the waggon and conveyed to the opposite bank in a dug-out; the empty waggon was then pulled through by the span of oxen.

On the evening of the second day I received a message from Schmidt that some of the natives were too sick to come on and they wanted the waggon to return. As all the natives a few days previous to our departure had been examined by the doctor at the Lake and had been pronounced sound and fit for trekking, I



ABOUT TO CROSS



NEARLY THROUGH





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replied briefly that the sick ones could stay where they were and the others had better come on quickly. I deduced from this that the foreman had practically no authority over the natives, which warned me only too truly of the weeks of worry and trouble in store for me. In fact, it was just touch and go that I did not return to Tsau then and there, sever my connection with the scatter-brained recruiter and leave him to his own devices. After consideration I decided to see the thing through—and was sorry immediately afterwards.

On the following day all the natives straggled in save two. I allowed them only one day to rest before we resumed our trek, for I could afford but very little time, as the grain I had was just sufficient to reach Rhakops.

From Totin in the rainy season there are two routes to Rhakops ; one along the river (the way we had come), and the other through the Heina Veld, which lies to the south of the river. This veld in the dry season is a waterless desert, but during the rains it is possible to trek through, as many of the *vleis* there retain water. To get through means a week's hard trekking at the best of times. January as a rule is not too early for trekking, though I had been advised by those in Tsau not to risk it as the rains up to then had been very scanty. It had been, therefore, my intention to go down by the river road, till I was rather foolishly persuaded by Schmidt to go via the Heina. He urged on me the fact that the natives were used to "thirsts," whilst the river area would be bound to make many of them sick with fever. Further, both he and Natal (my interpreter) who knew this Lake road well, said the pans in the desert were bound to have water in them by now. A heavy thunderstorm at Totin and the sight of black rainclouds over the Quebe Hills confirmed me in my decision, although it was against my previous intentions ; I had, however, an inward conviction that I was doing the wrong thing—and so indeed I was ! One fact reassured me : leading from Quebe Hills back to the river there was an old waggon road by which, if unable to cross the desert, I could regain the river area without having to retrace my steps.

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At sunrise we started. Ours was the first waggon of the season to take this route, so no waggon spoor was visible and the oxen-track was considerably overgrown. Much of the ground was flooded by the recent heavy rains ; this reassured me somewhat and revived in me hopes that the pans in the Heina might have some water in them.

We made three long treks that day, outspanning for the night at about nine o'clock, as far as one was able to calculate the time. A watch is a more or less useless article on the veld, the sun, moon and stars being one's guide. We had come through much thick bush and the sand was very heavy, consequently it had been hard work for the oxen to cut a track through. The waggon was also very heavy, as it contained some three thousand pounds of grain, as well as half-a-dozen sick or malingering natives on it. Much game spoor was visible, chiefly wildebeeste and impalla ; small buck spoor and that of wild pig were also numerous.

At sunrise our caravan was on the move again and we made a long morning trek. The soil now changed, the heavy sand and thick bush giving place to stony ground strewn with boulders ; some large trees, especially the Baobab, were noticeable. The stony and uneven ground made it even more trying for the oxen, and I had ever in my mind the fear of the rickety front wheel breaking.

We outspanned in the Quebe Hills towards noon, after a steepish pull up the rising ground. These hills are one of the few isolated groups of outcrop to be found on the Kalahari. At the foot of many of these hills numbers of large Baobab trees grew, some being of huge girth.

On our arrival there I ordered certain natives to be despatched to the nearest pans to ascertain whether they held any water. I further instructed these natives to bring to the camp any wandering bushmen they might come across, as I hoped to learn from these walking encyclopædias of veld lore how heavy the rains had been in the Heina.

A violent thunderstorm broke over the hills that night, the

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lightning playing with great brilliancy on the quartz kopjes. We took the precaution of unfastening the trek-chain from the waggon, the former being ever a dangerous attraction for the electricity. It is no very rare occurrence for a whole span of oxen to be struck dead by a flash, the electric current having struck the trek-chain with fatal results.

Some of the natives were getting sick, the continual rains wetting them through and through. I did what I could for them, which chiefly consisted of looking wise, taking their temperatures with a clinical thermometer (which I told them informed me infallibly as to whether they were malingering or not) and dosing them with Epsom salts. Epsom salts was my panacea for everything from a swollen head to blackwater fever.

About noon on the following day the two Damaras returned with the news that they had been unable to find any pans at all in the veld, or bushmen either, but that the grass everywhere was very green and the ground very moist. I decided on hearing this to risk it. It was not of the oxen that I was anxious ; for, by careful arrangement of treks so as to give the cattle every opportunity of grazing when the grass was wet with dew or rain, I felt confident of getting through safely, even if we came on no pans at all with water in them. I was concerned for the party of natives in my charge ; for I had no wish to leave corpses behind as a souvenir of my trip.

I thereupon assembled all the natives of the party together and spoke to them through my interpreter. I told them that they had a three days' hard trek before them if there was no water in the veld ; that they must therefore walk and not loaf ; that they must behave like men and not like children. I ordered them to cook before their departure three days' food and to fill up every available pot and pan with water. Having asked them if they had anything to say, and receiving the response that they had nothing, I dismissed them to their task of getting everything ready for the trek.

The natives started at two o'clock the next day, though not without much delay on their part on first one pretext and then

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another, till my patience was well-nigh exhausted. When the last man was out of sight I gave orders not to inspan the waggon till sundown, as I wanted the natives to get well ahead.

The sun had all but sunk when our waggon started rumbling over the boulders and stones through the kopjes. We had not trekked more than a mile before we came on the whole party of natives, foreman and all, squatting on their haunches ! For a moment I nearly saw red. I never before experienced such a revulsion of feeling or such an intensity of rage. In a flash it all passed through my brain—the uselessness of my planning, scheming, or worrying about these craven curs. I reflected bitterly upon the foreman's lack of authority and his selection by the recruiter ; if ever ears tingled at that moment they were those of our scatter-brained leader in Tsau. One or two of the natives caught sight of my face at that moment—it was not pleasant to look upon, I am sure—and slunk away. Beyond issuing a brief order to the driver to turn round the waggon and return to the hills I said not a word. Walking ahead, I realised the hopelessness of attempting to trek with these natives through the Heina “thirst,” and that there was only the one alternative before me, that of returning to the river.

After outspanning I gave orders that every native was to be up before dawn to find the old Lugard road,<sup>1</sup> which led to the river. I ate my supper that night in gloomy silence, disgusted with everything ; if I had only had someone to whom I could have talked it would have been some relief. I saw, however, that worrying would not help matters, so I resigned myself to the inevitable. The rainy day had given place to a most perfect night. The stars were shining in all their brilliancy and the large trunks of the Baobab trees stood out like giants near the outspanned waggon. Nature was peaceful enough ; but Nature only. The little groups of natives in deep and excited conversation spelt trouble—it came !

It was not till the sun was high in the heavens that the spoor

<sup>1</sup> So named after Sir Frederick Lugard, one of the leaders of a prospecting company which cut this road to the river.

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of the old waggon road was discovered. But faint indications in the thick bush were left of the track—disused for nearly fifteen years—and it was only with great trouble that we were able to follow the overgrown road. We had to cut away much bush and chop down many overhanging branches of trees. A span of oxen does a lot to make a way for the waggon, but an overhanging bough has to be cut down or it will completely break the waggon tent ; as it was, before we reached the river the tent of the waggon was a wreck, its canvas in strips.

The veld between the hills and the river, one long sand-belt, was waterless. I had very meagre information as to the number of treks it would take before we reached water ; hence I decided to trek hard. Again I ordered the foreman to see that every native kept ahead of the waggon.

We trekked a good part of the dull and cloudy day. Much heavy rain fell at times, which necessitated our stopping ; to trek during pouring rain means sore necks for the oxen, as wet yokes soon raise blisters.

Most of the time I spent sitting on the front of the waggon guiding the hind oxen by mouth and by whip, for fear the front wheel would come to grief on one of the many tree-stumps that littered the overgrown track. What would have been the result if that had happened I did not care to contemplate. Sufficient unto the day then was the worry thereof !

We made poor progress through the veld as the impeding bush and thorn scrub made it hard work for the oxen to force their way through. There were, further, on the waggon, adding their weight to the load of grain, a dozen or so sick natives, half of them malingerers. Had I, though, refused to allow them on the waggon, they in turn would have refused to trek—hence I was between the devil and the deep sea ! Those raw natives had by now got wise to the fact that each of them was worth so much to me, and this only tended to make matters more difficult.

The foreman was almost worse than useless ; notwithstanding my repeated exhortations that the natives should all keep in front of the waggon, by the time I outspanned for the night I was

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

informed that several were still behind. Since the cattle had already been one day without water and I had no exact idea as to whether we might reach it on the following day, I refused to delay the waggon a moment ; for I was not going to let the poor dumb animals suffer for the laziness of the so-called higher animals in my charge. I consequently inspanned before dawn and trekked hard all the next day. When outspanning for the night we felt we were near the river, the distant croaking of the frogs, not to mention the confounded mosquitoes, testifying to the proximity of water.

That night I found only a cupful of water left in the *vaatje* of the waggon, and when this was finished I never felt so thirsty in my life, though the night was cool. To appease my artificially created thirst I took sundry sips of Cape brandy, flavoured with an iron-quinine tonic—a queer mixture at the best of times.

A short morning trek brought us to the river, which looked very fresh and picturesque after the monotonous veld of the sand-belt. By the river was a small village. Releasing the thirsty oxen, which had been two full days without water, we let them drink their fill. It is always a pleasant sight to watch a thirsty span sucking up the cool water ; you feel how thoroughly they deserve it.

While the oxen were grazing I had a most enjoyable dip in the river, changing my dusty clothes for clean ones. I then proceeded to await the arrival of the natives. When they had turned up I counted them and found nine men were missing and one or two women also—about the women I did not worry a jot as they were only encumbrances. I sent back several of the most willing natives with water to bring them in. After a wait of a day and a half the natives returned with the unsatisfactory news that the missing men and women, judging by the indications of their footprints, had returned in the direction of Tsau. I was now ten men short out of the number that had left the Lake with me. My reference to this in my diary reads : “ Now ten men have deserted, which leaves thirty-eight in all ; if this continues only waggon and self will arrive in Serowe.”

## TROUBLES ON MY RETURN TREK

Once more I pointed out to my foreman the folly of not carrying out the instructions given him and the seriousness of our position. We had been on trek for seventeen days and had only covered seventy miles in actual distance. There were but ten bags of grain left and no prospect of obtaining any more till we reached Rhakops—in other words, there was just sufficient food for ten days and in the manner in which we were travelling it looked a full twenty days' trek to Rhakops. The prospect of starvation seemed to strike home to the natives ; so did my new rule : No trek—no food ! To appeal to the stomachs of the natives seemed the only powerful argument.

In view of the incompetence of the foreman, I appointed certain of the best natives as police boys. To these I issued instructions that they were to keep every native in front of the waggon and that they might flog any they caught loafing behind, I myself taking full responsibility. In my state of mind then I would without any qualms have countenanced torture. I write openly what my feelings were then, by penning an extract from my diary. Being always alone, with never a white man with whom to exchange words or ideas, I spent many an hour writing my thoughts and observations in my diary ; it was, in fact, my only relaxation. The many hours of intro- and retrospection leave on one's character an indelible mark, which neither time nor change can efface. An almost unnatural state of self-absorption is the inevitable result—a state that is certainly not conducive to happiness.

Here are some of my diary extracts for the 20th of January :

“ Taking one hundred and fifty natives, men and women and children, by waggon five to six hundred miles, through lion veld, through fever veld, and thirstland—alone—is no child's play ! What a contrast the Damara women are to the men. The former carry their children on their backs and the greater part of the kit—and are never sick and never complain. The men do nothing save loaf, grumble and malingering. True, it seems that every country owes its greatness to its women and not to the men—to the mothers and not the fathers of the nation.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

“ The contact—now of weeks—with these natives sickens me more and more. When a skey breaks, or something delays the waggon, a crowd of these niggers gather round it and start chattering like baboons ; so do they irritate me that I feel like getting my sjambok and letting out all round to relieve my feelings. Oh for the slave days of old ! Chains and a few long whips would make these loafing niggers walk their thirty miles a day.

“ How constant contact with these natives seems to render one more and more callous, and less sensitive to the feelings of others. I seem to feel I would gaze on the sufferings of one of these natives with as much equanimity as I could on the sufferings of a wounded snake ! ”

In recording these lines I do not, of course, put them on record as my feelings to-day ; but they were the sentiments solitude, overwrought nerves and the daily troubles on that lonely trek produced.

When all the remaining natives were assembled we started trekking along the river. We were now able to trek for most of the way in the river bed since the water had returned to its normal level ; in places where the river banks were too high and the trees too large the waggon track led through the sand-belts that stretch along the river.

My police system worked fairly well ; one of the natives was flogged and the example had some effect. We were now on short rations, as the stock of grain was nearly exhausted. Fortunately the natives were able to supplement the little food they were receiving with the flesh of sundry ant-bears, which they were past masters in catching. I never tasted the flesh myself, but it looked good and appetising and similar to pork.

In one evening trek we passed through a forest of *mopane* trees, most of them dead and bare. It was a most desolate sight. The tall gaunt trunks with their gnarled and withered boughs stood out in weird relief against the dim light of the twilight sky—a forest of Death ! Some kind of worm had caused the destruction of many of these trees, and lightning that of others.



## TROUBLES ON MY RETURN TREK

The moon was now full ; so in order to save the oxen I trekked as much as I could in the night-time, outspanning at sunrise to give the cattle a short graze before the sun became too hot. Whilst trekking, the natives would walk ahead for a couple of miles, then squat down and kindle a fire. As soon as the crack of the whip reached their ears off they would go again, knowing that if they delayed a sjambok might descend on their shoulders. When the waggon passed all that remained of their little outspan fires would be the small heaps of glowing embers.

Trekking on by the river we passed the Baobab tree and shortly afterwards reached Samuel Shepherd's Post—a large settlement of Damaras in charge of several cattle-posts.

Here, as I had feared, I was met by fresh trouble with the natives. When I gave the signal to inspan (about three o'clock A.M), having no wish to stop at this post a minute longer than was necessary, a deputation of the niggers gravely informed me that they were not oxen and that I was killing them. I informed the deputation in as forcible language as I could convey through an interpreter that I fully agreed with them—that they were not oxen, for none of them had the heart of a rabbit, and that if they were oxen I should have some respect for them. Not a complaint from any of the women ! Only from the men who carried nothing save a spear. I cajoled them, humoured them like children, talked to them like a father, finally cursed them like a trooper, and went to sleep again. There was nothing else to be done but wait for daylight. I extracted from them, however, the bargain that if there were to be no night trekking they must make at least two long treks a day.

It was evident that the cattle-post natives had put them up to it, quite a few of them being Christians. If you are anxious to put your hands on a *schelm* native in Africa, just trek to any native kraal that has had a missionary in the vicinity. Incidentally lock up everything you value in your waggon safely, for the Christianised coon has thoroughly imbibed the art of

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

thieving ! It is rather a sad thing to record, but alas only too true.

The Damaras at this cattle-post, having been some time in the Protectorate, were shrewd enough to see the whole position and the many weak spots in my authority ; hence, to accept my defeat gracefully was the wisest course. It was a case of a daily fight for me to maintain my authority over the natives, for it had not only been unsupported but had even been undermined by the insidious behaviour and talk of the recruiter. Had I once had an open collision it would have been the finish of everything. A tale of death by fever would have easily accounted for my departure, for there was not a white man to know the difference. I do not wish to imply that I was too highminded to withstand the temptation to use brute force ; but I had sufficient horse-sense to see that it would be fatal for me if I once lost control of my temper and precipitated matters.

The day after this refusal on the part of the natives to trek during the night I got "my own back" by making a long trek till nearly noon. The day was cloudy, fortunately for the poor oxen, which had to bear the brunt of the laziness of the natives. By the river in this region we came on much spoor of hippo and on one occasion I caught sight of a cow and calf going down the river, grunting in unison.

A long evening trek brought us to Piet Sebege's stadt, where we outspanned for the night. Where before had been floods were now "lands," well covered with crops of Kafir corn, mealies and pumpkins, rather late, as the floods of that year had delayed the planting though considerably enriching the ground.

That day I had a very narrow escape of getting a broken limb from the kick of an ox. We were leaving the river bed to trek along the banks, ascending a very steep drift. I was walking behind the after-oxen, urging them on, when one suddenly let out with his hind leg. Fortunately I was wearing at the moment leather riding gaiters, but for which the force of the blow would have broken my leg. As it was, I got off very lightly, though I was sore for a few days.

## TROUBLES ON MY RETURN TREK

One more trek brought us to Makalambedi—on the border of Khama's territory.

In this trek we came on much lion spoor, as well as that of big game. At night-time the natives in lion veld always carried burning torches gathered from their little outspans; this line of twinkling lights in the veld looked very quaint.

I had been advised by native intelligence that the storekeeper at Makalambedi was very ill, so I pushed on to arrive as soon as I could. I explained to the natives that I was going to trek all that night till I reached the store, and that so far as they were concerned they could do what they liked in the matter—either come on the morning or trek with the waggon. With true cussedness, seeing that I did not care what they did, they decided to trek with me. I was walking ahead of the waggon that evening in the clear moonlight, and, my thoughts reverting to the lion spoor we had observed just before, I was wondering whether I should ever get the opportunity of meeting a lion at close quarters. Thus ruminating, my train of thoughts was suddenly broken by the sight of a crouching form not twenty yards ahead of me. I stood stock-still, and stared. Not a movement. Not a rustle. Only the same crouching position as though waiting to spring. I levelled my gun, took careful aim, and fired!

Well, I may as well confess it—my lion was no lion at all. It was a thorn bush. The moon's fickle rays and my imagination had done the rest.

It was late before we outspanned by the store. When the natives turned up they were full of the fact that a huge hippopotamus had charged down to the river right in front of them, making a noise like thunder crashing through the bush and reeds by the river.

## CHAPTER XI

### ON HORSEBACK THROUGH THE DESERT

I FOUND the trader at Makalamabedi store very ill, thoroughly run down from fever and from the deadly monotony of the place. He was the only white man for miles around. He was also suffering from bad veld sores, many of which had developed into sloughing abscesses. I was able to be of some little assistance to him, but at the same time I strongly urged him to leave the place—at least for a time—as the life he was living was not life at all, but merely existence.

I found there was not a bag of grain to be obtained in the place; in fact the storekeeper wished to buy some from me, which was, of course, quite out of the question. The grain crop in the district had been almost a failure, owing to the recent floods. I spent a day at the store livening up the trader, who sadly needed it. At sunrise on the following day I inspanned and trekked out of the stadt. We were now in Khama's territory. The veld here was covered with very fresh green grass, the great part of the land through which we were now trekking having been before under water.

We reached Moremi Drift the following day. Much of the river near this drift was very rocky, numerous ironstone boulders strewing the bed of the stream. I was making as long treks as I could during the day, as my supply of food for the natives was fast giving out; fortunately the sky was cloudy and overcast. I had reduced their rations to less than 1 lb. per head a day, a striking contrast to the surfeiting diet the recruiter had so foolishly lavished on them when in Tsau; consequently I had to listen daily to endless grumblings and complaints as to my unworthiness and to eulogies of our distinguished leader. What

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could one expect from a crowd of niggers so completely spoilt.

I bagged a bull kudu near this drift, which was, however, as tough as my boot and must have been nearly as old as Methuselah. The meat was a welcome change though after the eternal tinned salmon and bully beef. The killing of such game was, of course, against regulations, but in the circumstances I took the risk. Nevertheless I thought it expedient to report the fact to Chief Khama on my reaching Serowe. He, however, already knew of it! Native intelligence in South Africa is wonderful.

It was always a very pretty scene at night-time when outspanned by the river. But for the incessant friction and worry I could have felt then at perfect peace with the world. On the one side the dark smooth waters of the Botletle silently flowed between banks lined with thick reeds, in which the croaking frogs nightly held concert; on the other stretched the thickly timbered veld, now quiet and still, in which twinkled the little camp fires of the natives like fireflies in the darkness. Only the distant snarl of a sneaking hyæna or the occasional grunt of a hippo in the river would break with startling clearness the quiet of the night. The little fires slowly died out one by one till just a few burning embers gleamed in the darkness. Perhaps it was even more peaceful and solemn when the darkness of night gave place to the grey of dawn which came stealing up from the east, paling the light of the stars, and when the greyness of dawn gave place to the tender hue of breaking day. In faint and ghostly light the sleeping veldt awoke. The dawn, however, brought also another day of worry and trouble. I would have repeatedly to urge the natives to get on the move, not daring to inspan till the last had gone ahead for fear of some lagging behind, which meant in the end my missing the second trek.

It was very difficult to recognise parts of the country through which we had trekked before as so much of the land had been then under water. The drift which we had been compelled before to ford with double spans was now dry. Our travelling was consequently now nearly twice as fast, since many of the

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long detours before necessary were no longer so ; our waggon, further, was nearly empty and this assisted the oxen considerably. I outspanned at Menoakwena Drift on the evening of the 26th, where we found kraaled, on their way to Serowe, a mob of cattle sent down for sale by one of the trading stores at Tsau. Some waggons bound for the Lake were also outspanned here and we were able to obtain news of the road ahead of us. What we gleaned was not reassuring. The waggon natives informed us that the rains in the desert had been up till then very scanty and that they had lost three oxen, two of which had died in the "thirst," the other at the well. It had rushed blindly for the water—mad with thirst—and had fallen into the well and broken its neck. This news of the road was not at all satisfactory, for with all these natives I felt it would be a difficult task to trek fast, as would be necessary if I were not to see my oxen die in the "thirst" ; and my experience with the natives in the Heina veld was hardly encouraging.

I rested the cattle during the forepart of the day following our arrival at this drift, for ahead of us was the "thirst" of Hendrick's road. In the afternoon we outspanned and trekked till sundown. The sand was very heavy, the veld here being bare. After a short graze the oxen were inspanned again and we made a long evening trek. After another short outspan we trekked on till late in the night.

With consistent contrariety a native must needs die in this "thirst," not being considerate enough to wait till we were near water. He had been sick of blackwater fever for some days. A sad wail—the death dirge of the Damaras—awoke the sleeping veld. It was all the more plaintive in the ghostly stillness of approaching dawn. Sunrise saw a newly made grave in the wide-open veld and the waggon on trek. We trekked long—far too long in the hot sun—till we reached the stadt of Rasebaki by the river, where the wearied oxen drank and grazed. A short evening trek brought us to Kop's Post—the scene of our old camp. As I had anticipated the Damaras in this cattle-post were the cause of more trouble ; here again my fibreless mob of black

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ivory told me that they were not oxen. They knew full well that it was my intention to rest the cattle for two or three days at the stadt of Rhakops, which was only two treks off. Disgusted, I trekked on, leaving them there, and reached Rhakops flats at sunrise, after travelling the best part of the night. Much spoor of wild ostrich, a most peculiar imprint, was visible on these flats. I outspanned by the police camp and had breakfast with the cheery N.C.O., and it was good to see a white man again after weeks with my blacks.

All the land round the stadt, which before had been under water, was now covered with crops of mealies and Kafir corn. I was advised to warn my driver to watch our cattle carefully when grazing, as if they were found amongst the natives "lands" the owners would demand compensation for alleged damage to their crops. The crops had flourished well just after planting as the ground had been enriched by the recent floods, but now they were in sad need of rain; hence the natives, foreseeing poor crops, were not at all sorry to find a span of oxen roaming amidst their mealies in view of the compensation to come. I learnt "gallsick" had broken out amongst the cattle in the stadt, whilst horse-sickness had been and still was rife.

Most of the natives straggled in on the following day. As I had promised them, I bought at the store a young ox and had it slaughtered to give them some change of food. To my surprise on going to the waggon where the ox was being cut up I found a hind quarter missing and learnt that Schmidt had coolly presented it to some of his loafing friends in the stadt. This was the last straw! I gave the native till the next day to get it back, failing which I would charge him before the police. Doubtless he thought that I was bluffing in the usual manner of our recruiter, for no meat was forthcoming on the morrow. He got, therefore, a decided shock when two Basuto policemen escorted him up to the police camp.

As I decided not to charge him formally, the police corporal reprimanded the native severely. I had acquainted the N.C.O. with the position, so he was not surprised when my foreman, in

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

defence, told him that Morgan had put him in charge of the natives and he could therefore do as he liked. The Damara added he would now return to the Lake. "In irons, if you do," promptly replied the N.C.O. Personally I did not want him imprisoned, for, bad as he was as a foreman, he was better than nobody, and, further, one could hardly blame him, an ignorant native, for trying under the circumstances to show off to his friends in the stadt what authority he held and what a big man he was. In view of this collision with the foreman I determined to take both him and Morgan at their word—Schmidt should be the foreman and the *sole* one. I decided to ride on horseback through the desert when we reached Mopipi. This decision of mine was further prompted by the information I daily received as to the cloud of distrust and suspicion that everywhere enveloped the doings of the expedition; by the information that the recruiter's spoor after his second departure from Johannesburg was but a track of debts and broken promises. Hence I felt that to arrive in Serowe with these natives, without any arrangements made for their reception, would mean numerous desertions and endless trouble. Last, but not least—I will be perfectly frank on this point—I was so heartily sick and disgusted with the whole affair, which from the beginning to the end had been but one long course of pettiness and deception, and, to boot, a pure labour of love inasmuch as I had not received one penny of the salary agreed on, that I felt the sooner I was finished with the whole "shooting match" the better for me. I was also feeling so below par that I dreaded even the one more week that I had yet to spend in the company of those natives.

We trekked hard round the river bend to Mopipi, as the river was lined with cattle-posts, all of which contained their mob of loafing Damaras. I so arranged the treks that we passed most of them whilst trekking and the principal ones during the night. We reached Mopipi, or "Barker's Store," on the 4th of February. It was understood that this store was to supply us with grain for the natives. The storekeeper on my arrival informed me, however, that he had received no authority to do so and that the





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last account incurred by the expedition had not yet been paid, the Johannesburg promoters having dishonoured the recruiter's signature. So I found myself in a very pleasant position—with no food, and over one hundred natives on my hands! I had no alternative but to send the waggon back to Rhakops to try to obtain grain from the store there. Meanwhile the trader at Mopipi, who was only acting on instructions, helped me out by supplying me with just enough grain to keep the natives from starving. This disgraceful confusion alone would have decided me as to the urgent necessity of going ahead to make some preparations for the natives and to endeavour in some small way to clear the cloud which hung over the affairs of the expedition.

I was able to hire here a native horse, a "salted" one, and I also engaged the owner to accompany me through the desert. We saddled up at daybreak on the morning of the 8th, having packed on our saddles a few pounds of Boer meal, a little coffee and sugar, and one or two tins of potted meat. This had to suffice for the needs of myself and my native for about a week, by which time we reckoned to reach the stad of Serowe.

Having made all my preparations, I handed over the reins of office to Schmidt with grim satisfaction. He did not seem to relish very much his sudden promotion to absolute power—the sole responsibility of a hundred odd men, women and children. Before mounting my horse I took a last look at the motley crowd of humanity, whom I had brought with me over three hundred miles, with whom I had been for five weeks; and so strange is human nature that I felt almost a tinge of regret—or was it reproach?—as I grasped the reins and rode away.

(I never saw those natives again. I learnt that some of them eventually arrived in Serowe after having managed to smash the front wheel of the waggon when in the desert; and that but for one or two providential showers of rain they would have all perished of thirst.)

After riding three hours we reached Machanin Pan, where we

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watered our horses and rested them for a couple of hours during the heat of the day. My native was a Bahurutsi, a river native. He spoke a dialect full of "clicks" and "clucks," and it was very difficult to understand. However, by dint of much struggling we managed to make ourselves intelligible to one another.

The water in this *vlei* was of the consistency of pea soup; a sediment of mud an inch thick remained in my cup after drinking some coffee. As hundreds of head of cattle had watered there this was not very surprising.

We rode steadily on through the afternoon, reaching Chucutsa pit at sundown, after crossing the wide stretch of Chucutsa salt pan, which was now nearly dry. Its surface was as flat as a billiard-table, the alkaline deposit crumbling into powder under the horses' feet. We off-saddled for a couple of hours at the water to rest our horses and to have a short respite. Remounting, we rode steadily on through the night till the moon sank. It was then close on midnight. I was dead beat when I dismounted, stiff and very weary. We had been in the saddle for nearly ten hours and had covered some thirty-four miles. The heavy sand, as also the length of our journey, prevented us from pushing our horses; a fast steady walk was the only gait at which we could travel, for if we had ridden any faster our horses would not have lasted out the journey. On the part of the riders it was really more a question of endurance than horsemanship. We tied our horses to a tree near by and, fully dressed, threw ourselves on the soft sand, using our saddles as pillows and our blankets to keep off the dew. I slept like a dead man till sunrise, when we mounted our horses and rode on. After riding for about an hour, we came on to a waggon outspanned in the veld on its way up to the Lake. A Dutch transport-rider with his family was accompanying the waggon. I had a short yarn and a cup of coffee with the Dutchman and his wife, and before leaving they gave us some bread to take along with us. Hospitality is the first rule of the veld. We rode on till noon, when we off-saddled for a short while to rest the horses. We were now well in the desert and riding through this was most monotonous; never a change

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from the thick bush and heavy sand that stretched for miles around. At sundown we reached the Lotlhakane well and there rested, making a short meal of "roaster-cookies" and coffee. Being now out of the fever zone and in the cold, clear air of the Kalahari, I suffered almost daily from attacks of fever, which, though not of a very severe nature, were yet quite sufficient to make me feel very much below par. A hollow tooth also gave me periodical twinges. Altogether I was far from happy.

We had now covered seventy miles. I managed to get a wash at the well by filling up the cattle-trough with the well-water. Resting during the forepart of the next day, we saddled up in the afternoon and rode without a break to the well at Ditawane, where we camped for that night. We were riding as much as possible during the night in order to save the horses. The nights were quite chilly after the heat of the river zone. In the afternoon we saddled up and resumed our ride, though after two hours in the saddle I was compelled to dismount, fever coming on suddenly. To make up for lost time on the fifth day we rode steadily from sunrise for eight hours, only off-saddling once to graze the horses. My native, though a very slightly built man, possessed a vast amount of endurance, a stretch of twelve hours in the saddle being to him quite an ordinary thing; to me it was by no means so. At times I felt so weary that I could have almost fallen out of the saddle, as fever had almost completely sapped my energy. The monotony, too, of the veld was deadly.

When near the Mukarane Pan we met some waggons trekking up to the Lake, accompanied by two young traders bound for the interior. Meeting them was a pleasant break in the ride. A chat, a few nips of brandy, and a couple of cigarettes were more than welcome. We camped by the *vlei* for the night. There was plenty of water in it, but it was as muddy as it could possibly be. We had to drink it, however, and with coffee it went down all right. From this pan there were yet sixty miles to be covered before our destination was reached. I ate very little—too little—on this trip, not more than two or three

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“roaster-cookies” in a day. I did not feel hungry in the least, but I should have eaten more; as it was, I was simply living on my reserve strength—as I found out too late when I had overdrawn upon it. We reached Momongwe well by noon on the sixth day, after a long period in the saddle, made a short stay by the well and were in the saddle again till sundown, passing Kolokome and dismounting some miles beyond. Since noon it had rained steadily, so we had wrapped our blankets around us to keep out the wet. After a rest for an hour or two it was my intention to ride on through the night so as to reach Serowe by sunrise. It was, however, a case of *L’homme propose, Dieu dispose*; for after dismounting I was seized with a very sharp attack of fever and dysentery.

I lay by the fire whilst it rained steadily, racked with fever. Severe vomiting and other distressing symptoms followed and I soon saw it was out of the question to think of riding on that night. I had eaten nothing all that day, and had had only muddy water with coffee to drink. I can recall very easily that night—my last on the veld! The steadily pouring rain drenched me as I lay shivering by the smouldering fire that burned with difficulty on the sodden ground; the two horses tethered to a neighbouring tree huddled together to seek comfort one from the other; and my native sat gloomily beside the fire, never moving from his cramped position save to hand me a cup of muddy water or to stir the almost quenched-out embers. It was indeed a miserable night—and yet one I would willingly live again as part of the free and open life on the wide African veld.

I woke at dawn after a fitful rest to find my native and horse gone and a strange native by the fire. I learnt from him that my boy had taken fright at my condition and had ridden on to Serowe for assistance.

There was nothing for me to do but wait. At about ten o'clock, however, my mare strayed back—the wise little animal. I felt weak, but fever had left me. I saddled up, but unfortunately had to pack all my boy's kit in addition to my own on the one

## ON HORSEBACK THROUGH THE DESERT

horse. The poor animal was, like its rider, about done. We jogged along at an amble, reaching Sokoswe by noon. After a short rest I rode on till late in the afternoon, when I met the district surgeon coming along in a Cape cart drawn at good speed by a span of mules. The genial doctor and I shook hands heartily. He was agreeably surprised not to find me in such a deplorable condition as he had been led to expect by my native, who, it seemed, on his arrival at the stadt, had imparted to Chief Khama the brief information that there was a white man dying on the veld ; hence the doctor had come out post-haste with the idea that he was going to bury a corpse. Instead he only found a miserably wet-looking object, a bit white about the gills, riding a tired little mare.

I finished the remaining seven miles in comparative comfort, sitting in the Cape cart beside the doctor, who regaled me with all the latest news of Serowe. I heard nothing good about the expedition with which I was connected. It was dark when we reached the town. I spent three days in the stadt, residing with the hospitable doctor, during which time I did my best to make some satisfactory arrangement for the natives left behind. I found the state of affairs in connection with our expedition even worse than I had expected. Having straightened matters a little, I left the stadt and rode the remaining forty miles to Palapye. Within three days, after ten months on the veld, I was sleeping—uncomfortably—in a soft bed in Johannesburg.

## CHAPTER XII

IS THE EAST CALLING OR THE WEST DRIVING ?

**A** FEW extracts from a letter to my brother in England give a small insight into my doings after my return from Ngamiland, during the few weeks prior to my sailing from Africa to the Far East :

DURBAN, NATAL,  
*20th July 1911.*

“MY DEAR HAROLD,—To-morrow I sail for Japan. Before, however, bringing you to this date I will give you some idea as to how I have been spending my time since I returned from Central Africa in February last.

“As I fully expected, my reception by the promoters of the expedition with which I was connected was hardly what you would call gushing. Personally I couldn't blame them, for if I had wasted some four thousand pounds in a venture I shouldn't go out of my way to welcome with open arms one who had assisted in the fruitless expenditure. I received fifty pounds for my ten months' work and had perforce to be satisfied. Fever, fifty pounds, and Experience were all I got for that trip. Well, so much for that fruitless attempt to wrest success from Fate—just one more failure, and what is it among so many ?

“For about a month after my return I did nothing much, except pay a few bills I had left behind in Johannesburg and vainly attempt to dispose of at a profit some tiger and lion skins I had brought down from the lake. I had numerous irons in the fire, all of which melted, leaving behind only a clinker mass of Depression and Disappointment !

There seemed then no alternative before me but to return



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to the mines. I was, however, by no means anxious to resume underground mining, as my state of health was not good enough. Malaria and mine dust don't mix well. The worst thing about malarial fever is that one suffers from it worse when one is out of the fever zone. For the first two months after my return to the Transvaal every ten days regularly saw me down to it for a few hours ; it is slackening off now by dint of quinine and sundry whiskies and sodas. Further, I was not inclined, after weeks in the open veld, to live again the four-grey-walls-and-dirty-ceiling life in a mine room. It's too much of a good thing ! When parsons talk of the drinking habits of Rand miners they don't understand. Let them live their days in a single room year after year, and they would soon find drinking was about the only hobby worth taking up seriously.

“Up to the date of my departure from Johannesburg I was a regular subscriber, or perhaps I ought to say a regular ower, to the Public Library and did quite a little reading whilst out of a job. The ‘Soul of the People’ has decided me to return to the East. During the nights on the Kalahari when the smoke of the camp fire wafted the smell of burning wood into my face, I used to spend hours recalling scenes of Japan. So I'm going back. In this decision of mine I don't know whether I am answering the Call of the East, or obeying the dictates of Fate which, in the shape of adverse circumstances, is driving me from the West. Is the East calling or the West driving ? I know not ; I feel like a piece of flotsam floating about with any chance current diverting its course. It is well over two years since I arrived in this country and my last state is worse than the first as regards material results ; and isn't that about the only criterion the world has to-day with which to gauge Success ? I don't kick, however, against Africa ; there's many a worse country than this and many a worse town than Johannesburg.

“I have spent many nights lately at the Anglo-Austrian café, and appreciated very much the music after months on the veld. The fair attendants of the café are still as haughty as ever, though I was sorry to find several old faces missing. Life on the

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

Rand jogs along in the usual way. The manager of the G—mine and half his staff all got sacked the other day. The expenses were too high, owing to the mine having been badly worked for years. As in bridge, when in doubt you play trumps ; so in Rand mining—when in doubt (*i.e.* when the mine does not pay) you sack the manager and his staff. It is quite simple !

“ I am enclosing you a literary ebullition, which represents the experiences of your aristocratic brother during the months of May and June when he was running a bottle store in Johannesburg. During May I was learning the job under the instructions of the manager—and the job wanted some learning I can assure you. During June I was alone in my glory—a full-fledged bottle-store keeper !

“ In the very unlikely case of you not being aware as to what a bottle store is in this country I will tell you. In other words, it is a wholesale and retail wine shop—no drinks allowed on the premises, barring, of course, those of the manager and his thirsty friends, and a few ‘ bums,’ such as some of the members of the C.I.D., which, being interpreted, means the Criminal Inventi—no, I mean—Investigation Department. The job of running a large bottle store gives one a pretty good insight into the morals, or lack of them, of the man and woman of the town. One becomes a good judge of human nature. I trusted many a hard-looking case in my bottle store for a bottle of whisky, and very seldom was my trust misplaced ; but I must confess I found the bulk of the respectable women, or, in other words, the well-dressed ones in Johannesburg were amongst those I could not trust—and, of course, Australians.<sup>1</sup> Women as a rule seem to have a pretty warped sense of honour. The average woman will cheat at cards with as much readiness as she will do you down for a ‘ tickey ’ in your bottle store. Of course, if you suggest that they are dishonourable they are highly indignant. I recall as I am writing an instance of a glib-mouthed lady coming into my

<sup>1</sup> I refer to the Australian one rubs shoulders with in Africa and in other parts of the world. Not having been to Australia, it is unnecessary for me to say that I make no reference to the real Australian.

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store one morning, smiling sweetly, doubtless thinking easily to deceive the guileless-looking youth behind the counter. 'Oh! good-morning! Will you trust me for a bottle of whisky?' 'No! I won't; you owe me sixpence,' was my abrupt retort. My memory is pretty retentive. A storm of indignant protests I cut short by remarking, 'I will let you off your sixpence, but I will not trust you for a bottle of whisky. Good-morning.'

"One unsavoury business into which I obtained an insight was the Illicit Liquor Traffic—*i.e.* selling liquor to the natives. Fortunately my store was owned by a clean firm which did not cater for such a business, but you cannot keep clear of it. This illicit business is chiefly in the hands of the low whites of the town—chiefly low Dutchmen, and a few ex-C.I.D. men. The Kafirs on the mines are only allowed Kafir beer, which is quite a refreshing drink, especially on a hot day on the veld; no other intoxicating liquors are allowed. Hence this flourishing traffic! That this illicit liquor business is profitable one can easily conclude from the fact that when a man is caught at the game and gets six months' imprisonment—or, as he terms it, goes on the Continent for six months—there are many to fill his temporarily vacated post. The iniquitous and despicable system of 'trapping' is much in vogue on the Rand. The chief result of this system apparently is the periodical capture of some poor ignorant man or woman, and in not a few cases that of a poor *innocent* man or woman. This 'trap' system supports a crowd of hirelings, recruited from the 'bums' and 'deadouts' of the town, quite a few of whom, one concludes, take a hand in the game themselves. The chief occupation of the C.I.D. liquor 'tocs, so far as my little experience went, seemed to be that of supporting lamp-posts, ostensibly engaged in watching a bottle store, and that of cashing sundry open cheques for thirty shillings or two pounds, of the origin of which it were better not to inquire.

"Large sums of money are spent on drink on the Rand. I used to take in cash over the counter as much as seven or eight hundred pounds in a month, quite apart from two or three

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

hundred pounds' worth of family orders. Seventy pounds on a Saturday was by no means an unusual sum. By this I don't necessarily infer that the Randite is an excessive drinker—I don't think he is—so much as to give you an idea how densely populated is the mining world of the Transvaal.

“My literary outburst is headed :

### “SIDELIGHTS IN A BOTTLE STORE

“(M. stands for me : L.C. stands for ‘lady’ customer : G.C. for ‘gentleman’ customer.)

“M. (*disturbed whilst busily engaged in dusting the store*).—Good-morning.

“L.C.—A bottle of sherry, please—1s. 3d. (*sotto voce*)—for cooking purposes !

“Exit ‘LADY’ with sherry for ‘cooking purposes’—less 1s. 3d.

*Enter ‘GENTLEMAN’ from cab-rank.*

“M. (*gazing absent-mindedly out of the window*).—Ah ! Good-morning. How goes it ?

“G.C. (*briefly*).—The usual.

“M.—Gin, eh ?

“G.C.—Sis, man ; don't you know yet what I want ? A half-flask of Johnny Walker, of course.

“M. (*suddenly recollecting*).—You owe me a tickey from last week—shall I take it out of this ? Well, all right ! don't forget it.

“Exit ‘GENTLEMAN’ to cab-rank. A tap is heard at the back door.

*M. takes a flask of whisky, disappears, and shortly returns with 2s. 6d.*

“A happy policeman is seen later with a smile on his face in Market Square. Enter ‘LADY’ : face familiar, slightly flushed.

“L.C.—A bottle of sherry, please—1s. 3d. (*sotto voce*)—for cooking purposes !

“Exit ‘LADY’ with sherry—less 1s. 3d.

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“ *Enters ‘bum’ : is recognised as such ; wants a free drink ; doesn’t get it—exits muttering eloquently.*

“ *Enters ‘stiff’ : is not recognised as an illicit Dop buyer. Receives six bottles of ‘Dop’ brandy. Cash and lengthy explanation of birthday-party on a farm duly received.*

“ *Enters a ‘remittance-man.’ M. gathers together his wits : he knows this type.*

“ G.C.—*Bottle of Dewar’s—Imperial—please. I will look in later and pay.*

“ M. (*aside*).—*Oh will you ? I don’t think you will ! (Aloud) I am sorry I have no authority to give credit.*

“ G.C. (*indignantly*).—*Oh ! But, I say, Mr B—— knows me well : I have often purchased from him.*

“ M. (*aside*).—*I am quite sure B—— does know you well—a little too well. (Aloud and very suavely) Quite so !*

“ G.C. (*producing 6s. 6d.*).—*It will be a long time before I come here again.*

“ M. (*wrapping up bottle*).—*Quite so !*

“ *Exit the gilded youth with his whisky to the task of penning to his soft and foolish parents at home a vivid account of the hardships he is suffering in Africa.*

“ *Enter another G.C.—a somewhat similar type.*

“ G.C. (*loftily*).—*Ah ! send the usual round.*

“ M. (*wondering who the deuce the bounder is*).—*Certainly—and what did you say your name was ?*

“ G.C.—*Oh ! Ah ! Brown, Mistah Pondesbury Brown.*

“ M. (*with continued tact*).—*Ah yes, quite !—and what—did you say your address was ?*

“ G.C.—*Oh ! Ah ! 50 Stanley Mansions. Ah !*

“ M.—*Quite !—and what—did you say you wanted ?*

“ G.C. (*with a look of unutterable weariness*).—*Oh ! Ah ! two bottles of beah !*

“ M. (*with a resigned sort of expression*).—*Well ! well ! All right.*

“ *Exit Mistah Pondesbury Brown to mash the girls in Pritchard Street.*

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"After a short interval, during which time M. checks the stock and turns away a 'coloured' gentleman who swears he is a Portuguese, enters L.C., a regular 'gin-customer.'

"M.—Good-morning. Half ?

"L.C.—Yes, please. He! He! (*Laugh.*) You are beginning to know me now. Ah! I remember when my poor husband . . . (*Here ensues a lengthy conversation on the merits and demerits of the departed husband: during which M. periodically remarks 'Quite!' thereby saving much energy.*) Exit the 'gin' lady, less 2s. 6d.

"Enter L.C.—rather a nice girl! M. looks interested.

"L.C. (*vivaciously*).—Six bottles of champagne, please. Will you send them round to my flat? Soon? (*With a sweet smile.*) Put them down to Mr Softhead, won't you; he gave instructions, didn't he?

"M. (*discreetly*).—Oh yes, that is so! Well, did you win at the races on Saturday? . . . (*Here follows an interesting conversation, unfortunately disturbed by the 1s. 3d. sherry 'LADY' returning—her third visit!*)

"Exit the friend of Mr Softhead, carefully avoiding the sherry 'LADY.'

"L.C. (*rather flushed and slightly unsteady; holds firmly to the counter for support and speaks distinctly hoarse*).—A bottle of sherry, please. One sh-sh-shilling and tic-tickey. (*With distinct emphasis.*) For cooking purposes! (*And indignantly*) I wish they would fetch it for themselves.

"Exit good dame, still bravely trying to play her rôle.

"Enter M.'s brother, who takes a great interest in his brother's work; more so than he has ever done before. He watches with an amused smile his younger brother struggling to do up three bottles of beer in the guise of a bundle of books! This in accordance with the commands of the distinguished L.C. standing by, who 'really can't be seen carrying beah, doncher know.'

"Seven o'clock strikes! M. locks his cash up: refuses admittance to a drunken C.I.D. and a 'toff': takes a farewell look

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*before shutting up the store, and departs to 'Blackings' for his dinner.*

“Having concluded this literary effort, now for a few words about my doings after leaving the store.

“I left Johannesburg early in July for Durban, arriving there after a twenty-four hours' journey. The train was full to overflowing with merry Randites bound for a seaside trip to Durban, which is to-day the Brighton of Africa. I took, therefore, a 'second' ticket, tipped the guard a half-sovereign, and travelled 'first'—thereby saving a pound. Experience again! Just one solitary pal saw me off. Him I met quite by accident during the afternoon in Eloff Street, so I remarked casually: 'Come and have a farewell drink.' 'Whither bound?' he asked. 'China,' I briefly replied. He gazed at me for a moment, thinking I was joking; but as he knew something about my former pilgrimages he slowly digested the information and accompanied me to have a drink. After a short chat I remarked: 'I must be leaving you now as I want to pack my things; my train leaves at seven to-night.' My companion gazed at me for a moment, then slowly replied: 'Of all the coolest beggars I have ever met you are the limit! You first casually inform me that you are leaving for China to-night, and now—it's past four—you say you must start to pack. Anyone would think you were bound for a week-end trip instead of to the opposite corner of the globe.' I suppose to others it would seem a big proposition; but to me, now, it's nothing much more than a trip to Krugersdorp; I am so used to it.

“My capital for this trip is just fifty pounds. I am going first to India, as I have half an idea I might get the opportunity to anchor there, though I 'bank' on nothing now. It will cost me twenty pounds to get as far as India; there is, unfortunately, no opportunity to work my way across. I am due in Japan—well, when I get there! My idea, if nothing turns up on the way, is to resume teaching in Tokio and do there also a bit of writing; I might go to the length of writing a book on my wanderings if

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my depleted stock of energy does not completely evaporate before. It should be an object lesson to the young man of the Western world never to leave the beaten path of Life. When I was last in Japan I was held up to the young men of Nippon as an object lesson of enterprise—an object lesson to be copied ; to-day I very much doubt whether such would be the case.

“It was only with the greatest difficulty I could obtain a room when I reached Durban, so packed to overflowing was this seaside town. Its surf-bathing and lovely beach yearly attract thousands of jaded Johannesburgers. On the night of my arrival I visited nearly every hotel in the town before I got a bed. Such a conversation as this was quite usual: ‘Any rooms?’ ‘No! sorry, full up!’ I would then continue: ‘Oh! I am not particular; any shakedown will do?’ ‘My dear sir,’ would be the weary reply, ‘there are already three men on the billiard table and one on each bath; not an inch of room is there on the *stoep*—so where can I put you?’ The ten days here have been most delightful and I am feeling all the better for the change.

“Yesterday I spent an enjoyable day at the whaling station, and caught sight of about three huge sharks hacking away at a whale close by the slipway. One—a little too bold—got harpooned; and, by Jove! he took some killing. All the bathing here is in enclosed areas as the sea is infested with sharks; but it is nevertheless most delightful.

“You mustn’t, however, regard Durban as merely a seaside resort for Johannesburg; for it is quite a busy seaport. Coaling is a big feature, many tramps putting in here for supplies. Durban will coal a big tramp with a couple of thousand tons in the space of a few hours.

“Rickshaws drawn by weirdly-painted and horned Zulus are much in evidence in the streets, but, in my mind, none save a Japanese knows how to run in a rickshaw properly.

“The colony of Natal is the soundest colony of the Union, at least from an economic point of view. It is not like the one-industried Transvaal, as many profitable industries are yearly springing into importance. Sugar, tea (rotten stuff at present),



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tobacco (Natal cigars are quite good), fruit and the wattle (for tanning purposes) are just a few of the products of Natal to-day. I went the other day to an agricultural show and it was well worth a visit, as it gave one a good idea of the agricultural possibilities of this colony.

“ Well, brother mine, I bid you a long farewell. I have not the faintest idea where I shall be in six month’s time ; and *entre nous* I don’t much care. I am getting very tired of it all ; of being kicked around and of being made a football of by Fate. But it is the Aftermath of Wanderlust. Don’t you stir from the cage ; beat your wings against the bars rather than fly away !  
Yours ever,

“ ARTHUR.”

And this last is my advice to the young and restless reader.

## CHAPTER XIII

### UP THE EAST AFRICAN COAST TO ZANZIBAR

**A**T noon on the 21st of July the s.s. *Somali* steamed across the bar of Durban Harbour for India. I was the only through passenger; the others were mostly bound for Delagoa Bay and Beira; most of them were mining men or traders going up to Rhodesia. We were a cheerful party, all of us having seen a good bit of the world and incidentally much of the hard side of it; so we got on famously together.

We kept the Natal coast in sight all that day and the day following, till towards evening British coastland gave place to that of Portuguese East Africa. We sighted Cape Inyak by sundown and entered Delagoa Bay when it was dark, anchoring late in the evening off the town of Lourenço Marques. From our ship we could hear faintly the strains of the band playing on the plaza, the lights of which looked very picturesque in the distance.

The following day a small party of us went ashore to visit the town, which at the time of our visit was gaily decorated, the gala season being on. Lourenço Marques possesses one of the finest harbours in Africa, the anchorage of Delagoa Bay extending for a length of seven miles, with width nearly one mile.

The climate of Delagoa Bay is better than it used to be a decade or two back, owing to the extensive drainage of the town's environs; but there is still room for improvement. Our visit was not many months after the declaration of the Portuguese Republic, and we caught sight of the new flag. The town of Lourenço Marques is typically Portuguese—broad roads shaded by rows of trees, white façaded buildings of rather pretentious design, and on the sea front the inevitable plaza with its bandstand.

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We sailed at noon for our next port of call—Inhambane—and sighted Cape Burra within twenty-four hours of our departure, the coast all the way up being low, sandy and barren in appearance. Shortly after noon the pilot of the port, a native, boarded us, took charge and handled the ship in a most skilful manner. The passage into the harbour of Inhambane is very difficult to navigate, owing to a continually shifting sand-bar at the entrance ; to enter it by night would be to court disaster. The ship had to make several twists and turns to avoid the mud-banks before the deep-water channel, marked by white beacons, was reached. Entering, we sighted two dead whales moored to a buoy, and I learnt there was a small whaling station at this port. The bay was picturesque, its shining waters being dotted with the white sails of many coasting dhows. Just before sunset we came in sight of the little town of Inhambane, which was completely hidden from us when we were outside the bar. It looked very pretty in the rays of the setting sun : the red-tiled houses, white-fronted, nestling amidst thick groves of green waving palms and other tropical vegetation, made an attractive picture. A pier three hundred feet in length jutted out from the shore, but the water was far too shallow to permit any deep-sea ship to come alongside ; in fact at low tide there remained only a foot or two. One other steamer and a small sailing ship lay at anchor off the town, and during the following day a Portuguese steamer arrived from the north and shipped a batch of coolies for the mines in the Transvaal. The districts round Inhambane were densely populated, as is also the district of Gazaland to the south ; both supply a large number of natives for the Rand. A few of us “ did ” the little town the next day. At least we roamed round the small settlement and visited the native locations, till the heat and the smell drove us on board again. We all decided that Inhambane at a distance was infinitely preferable to Inhambane at close quarters. The pretentious style of architecture and the dilatoriness in the officials were typically Portuguese. It took us over one hour to buy a few postage stamps for our mail, and in the end some of us got stamps for nothing, so

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confused was the Portuguese staff over the exchange of money. Anyone might have thought that we were the first party of foreigners that had ever entered Inhambane with English coin.

Right behind the town was a large native location, peopled by the Myamba tribe. Their little huts were erected amidst waving palms, and but for the insanitary conditions of the location and the consequent unhealthy smell one would have appreciated the picturesqueness of the scene. In the intense heat, however, we were only too glad to get away and seek a café, where we ordered tea—to the open disgust of the proprietor! It was then about eleven o'clock, and we had the opportunity of watching the Portuguese residents stroll in for breakfast. Half-castes of all shades were largely noticeable. I think one of the reasons that the Portuguese will never be very successful in maintaining their prestige in their African colonies is their free intercourse with the native, the Portuguese official making no attempt to preserve the purity of his race.

Having finished our refreshment, we took a short stroll along the front before returning to the ship. We visited an old Arab temple, which recalled to my mind memories of the once-powerful race that formerly controlled most of the trade of this coast. Inhambane is one of the oldest established settlements of the Portuguese in the Mozambique district. The Portuguese arrived on this coast, famed for gold, as early as 1497, and drove out the Arabs. The first fort was erected in Mozambique Island in 1508, and the town of Mozambique was afterwards made the capital of the province. Portuguese East Africa is now divided for administration purposes into two separate districts—Mozambique district in the north, and that of Lourenço Marques in the south, which includes the territory of Inhambane.

We had to wait for the tide before we could leave, as much of the bay at low water consisted of exposed mud-banks which smelt most abominably in the heat of the day. Inhambane district is considered nevertheless to be the healthiest in the colony; it doesn't say much for the rest!

Late in the afternoon we got away and steamed north. All

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the day following we kept the mainland in sight ; it was still low, sandy and barren in appearance. The lights of Beira showed up by evening and we anchored outside this port at midnight. At daybreak we steamed into the harbour.

Beira has ahead unlimited prospects. A few years should see it the foremost port of Africa. Beira owes much to its geographical position ; for it is the port of entry for North Rhodesia and will soon be for the copper mines of Katanga, in Belgian Congo ; it also taps the Portuguese territory of Manicaland. Further, it will not be long before it is the port of British Central Africa. But, unfortunately, Beira is in the possession of one of the most dilatory nations of the world. Proof of this was given us not long after the *Somali* dropped her anchor. It appeared that a few motor launches had the monopoly of conveying passengers between the shore and the vessels lying in the harbour, so I experienced the greatest difficulty in regaining my ship at night-time after having spent the day ashore, as not a launch was to be seen and no other craft was permitted to carry any passengers. This fact alone illustrated to me the methods that controlled the port.

The name of Beira means " sand " and the town is in no way misnamed. I heard Beira termed a place of " tin roofs and sand " ; and really one has not much to add to this in the way of description. The roads are a foot deep in sand, on which it is impossible to walk for any length of time ; the chief way the residents move about is by the rather unique method of sitting in a little trolley which runs on light rails, pushed along by Kafirs. In appearance the little trolley is as like a garden seat on wheels as is possible. Three of us got into one of these conveyances—a tight squeeze !—and were propelled by one native ; once the car was on the move little effort was necessary to keep it going. For a progressive and go-ahead town like Beira this method seems rather primitive ; yet it is rather hard to suggest a better substitute as the streets are too narrow for trams. The outskirts of the town are pretty—at least in contrast with the town itself. The palm, which always seems to thrive

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well on sandy soil, is very conspicuous. But Beira is the bleakest place on the East African coast. A golf-course and a small stretch of beach allow the residents some little relaxation, though Beira is far from being, as some would suggest, the health and holiday resort for jaded Rhodesians.

Our passengers left the ship here on their way to Rhodesia, and I was left solitary on board. In the company, however, of the extremely well-read and cultured German captain I passed many pleasant hours and never felt time hang heavily on my hands. He possessed a splendid knowledge of the English language, as did nearly every other officer on board; indeed his knowledge of our English classics was as deep as my acquaintance with German writers was shallow.

Leaving Beira on the afternoon of the 28th we passed Chinde during the night. This latter port is too shallow to admit deep-sea ships, so the German East African line has a small steamer on the station running to and fro from Beira with passengers and mail, and specially built to cross the bar. Chinde is the present seaport for British Central Africa, but will soon be superseded by Beira.

On the 31st we sighted the island of Mozambique, on which is situated the town of that name, the former capital of Portuguese East Africa. Since the departure of the Governor-General for Delagoa Bay the trade of Mozambique has diminished, and the island offers but small inducement to steamers to call. From a historical point of view the island and town are interesting, as the palace is nearly three hundred years old, whilst the Fort of St Sebastian is older still. Steaming north, still skirting the land, we passed the island of Ibo, another small Portuguese settlement off the coast. Portuguese coastland then gave place to the shores of German East Africa, the River Rovuma being the boundary between the two territories. After five days' steaming from Beira we sighted the island of Zanzibar, off which we anchored on the evening of the 3rd.

The island of Zanzibar lies about fifteen miles off the mainland, and is about twenty-seven miles at its broadest part. Numerous

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coral islands and reefs (at some future date to grow into coral islands) dot the bay on all sides. The town lies on the west side of the island; and its frontage of white houses and public buildings, conspicuous among which is the Sultan's palace, makes an imposing picture. Numerous Arab dhows, flying many different flags, the red flag of the Sultan being especially noticeable, lie along the beach. A large number of the buildings are painted yellow to signify that they are the property of the Sultan, or, as I revise these lines, of the late Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1890 the island of Zanzibar and that of Pemba have been under British protection. That year saw the abolition of slavery—a distinctly doubtful blessing for the clove trade of the island. In 1896 the bombardment of the town took place as the result of an attempt to usurp the Sultan's throne. The top of the Sultan's gunboat, sunk during the action, is still visible in the bay off the town.

The mainstay of the island is the cultivation of cloves. Ninety per cent. of the world's supply comes from the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. In the clove industry to-day the one great handicap is the scarcity and irregularity of the supply of native labour. The mainland which at one time made up the labour deficiency of Zanzibar Island now needs most of its labour for its own industries. Though the island is well supplied with natives (the last census returning two hundred and fifty thousand people resident in the island, of whom the greater part are Swahilis), the drudgery of the work of picking the cloves, coupled with the general laziness of the native, result in a great shortage of labour in the plantations; and this means that a good percentage of the crop is never gathered in. It is not therefore to be wondered at that many Arab owners lament the passing away of the "good old slave days." Many of the plantations, formerly owned by wealthy Arabs, are now in the hands of Indians; and in the case of those that are still owned by the Arabs the crops are in many instances mortgaged far ahead. Indians, chiefly Banyans and Goanese, are gathering a

<sup>1</sup> Zanzibar was taken over by the Colonial Office in July 1913.

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great deal of the trade of the island in their hands ; and there is to-day an Indian bazaar in Zanzibar town that would not disgrace a large city in India.

The bulk of the cloves grown on the island of Pemba goes to the home and continental markets, together with a good deal of the Zanzibar crop ; the balance is shipped to Bombay.

Of the many foreign hotels that used to flourish in Zanzibar a decade ago but one remains to-day. Further, most of the old established Anglo-Indian houses, which formerly had branches in the island, have closed them, owing to the decline in the island's trade. Zanzibar used to be the distributing centre for all the trade of this part of the African coast, but the growth on the mainland of the ports of Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam, combined with other causes, have greatly decreased its trade.

I paid a visit to Bu-Bu-Bu, where many of the above plantations are ; it is connected by rail with the town of Zanzibar. The line was laid down by an American company, which also controls the electric lighting of the town. A little Baldwin engine, with a bell clanging furiously, was attached to the train. The line first runs along the front, overlooking the bay and the shipping ; then through the market street, which is so narrow that a gorilla in the train could reach out and pick any article from off the little shops that line either side. I caught sight of all sorts of goods, from calico print to earthenware pots, from coral beads to bundles of evil-smelling copra, displayed for sale. We passed by tailors sewing industriously, barbers diligently shaving heads, convicts in yellow garb with clanking leg-irons working resignedly in the streets. All sorts of humanity were jabbering, spitting, gesticulating and gossiping !

After the train had taken us through the crowded market we skirted the edge of the island, which gave us an uninterrupted view of the sweep of blue sea dotted with white sails. On the other side were to be seen thick groves of palms and banyan trees with thatched native huts scattered here and there. Solitary and melancholy camels stood motionless on the white sandy beach.





ZANZIBAR'S NARROW STREETS



OLD PORTUGUESE FORT IN ZANZIBAR



## UP THE EAST AFRICAN COAST TO ZANZIBAR

We passed numerous mosques and Indian temples, old Arab houses and palaces in ruins—relics of the *régime* of a once-powerful race ; over small coral-stone bridges which spanned small streams, shaded by groves of towering yet slender palms ; beside small lagoons and long stretches of white beach, littered with craft of all kinds. Stopping here, stopping there, taking on black-garbed Mohammedans, white-gowned Swahilis with red fez-caps, dark-visaged Arabs—all spitting betel-nut juice, we eventually reached the clove plantations.

The clove grows on large leafy trees, thirty feet or more in height. A clove plantation is a small forest and a most sweet-smelling one. Ten years is the age necessary for a tree to mature ; then it bears its first crop. The average annual crop from each tree is anywhere from five to ten pounds, though I was told by one clove dealer that a few trees yielded as much as one *frasla* (35 lb.). Ladders are used on the big trees, the cloves being plucked when ripe by men, women and children. The rate of pay for gathering is so much per basket, which contains one *frasla*—the unit employed for commercial purposes. I should think clove-picking would be one stage worse than strawberry picking, especially under a Zanzibar sun.

A ramble through the streets of old Zanzibar discloses many curious and picturesque sights. The streets are the narrowest I have ever seen ; indeed, so narrow that two President Tafts would find it difficult to pass one another. A little cart, drawn by a donkey or an ox, completely blocks the passages. The tall houses, three or four storeys high, with such narrow streets, gave me the impression of Broadway, New York, with its skyscrapers. The narrow streets have one advantage : they shade one from the intense glare of the tropical sun, and in them the faint breeze is felt at its strongest. Coral stone is the brick of Zanzibar. All the houses are built of this material and painted a dazzling white, whose glare, together with that of the white coral roads, is very intense. Nearly all the buildings possess most handsomely carved oak doors, heavily studded with brass knobs. Courtyards—typically Moorish—with palms and other tropical

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

foliage look most refreshing to the sweltering passer-by. One notices many windows barred. Through them one could just get a glimpse of some artisan at work ; the sound of the silver-smiths' hammers was unceasing. The Oriental and Ethiopian showed no curiosity on meeting a European ; they gave the visitor courteous *salaams* and greetings of *yambo* and passed on.

Perhaps one of the most interesting sights in the town is the old Portuguese tower, a relic of the sixteenth century, which is still staunch and strong. The outskirts of Zanzibar are very attractive ; the soft green of the waving palms blends with the rich tints of the banyan and orange trees, shading the open spaces and little native huts.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM ZANZIBAR TO BOMBAY

**W**E left Zanzibar on the evening of the 3rd as the sun was setting and steamed north towards Mombasa. Several Goanese passengers had joined the steamer, most of them being on their way home to India on leave. We sighted Mombasa at daybreak, the distance from Zanzibar being only one hundred and forty miles, and anchored after breakfast off the town, which lies on the east side of the island. Ships of too heavy draught have to go round to the other side of the island and anchor off the port of Kilindini, as the channel there is much deeper. Navigators here need all their wits about them, particularly when entering the eastern channel. A large freight steamer piled up on the rocks testified to this ; her unfortunate captain had taken too sharp a turn or had not allowed for the strong set towards the shore.

Mombasa is the headquarters of the East African Protectorate Customs and the centre of nearly all the oversea trade of the Protectorate. It is a commercial port of steadily increasing importance, handling to-day most of the imports and exports from the large stretches of territory in the interior, which the Uganda Railway has done so much to open up. The district of Nairobi, made familiar to the reading public by the exploits of such distinguished hunters as Colonel Roosevelt and son and Mr Winston Churchill, is a territory increasing yearly in value.

The native town of Mombasa is similar to that of Zanzibar, though smaller. It is built right on the edge of the coral shores of the island, which rise sheer from the water. The town possesses a famous fort—now used as a prison—where terrible fighting

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

took place in the sixteenth century between the Portuguese and the Arabs. Through the courtesy of the lady matron I was permitted to look over it. After passing over the draw-bridge I entered the fort by way of the massive oak door studded with iron; over the doorway I read the inscription to the effect that the fort was rebuilt by Don Frisco de Cabrena in A.D. 1635. I viewed the dungeons, where in the good old days the prisoners were *dropped* and kept three days without food or water; if alive after this persuasive treatment they were pronounced innocent! The old wells, where the inhabitants used to get their water during a siege, were also an interesting sight. The view from the parapet and from the little look-out towers was very fine—a clear stretch of blue sea on the one side and on the other a lovely bird's-eye view of the little town with its background of tropical verdure. The fort was built of coral rock throughout, some of the walls being as thick as five feet.

A stroll through the European section of Mombasa revealed nothing of much interest. Here also I saw little trolley cars similar to these used in Beira.

We left Mombasa after a short stay and steamed north, skirting the African coast. On the following day I looked my last on the shores of that great Continent. Shortly afterwards we ran into the south-west monsoon, which kept with us till we reached India. As we were "light-ship" we rolled a great deal. We had only a few native passengers, chiefly for Goa in Portuguese India. Since the Natal regulations with regard to the immigration of Indians into the colony have come into force the very profitable business of coolie-carrying has been lost to the ships on the Indian run. Our deck passengers cooked their food on the deck, permanent galleys being erected in the well-decks of the ship for the purpose. Curry and rice was their staple dish.

After nine days' steaming, north and east, we sighted the coast of India, and on the morning of the 18th we anchored off Nova Goa—the chief port of Portuguese India. We made only

## FROM ZANZIBAR TO BOMBAY

a short stay here as we had no cargo for this place, only the few deck passengers from Zanzibar.

In the evening we headed for Bombay. By sundown of the following day we anchored off that town, waiting for the tide till midnight, when we docked ; a heavy monsoon squall bursting over the harbour at that time made our entrance a matter of no little risk.

To reach the business and European centre of Bombay from the docks demands a *gharry* ride of half-an-hour, through a section of the native part of the town. Numerous godowns and docks are passed on the way, and ox-carts laden with all sorts of produce, the coolie drivers steadily urging on their patient steeds with sundry prods. The business section of Bombay is handsomely built ; its architecture would not disgrace any European capital ; along its busy streets speed motor cars, carriages and the humble *tikka-gharry*. All is bustle and motion ! When one recalls the history of the town and island of Bombay, of all the setbacks it had, the terrible scourges of fever and sickness that periodically ravaged the settlement, it is hard to believe that such a splendid city could grow from such unpromising beginnings.

Bombay has many clubs, all of which can supply the thirsty visitor with excellent " pegs " of whisky, and also many opportunities of beguiling his leisure-time in comfort. The colour line is very rigidly adhered to in Indian clubs. It is just as essential for the white race in India to preserve its caste as it is for the Brahmin to preserve his. And it would be well if visitors in India bore this fact more in mind.

A visitor strange to the ways of the East would be surprised to learn the hours at which the European resident takes his meals. He finds the merchant, on rising at seven o'clock, has a *chota hazri* brought to his bedside by his white-turbaned servant, that he breakfasts at nine o'clock, and by ten is at his office desk ; that he will then " tiffin," either at the club or at his bungalow, at two o'clock ; and will leave his office at five, perhaps later. (The business man in India works just as hard as he does

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

in the London office.) He will then have a light afternoon tea. After a couple of hours at the club, where he may indulge in a rubber of auction bridge, or a game or two of billiards, he will dine. It will then be about nine o'clock. These hours may seem unusual to the visitor, but if he has sense he will find them eminently adapted to the life in India. In no country is it more essential to live by the axiom, "Do in Rome as Rome does," than it is in India.

There are some very pleasant drives round Bombay. During a drive down Queen's Road one will meet many wealthy Indians, chiefly Parsees, riding in open and closed carriages on the road to Chowpatti, which leads up to the steep ascent of Malabar Hill. After a drive along the Ridge the Hanging Gardens are reached. Here a perfect view is obtained of the shipping in the harbour, with the numerous islands surrounding it, and the magnificent sweep of Back Bay. Close by are the Parsee Towers of Silence, into which you may enter if you are inspired by an ambition to say you have visited this famous burial-place when you return to the bosom of your admiring family. Not possessing the luxury of an admiring family, I did not enter, but contented myself with gazing at the wicked-looking vultures waiting for their next meal. They reminded me very forcibly of their brethren in Africa, which used to wait for our poor horses to die.

Whilst in Bombay I confirmed the truth of Kipling's words: "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." I was sitting on the lawn of the Yacht club listening to the band, when I noticed a devout Mohammedan carefully place his rug, or rag, on the stone steps of the Apollo Bunder, not a hundred yards away from where I was sitting, and turning to the East begin to pray. To the tune of "The Girls of Gottenburg" he remained at his devotions engrossed in his ritual, oblivious of his surroundings.

My intention on my arrival in India had been to take train to Calcutta; but certain arrangements into which I entered caused me to modify my plans somewhat. I now decided to reach Calcutta within a month's time; and to do this I planned





AN INDIAN BUNGALOW



BOMBAY

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## FROM ZANZIBAR TO BOMBAY

to travel round India by a coasting steamer. I spent in all a fortnight in Bombay—a period made very pleasant by the kindness and hospitality shown me by my host and those I met in his company. In India I was indeed fortunate in meeting so many who were ever anxious to smooth my path. In fact all over the East it was the same.

A most considerate action on the part of the agents of the British India Steamship Company gave me the opportunity of acting in the capacity of assistant purser on their steamer, *Virawa*, which was bound round the Malabár coast for Burma. Such a welcome opportunity of saving my limited funds was most gratefully accepted and appreciated. So with the good wishes of my friends I boarded the old but comfortable steamer, which sailed down south for Malabar on the evening of the 26th August 1911.

## CHAPTER XV

### DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

**P**RIOR to sailing all of us on board had to undergo medical inspection, as bubonic plague was prevalent in Bombay. The natives underwent a more rigorous examination than we, and their personal effects also were fumigated. Our cargo, some two thousand five hundred tons, chiefly consisted of small "bazaar" goods from Bombay merchants for the various coast ports. The dock gates opened for us towards midnight, when we steamed out on our southerly voyage.

The south-west monsoon was blowing fairly hard as we got into the open sea, bringing with it much rain and a moderate sea on our beam. We kept the coast of India in sight all the day following our departure; the land for the most part was low and sandy near the shore, whilst in the background high hills stood out prominently. The sea at night-time was highly phosphorescent and large white patches every now and then caught the eye, making one think that the ship was in shoal waters. These patches were small schools of fish (chiefly sardines) swimming in the illuminated seas.

During the day we passed Mangalore, finding it closed to shipping during the monsoon, owing to the heavy surf which makes communication with the shore impossible. Mangalore is the chief seaport of the South Kanara district, and during the open season exports coffee (from the Coorg district), dried fish and fish manure (chiefly the sardine); the manure is used largely on the tea plantations of Ceylon. The German Basil Mission have a tile factory here, the clay in the red soil of the neighbourhood supplying excellent material for this industry.

## DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

I noticed some of these Indian tiles on the East African Coast—in Zanzibar and one or two other ports to the south. There is a small interchange of commerce between that coast and Malabar by means of the Arabian and Persian Gulf craft.

This evangelical mission was established on the Malabar coast in 1816 and is worked in conjunction with several industries—the tile works in Mangalore and Cannanore, and the cotton and weaving industries in Calicut. Down to a recent date these industries were not profitable; now that they are worked independently small profits are being realised, going, of course, to the mission.

On the morning of the 28th we anchored off Cannanore, which is a rather more sheltered port, though in heavy monsoons ships have to lie well out and wait for an abatement in the weather before they can effect communication with the shore. The coastland here is low, and the beach sandy and fringed with waving palms. The green of these graceful palm-trees with the white surf of the sea breaking on the beach affords a very pretty sight.

The cargo from the ship was off-loaded into large wooden dhows propelled by long oars, or sweeps, when the wind was not sufficient to swell out the one large sail. The oars in use were very peculiar in shape, being long bamboos with a wooden pear-shaped attachment at the end—as near to a ping-pong racket in appearance as possible.

When the cargo for this port was all discharged we took on a few bags of dried fish and fish manure for Colombo. We sailed in the evening for our next port of call—Tellicherri—which lay only ten miles to the south. The officers on the *Virawa* used to call this coast service the “tram service,” as the distance between the various ports is so small.

An hour's steaming along the low coast, with the inevitable fringe of palms and stretch of sandy beach on which the white surf was breaking, brought us to our next port. We anchored off Tellicherri at sundown. At daybreak we started discharging our cargo, which chiefly consisted of small bazaar goods, such

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as medicines, piece goods, trinkets, etc. A small trade is done from this port with the Laccadive Islands, native craft bringing from the islands coir yarn and receiving in exchange rice and other goods.

After a twenty-four hours' stay we weighed anchor and steamed south for thirty-six miles to Calicut. We anchored well out, and the same view of the shore was obtained—just a stretch of sandy beach fringed with palm-trees, small groups of huts and a background of low red-earth (laterite) hills. Calicut is of more historical interest than the ports we had just visited, as it was the first place on this coast to be visited by Europeans, the Portuguese landing here as early as 1486.

A visit ashore was instructive and fully repaid one for the discomfort of sitting for about an hour in a surf-boat and being carried ashore on a coolie's back through the surf. I took a *jutka*, or small carriage, and drove round the little town. The native bazaar was very interesting. It consisted of one street lined with open-fronted shops; each shop possessed upper storey and tiled roof. In front were displayed the goods for sale—cereals in baskets, yellow-metal pots, trinkets, umbrellas, cotton goods, and little heaps of evil-smelling copra lying on mats. Most of the natives were wearing huge straw-plaited hats, some nearly three feet in diameter, to shield them from the burning sun; many were engaged in carrying heavy baskets, suspended on either end of long bamboos, and filled with produce, such as melons, roots, fruit, etc.

The usual hubbub of an Indian bazaar greeted one's ears, the usual odours assailed one's nostrils, and the usual scenes met one's eyes. The village barber was cutting queer and intricate designs on a coolie's head; the bullock-cart with its thatched shade jolted over the stones; the sacred cow wandered aimlessly round the houses molested by none; and the goats lay basking in the sun at the entrance of the shops.

Having driven through the bazaar, I passed beside the barracks, which are picturesquely situated on high ground outside the town. After skirting long stretches of paddy fields, groves



ON INDIA'S SHORES





## DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

of palms and luxuriant tropical foliage, all of which looked very fresh and green after the recent rains, I gained the *maidan* and the town again. I then paid a visit to the fishing huts that lay along the seashore between the barracks and the town. As I passed I noticed many boat-builders at work. The method here employed in building boats is, I believe, peculiar to the coast, as the beams are all sewn together by coir fibre, no rivets or nails being used at all. A reason I heard suggested for this is that there is in consequence greater give, or less resistance, when riding the surf. It may be so; though I can recall cases where riveted boats are employed in surf-riding. A little beyond the fisher huts I came to the fish-curing yards, the disagreeable smell of which had warned me of their proximity some time before I reached them. The process of curing is simple. Large open spaces are covered with mats on which are spread sardines and other small fish in large quantities; salt is then sprinkled on them. The smell is nearly overpowering!

The Government have erected two curing yards here, and, I learnt, supplies the salt free to those who bring their fish to these yards. Much salt on this coast is obtained from the seawater by condensation. The seas along the Malabar coast are well stocked with fish, the fishing industry, however, being more or less at a standstill when the monsoon is blowing. Canning the very numerous sardines has been tried, but I was told that the lack of oil prevented this industry from flourishing. At Mahé—the French settlement—there are two canneries. With the ever-growing scarcity of the sardine in home waters one would think that the sardine off this coast might be more profitably used than as dried food or manure for tea plantations.

Many “dug-out” canoes, similar in appearance to the *mokoro* of the Botletle, though of somewhat stouter design, were in use along this coast.

In this, as in nearly all the ports on this coast, I noticed many natives affected by that curious but unsightly disease of elephantiasis—a dropsical affection of the lower limbs.

Towards evening I started to return to the steamer; it took

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

a good hour's pull before we gained the ship, as the monsoon was blowing strong. We then steamed for Cochin, which lies eighty-eight miles to the south. By daybreak we were at anchor off this port.

If the sand-bar at the entrance were removed the harbour of Cochin would be one of the finest in India. A narrow entrance leads into the estuary, which is completely sheltered from the sea by its principal arm; this runs parallel to the coast, varying in breadth from a quarter of a mile to three miles. The harbour has plenty of water, five or more fathoms being found even at the Port Office jetty. The bar also is very narrow, and but a small amount of dredging would be necessary to clear the entrance. But the Madras Government, in view of the extensive outlay that has been made on improving the port of Madras, is naturally loath to do the little that is necessary to convert Cochin into a formidable rival.

In Cochin I obtained an insight into the working of the cocoanut industry, the mainstay of the coast. The chief commercial products of the cocoanut are the coir fibre, which is manufactured into yarn and used largely in the making of mats, ropes, etc.; and the copra, from which is extracted the oil, used chiefly in the manufacture of candles, soap, perfumes, etc.

To obtain the coir yarn the husk is buried in the ground and there left to rot for a period of about twelve months; the longer the better, though the native to-day is alive to the question of supply and demand and when high prices are ruling he will dig up husks before the expiration of the full period. The husk, when rotten, is beaten to pieces, and from this is obtained the coir fibre, which is afterwards woven into yarn. Women and children are mainly employed in the work of sorting out and classifying the different grades of fibre, which is converted under hydraulic pressure into bales ready for export.

The copra is obtained by drying in the sun the halves of the nut, which rids the "meat" of a great percentage of the water it holds; when dried the "meat" shrinks from the shell and pressure squeezes out the oil. The native process for extracting



COIR FIBRE, FROM THE COCOANUT



## DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

the oil from the copra is simple but effective ; it is on the principle of a pestle in a mortar, with the motive power supplied by two oxen turning a large beam. The bulk of the oil (in barrels) and the fibre (in bales) goes to Bombay for shipment to England and to the Continent, Germany and France being large buyers. In some instances, when opportunity offers, the stuff will be shipped by steamer direct to England. There is a tendency for the home buyers to purchase the copra and extract the oil for themselves. As the oil extraction is quite a little industry amongst the natives, who sell the oil to the merchant houses, it will not be to the advantage of the Malabar firms to allow the extraction of the oil to pass into the home buyers' hands.

I made a trip along the banks of the estuary, passing by numerous godowns and wharves. Quite a business-like air pervaded the place. I saw many small river boats, with high prows and sterns like Venetian gondolas, passing up and down laden with goods and produce of all descriptions. In the distance, on the opposite bank (Native Cochin), could be seen the white bungalows and Residency Buildings peeping out amidst green surroundings. I next visited Candle Island, which is owned by one of the leading commercial houses of Cochin ; and there I caught a glimpse of some of the teak timber, cut from the forests of Native Cochin. The timber industry here, however, is not very large as the difficulty of transport is considerable. The cotton-wood tree supports a small industry—that of making tea-boxes, which are shipped (in pieces) to Ceylon for use in the tea trade.

Candle Island is one of the many small wooded islands in the estuary. It grows a little rice, but its value to the firm that owns it is on account of the small industry of boat-building which is carried on there. I saw on the island a miniature ship-building yard, which turned out many of the lighters that do the carrying trade between the port and the ships lying outside. At the time of my visit I was fortunate in finding one boat just ready for launching and was able to see clearly the method used in

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building. The lighter was built throughout of walnut, not of teak as I had imagined, and there was not a nail or rivet in her; every plank and beam was fastened to its fellow by coir fibre, lavishly soaked in fish oil. As a final precaution the seams were puttied. All the beams for the ship had been sawn by hand.

The lightering business is one of the chief sources of revenue to the firms in Cochin. The creation of a deep-sea harbour in the bay would naturally knock this lucrative occupation on the head, though a compensatory increase in other business would undoubtedly also ensue.

Cochin town is quaint and picturesque. In the afternoon I took a run in a rickshaw through the bazaar. As this lay in the native state, I was compelled to pay a small toll when leaving British territory. An obelisk stands on the bank at a certain point marking the boundary between the two territories.

It was only on my arrival on this coast that I heard of the small colony of white Syrian Jews that has existed in the heart of Cochin for centuries. They are said to have arrived in Cochin in as early as the first century after Christ; and tradition further states that one of the Apostles landed on this coast and founded the colony. If true, it is most remarkable that this small colony of white Jews should have remained in complete isolation in the midst of an alien and dark-skinned race for nearly two thousand years, preserving intact their identity, their colour, and their religion. They intermarry amongst themselves, though it is said that some husbands are recruited from the Jewish community in Bombay. They live in complete isolation in the heart of the native town, and some of them have never left the street in which they were born. I got a glimpse of only a few, as they are very shy and the approach of a stranger generally means an empty street. I was told that some of the young girls of the community were very pretty, but the few I saw could not be called beautiful, though they could certainly be called very dirty. An old Jewish synagogue at the end of the street in which they lived proved a most interesting

## DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

sight. The floor was inlaid with very old tiles of the ancient Chinese willow pattern. The Indian rajah of the state bought these tiles at a very low price years and years ago. The Jews of the colony coveted them, so they informed the rajah—in quite a disinterested fashion—that the tiles were made out of cows' bones ground down. The result, as anticipated by the wily Jews, was that, as the caste of the Rajah forbade him to have such articles near him, they were able to purchase them for a mere song. At least this is the story.

In the synagogue I was shown an ancient Hebrew Bible, consisting of numerous writings on parchment ; I was assured that it was, as indeed it looked, centuries old. The old clock of the synagogue was also a most interesting sight, being a unique specimen of ancient handicraft. It was worked on a most primitive system of weights, all the works being quite exposed. I was told it had never stopped and was centuries old ; it was indeed a rare curiosity.

A little Jewish boy blew vigorously on an old ram's horn, making a most diabolical noise, which is always to be heard on special festive occasions. Having seen all there was to be seen, I retraced my steps down the little street, vainly trying to get a glimpse of some of the hidden beauties.

The town of Cochin is as old as it looks. One old Portuguese church, said to date from 1779, stands in front of the *maidan*, and is still in good condition. I also saw some Dutch graves and memorials—the only relics of the Dutch colonisation.

As is usual with these towns along this coast, most of the buildings were built of laterite, which abounds in the soil. Here and there, in places where that once-mighty race has been, one noticed a Portuguese " touch " in the architecture.

Although I could not say what gave me the impression, unless it was the free use of the bamboo, every now and then I noticed something in the streets of Cochin that forcibly recalled to my mind streets and life in Japan. I cannot remember anywhere being so reminded of Japan as I was in Cochin. There seems undoubtedly a distinctive link between all races east of Suez,

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which every now and then is forcibly brought home to the traveller.

After a long and tiring though instructive day ashore, made very pleasant by the courteous ship's agent, I returned to the steamer, which was now ready for sea. We sailed late at night and arrived by daybreak at our next stopping-place—a little port called Alleppi. We anchored some two miles out.

Had it not been that I was anxious to see all there was to be seen, I should have preferred remaining on board, as a visit ashore meant a long pull in a native boat in a moist and steamy atmosphere, which greatly magnified the glare on the water. There was also a moderate sea running.

I had to land at a jetty, as the surf that was breaking on the beach was too heavy for our boat to run in. To do so I had first to get on to a barge laden with coir yarn which lay alongside the jetty and then, when a sea lifted the lighter, at the crucial moment to do acrobatic feats in leaping to reach and obtain a hold on to the jetty. My youth and my long legs landed me in safety!

Alleppi is the principal seaport of the state of Travancore and is the second largest town in that state. Trivandrum is the capital and the residence of the Maharajah. Alleppi lies between the seashore and the paddy lands which bordered the backwaters. These backwaters, or lagoons, are a feature of this coast. Some near Alleppi were almost the size of lakes, most luxuriantly foliaged and thickly fringed with waving palms; in fact, it is possible to travel to Cochin by way of these backwaters, a continuous chain of which lie along the coast. They are formed by the discharge of the numerous rivers fed by the mountain torrents of the Western Ghats.

Another curious feature of this coast, or about this port, is the presence of a mud-bank which lies just off the shore. As the mud is impregnated with oil it influences the sea to such an extent that ships can communicate with the shore the whole year round; the oily mud stirred up by the swell breaks the force of the waves. When a ship's propeller turns a distinctly





THE MALABAR COAST: LUXURIANT TROPICAL FOLIAGE

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## DOWN THE MALABAR COAST

oily odour pervades the atmosphere. This mud-bank is of comparatively recent formation and is most erratic in its behaviour. It has a most reprehensible habit of going off visiting ; and one then sees the merchants chasing this mud-bank during the monsoon, as without it trade cannot be done. When it has decided on its summer abode, there for a time the merchants also dwell. When I was in Alleppi I learnt that the merchant houses had just returned after having followed this bank some thirty miles down the coast, where it had been " at home " during the monsoon. As the rains were now nearly over, they were at liberty to dispense, for a few months at any rate, with their unreliable friend.

The cocoanut and betel-nut are the chief exports of this place, as an almost unbroken belt of cocoanut and areca palms lie along the coast between the sea and the towering mountains of Travancore (the Western Ghats). Spices are also exported.

Only a few Europeans reside at Alleppi—eight, I believe, was the number when I was there. They have a nice little club and lead a contented if uneventful life.

I drove round the place and visited the bazaar, where the usual cow was strolling about. The system of canals leading into the backwaters behind the town and the gondola-shaped boats in use reminded me of Venice. The old broken-down walls of laterite stone covered with moss and lichen that lined the banks of the canals, spanned at intervals by wooden bridges, gave a very picturesque touch to the scenery. Outside the town was the usual luxuriant growth of slender, waving palms.

Barring our carriage knocking over a rickshaw and its coolie there was nothing very exciting doing in Alleppi, and as a nasty sea had sprung up I soon thought of returning to the ship. After a distinctly ageing experience of getting into the boat from the jetty, the little craft dancing on the waves like a cork, we started off to the steamer. The monsoon was blowing strong. I left behind a few choice and emphatic phrases to be conveyed to the architect of that landing-stage and hope they duly reached him ! The boatmen did not relish their task, but as they

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

were practically naked they didn't mind very much the waves that periodically tumbled into the boat. I did ! By the time we reached the ship our boat was half full of water, though the man at the helm had kept her head well on to the seas. I blessed the vagrant mud-bank that should have been at its post.

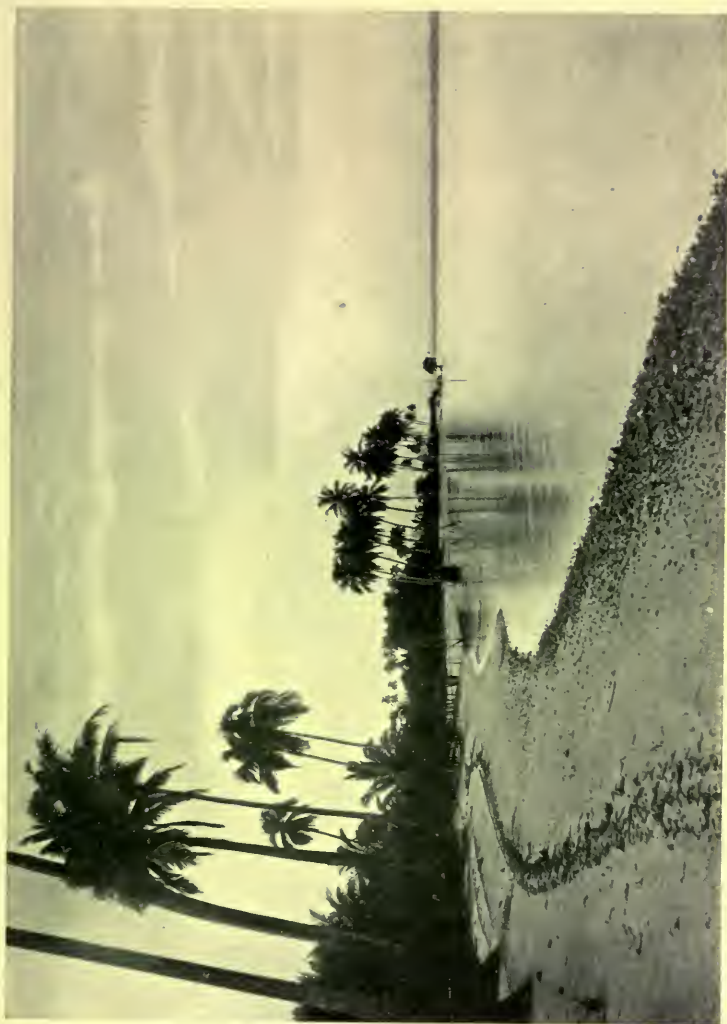
We sailed late in the afternoon and were abeam of Cape Comorin by daylight next morning. We anchored off Tuticorin in the afternoon.

Tuticorin from the ship's deck was not attractive. On low sandy soil, sparsely clothed with vegetation, stood a few red-tiled buildings and godowns, and one or two tall factory chimneys ; that was about all. Tuticorin is the principal seaport of the state of Tinneveli.

Whilst the cargo was being discharged I remarked on the perfect seamanship displayed by the Indians in handling their one-masted lug-sail crafts. They would steer their boats dead for the ship, running with the wind, and, whilst you held your breath thinking they would come round a moment too late, over would go their helm and they were alongside with their lines all but made fast.

The waters of the gulf were dotted on all sides with the white sails of these craft ; in the distance they looked like small yachts. When about to return to the shore the Indians pulled up their sails to the tune of a "chanty," hauling up the heavy sail hand over hand ; some ran up the rope like monkeys, gripping it with their feet, and by their weight so got the sail up. What the Indians in the Gulf of Manaar do not know of seamanship cannot be taught them by anyone else.

At sundown we weighed anchor and left the coast of India for Ceylon.



IN EASTERN WATERS



## CHAPTER XVI

### FROM CEYLON TO BURMA

**T**HE shores of Ceylon were in sight by daylight. As we were keeping close in to the island we obtained a good view of the pretty palm-fringed beach on which the white surf could be seen breaking. We sighted Colombo at mid-day. On our way we passed numerous outriggers and canoes, some under sail, others at anchor, fishing with nets and with lines. Those under sail continually kept their canvas wet to draw it tight, in order to catch what little breeze there was.

As we were stopping to pick up our pilot, a small brig with all her sails set crossed our bows and entered the harbour; her canvas in the bright sunlight looked like the white wings of a large sea-bird. She was one of the small brigs that trade in copra between Ceylon and the Laccadive Islands.

The new arm of the breakwater at Colombo is now completed, and Colombo to-day possesses a fine sheltered harbour, though in heavy monsoon weather the sea breaks clear over the breakwater. There were many gunboats lying at anchor in the basin, their "paying off" pennants trailing in the breeze. Most of them were from the China and Australian stations, awaiting new crews from home.

By three o'clock in the afternoon we were moored at our buoy and we started to discharge our cargo. The bulk of it was transshipment cargo for Madras, the rest being for the island of Ceylon, consisting chiefly of bags of fish manure which we had loaded at the Malabar coast ports for the plantations.

By noon of the 8th we were ready for sea. Our ship was now quite empty, with the exception of a few tons of coal sufficient to take us up to Burma, where the ship was to load a cargo of

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

teak timber for Bombay. Running south, skirting the Ceylon coast, we were abeam of Point de Galle by midnight. (Here I crossed my westward track of 1908— $80^{\circ}$  E.,  $6^{\circ}$  N.)

Off the land we sighted many of the small craft that trade up and down the Indian and Ceylon coasts. By noon of the following day the shores of Ceylon had faded away in the distance, and we headed for Burma. The south-west monsoon was still blowing hard, though it was nearly at an end; being "light ship" we rolled quite a little. After steaming for three days with the wind we came into a very confused sea, the seas running north whilst the tops were breaking south. For a time we feared that we were in the track of a cyclone—the typhoon of the Bay of Bengal—though the season for these depressions was over for a time. However, we encountered no bad weather, though we learnt later that there had been a very severe depression about this time off the coast of Madras, the aftermath of which only had reached us some two or three hundred miles to the eastward. By daybreak of the 11th we were in sight of Table Island in the Cocos group—the most northerly of the Andaman Isles. Some ships make the passage from Ceylon to Burma via the  $10^{\circ}$  Channel, which separates the Andamans from the Nicobar Isles in the south. We steamed, however, to the north of the islands.

Early the next morning found us in the muddy and yellow waters of the Gulf of Martaban. Had we not known our position, this muddy water, with stray logs of wood and brush adrift brought down by the swollen rivers of Burma, would have soon informed us of the close proximity of land. Shortly after daylight we sighted the coast of Burma; Amherst Point first showed up on the horizon and shortly afterwards Green Island came into view. At noon the pilot boarded us. As we drew near to the land I saw that the shores and coastlands were thickly wooded and green, with distant ranges of hills visible in the background. A cable-length off Amherst Point lay the famous Water Pagoda, which is built on piles in the water. In the glare of the sun this pagoda, painted white, looked like a large windjammer bearing



## FROM CEYLON TO BURMA

down on us with all her canvas set. The white pagoda, with its background of dark wooded hills and thick green foliage, is a striking object and an excellent landmark for the sailor.

Entering and passing up the River Salween (or the River Moulmein, as it is often called as far north as Moulmein) are tasks that tax all the pilot's skill. The river bed is continually changing, survey boats being always at work to sound the ever-shifting depths. A series of sand-banks off the entrance have first to be negotiated before the navigable channel of the river, which is marked with red and black buoys, can be entered. To add to the navigator's difficulties, a strong tide generally runs athwart the channel; low-powered steamers have just as much as they can do to take the sharp twists and turns without going aground. There still remain in the river the half-submerged wrecks of two or three large steamers that have come to grief.

By three o'clock we had made the entrance and started the passage up to Moulmein, which lies twenty-five miles up the river. The banks were fringed with groves of palms and thick foliage, behind which lay vast stretches of paddy land of the tenderest green, everything looking very fresh after the recent heavy rains. The nodding palms, swaying in the gentle breeze, and the dense clumps of tropical vegetation looked their loveliest in the cool of the afternoon. My first impression of the beauty and softness of Burma's scenery was never dispelled. The green paddy fields at a distance recalled to my mind English meadows and well-kept lawns.

The river was very full, though not quite so full as it had been a month previous to our arrival; then the greater part of the paddy fields adjoining the river banks had been under water. Even now the water was level with the banks. In places where the banks were bare of their fringe of foliage and palms I could see, stretching right to the wooded hills in the distance, one expanse of rich green, the sun glistening on the numerous plots which looked like so many little ponds in a grassy meadow. Little huts between groups of paddy fields were shaded by one or two solitary palms. High up in the wooded hills the white

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

spire of a pagoda would catch the eye shining brightly in the sun's rays—a testimony to the work and self-sacrifice of some devout Burman. The land on either bank was broken up into a network of small creeks on which floated little *houris* with thatched roofs—the gondolas of the East.

After steaming a few miles up the river we passed the small village of Kin Choung, which looked a perfect picture nestling amidst its groves of palms. As we passed I caught sight of villagers working in the fields up to their knees in mud, tending the rice beds. It recalled to me scenes of Japan. In many parts the river banks were lined with clumps of short toddy palms, from which the Burman extracts his drink of arrack—the *saké* of the country. Far in the distance, over the ranges of wooded hills that backed the stretches of paddy lands, were faintly visible the bluish-tinted mountains of Siam.

When we were within a few miles of Moulmein the slender spire of the Golden Pagoda showed up clearly, its gilded surface shining brightly in the rays of the setting sun and standing out prominently on the "Ridge"—the low range of hills that overshadows the town of Moulmein. Straight ahead of us the Joagalem Mountains stood out in bold relief.

Just before reaching Moulmein we passed the small village of Kyuo Ktang, which bears a very unsavoury reputation, being a favourite resort of many Dacoits—the pirates of Burma. Opium dens and other ill-famed establishments are to be found there.

A little beyond this village is the part of Moulmein which is called Mupun ; here most of the rice mills and timber yards are situated. Close by one mill I noticed a peculiar object in the shape of an old and disused factory chimney out of which was growing a large tree, its foliage luxuriantly shading the brick-enclosed trunk ; it was a most remarkable illustration of Nature's tenacity of purpose.

We anchored off Moulmein as the sun was setting, its last rays casting golden shadows over the surrounding country. The softness of twilight was slowly stealing over the land as

## FROM CEYLON TO BURMA

the splash of our anchor broke the stillness. Soon, but for the croaking of the frogs on the banks near by and the chirping of the crickets, everything became very quiet. The darkness slowly deepened. Presently the cry of the watchmen in the timber yards along the banks calling one to another reached our ears faintly. Never did the strains of Schubert's "Serenade" sound so sweet as they did that night when we lay at anchor in the calm waters of the Moulmein, though only from a phonograph.

I left the old *Virawa* on the following day and bade good-bye to my shipmates, from whose hands I had received many kindnesses.

A visit to a rice mill was interesting. The process of converting paddy, the unhusked grain in its natural state, into rice is very simple. The paddy is first sifted in order to get rid of all the refuse, such as bits of stick and straw, cheroot ends, etc. ; it is then passed between two revolving stones dressed with composition, known as the "shellers," which are just sufficiently wide apart to grind the husks off the grains of rice without breaking them.

It is then winnowed by rotary fans, the husks and dust being blown off, leaving behind the rice with, however, some still unhusked paddy. Some of the rice grains are broken : this is termed "cargo broken rice." The rice is separated from the paddy through various separators of different-sized mesh, the unhusked paddy going again through the "shellers."

The rice then undergoes what is called the "whitening process," the grains being polished by being poured between revolving cone-drums, set at a certain gauge so as not to break the rice but by contact of one grain with another to polish it. The dust which is obtained from this process is called "rice meal" and has a market value.

The various grades of rice obtained from paddy in order of commercial value are (1) "white rice," in which is allowed a small percentage of paddy (which is difficult to eliminate completely) and also a small percentage of broken rice : (2) "White

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

broken rice" (this is largely used in the manufacture of starch): (3) "Cargo rice": (4) "Cargo broken rice": (5) "Rice meal."

The mill dust is generally sold locally for feeding animals. The husk is utilised as fuel, though much of it simply goes to waste. I learnt, however, since leaving Burma that a process was being worked by which briquettes for firing purposes were made out of this refuse husk in conjunction with oil.

Perhaps even more interesting than a visit to a rice mill is to watch the working of the teak industry. The saw-mills in Burma are well equipped with the latest timber-cutting machinery, though they had nothing to show me in this respect that I had not seen in the Western States of America. In the timber yards, however, I saw what I have not seen in any other part of the world: the sagacious elephant doing as intelligently, and certainly more willingly, the work done in the West by thirty men. The elephants use their trunks to lift the logs and their tusks for leverage; the tusks are often iron-tipped to protect the ivory from damage. The elephant is guided by the *mahout* on his back, who directs the animal's movements with a steel-pointed stick; he will carry on his tusks logs that weigh three and four tons and will place the timber exactly in the desired spot. It is a most interesting sight to watch these big fellows, with their huge ears flapping against their heads, working so placidly and so humanly.

Moulmein is a most charming spot; it is, indeed, one of the pleasantest places I have ever visited. It possesses a very sporting little golf-course. I have never played on a prettier, though I fear I did not appreciate so much as I ought the beauty of the links when I found my ball curled cosily up in the roots of a majestic tree just off the fairway. I strongly recommend prospective visitors to Moulmein to get specially built "Dreadnought" mashies and niblicks to cope with the young saplings; they will need them! None the less I regard the little course of Moulmein with feelings of affection, as well as of respect.

While in Moulmein I was the guest of two Continental

## FROM CEYLON TO BURMA

gentlemen, both connected with rice firms. A chance meeting brought this about ; it is a long story, so I can't relate it. They could not, however, do enough to make my short stay as pleasant as possible ; and I look back with feelings of very great gratitude to those courteous hosts of mine who went out of their way to smooth the not too level path of a wanderer.

Moulmein was very interested in dancing. Even during my short stay there were no less than four dances, which in that damp climate speaks highly for the energy, as well as for the sociability, of a small community of about one hundred and fifty Europeans.

Before leaving, I visited the Golden Pagoda—the Pagoda of Moulmein. A courteous Burman—and the Burmans are as refined a people as one can find in the East—noticing I was a stranger, went out of his way to show me the beauties of the pagoda, of which he was justly proud. The pagoda was built of teak, with sun-dried brick in the foundations. The top was crowned with a *htee* (umbrella), from which hung little silver bells that tinkled softly in the evening air. Many gigantic and imposing figures of Buddha, made out of stone, could be seen, one in a reclining position being very finely sculptured. Always the same calm and meditative expression was depicted on the face. Quaint figures—half man, half animal—gazed down. A long gallery contained a row of life-sized figures, all carved in stone, illustrating scenes of life and emotions of the mind.

And the bronze bells. What sweet yet sad tones boomed out in the still evening air when one struck their chased sides. Every evening at sunset the slow tones of those temple bells would vibrate in the quiet twilight with their poignant appeal.

From the Golden Pagoda an exquisite panoramic view of the surrounding country lay at my feet. Overhead the wide expanse of sky was tinged with streaks of gold from the rays of the setting sun. Below I saw stretching far in the distance the rich green of the paddy lands and the thick luxuriant foliage of the undulating hills, behind which lazily wended their way the tortuous streams of the Salween. I could trace the junction of

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

the Atarang and the Gyiang rivers flowing from the east, and the swollen waters of the Salween towards the mountains of Assam.

The sun had set as I retraced my steps along the Ridge. I passed by temples and pagodas, and priests in the yellow garb of Humility gazing meditatively in the stillness of approaching night. It was very peaceful and quiet. And I wondered then who was the happier : I of the Christian West, or they of the Heathen East.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SCENES IN BURMA

IT was a delightfully fresh morning when I stood on Kaladan wharf at Moulmein awaiting the arrival of my companion who was to join me on a trip up the Ataran river. The mountains in the distance stood out boldly in the clear morning air, overshadowing the fast-flowing waters of the Salween, their summits draped in a faint transparent haze. The Golden Pagoda shone resplendently in the early light.

The wharf was thronged with crowds of bustling people—such a motley collection of gesticulating, jabbering humanity. Dark-visaged Madrassis, aristocratic Burmans and Talaings, slender Chittagonians from the Aracan coast rubbed shoulders with white-turbaned Hindus and Chinamen from Cathay. Bevies of sweet, dark-eyed little Burmese children with their graceful mothers, squatting in little groups on the ground, patiently awaited the arrival of the river boat. And the mixture of colours! The Burman and his womenfolk in their white jackets (*mgyee*) and skirts (*loongye*) of every conceivable shade, the Sikh policeman in dull khaki, the white-turbaned Coringhee and the blue-coated Chinaman gave one a glimpse of nearly every colour in the rainbow. Most of the Burmese women and children had on their faces a thick coating of powder, which is deemed by them highly becoming, though it reminded me of my experiences in Oregon resacking flour. In one or two cases where the powder had been judiciously administered the effect was pleasing to the eye, the white *thanakka* throwing into relief the pretty darkened eyebrows and the limpid eyes. Nearly all were smoking cheroots of varying shapes and sizes, green and dry.

Every now and then a couple of perspiring coolies, heavily

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laden with baskets of produce and bags of rice, would enter into a wordy battle, lifting their voices higher and higher above the din of the noisy crowd. A stranger to the ways of the Orient would think a free fight imminent; but the storm of words abated as speedily as it arose. Doubtless it was all over a pice that one coolie's uncle owed the other's dead grandfather. Nobody worried about them. A shove from a passer-by withdrew for a moment one coolie's attention to his load of produce, the other quickly availing himself of the interruption to mix himself up in the crowd; and so the quarrel ended!

In due course the river boat arrived on the scene and was soon filled almost to overflowing with the crowds of natives all carrying parcels and goods—everything from a bag of rice to a little oil lamp. Everybody carried a package of some sort, if only a present for the little mites at home.

My companion joined me just as we were about to sail. He was one of the superintendents of the Irrawaddi Flotilla Co., and was bound on a tour of inspection up the river. He was a Scotsman, and one of the type of Britishers that does not go "to the dogs" because he is out East. Whilst he was engaged on his business I watched a woman selling dates on the landing-stage. The fact that her lump of dried dates, her stock, got mixed up with the weights troubled her no more than the indiscriminate handling of the stuff with her dirty fingers worried her customers. She also seemed to take quite placidly the inevitable return of her customers to demand an extra lump, declaring that they had received short weight, notwithstanding the fact that they had—one and all—watched very closely the process of weighing. Oh for the temperament of the Oriental!

Just as the river boat slipped away from the landing-stage, half-an-hour late, a few stragglers turned up and gazed most indignantly at the departing ship. The native of the East regards Time like his wife—as something of little consequence.

It was just an hour before noon when we left Kaladan and steamed up the Moulmein towards the Ataran. It had been raining a little, but the sky was now bright, and in the sunlight the



## SCENES IN BURMA

banks of the river looked very fresh and green. We passed small native huts raised some feet from the ground, and fleets of *houris*, the boats used for carrying paddy, and one or two rafting stations where lay numerous logs of teak waiting Government "scaling" to determine the royalty dues. We stopped for a few minutes at the extreme end of the town in order to take on a few more passengers, and then entered the Ataran. The river here ran very strongly. In places near to the banks the water was thickly covered with paddy husk, amidst which little naked children were disporting themselves. Child life in Burma seemed to me to be the essence of happiness.

I saw numerous little "dug-outs" with raised gunwales made of teak. Those in use were paddled skilfully along by their solitary occupant, though sometimes one caught sight of two or three in these little cockle-shells which could be turned over by any sudden movement.

The boat kept close to the winding river's banks, which were thickly fringed with palms and jungle growth; in the background were tracts of paddy land, green as an emerald, overshadowed by the blue and distant hills. To me the scenery was typically English; to my companion it was typically Scottish—and we were both right!

We stopped at several little villages as we travelled up the river. In most cases the boat just rammed her nose gently against the bank and a slender plank would be shoved over the side. Disembarkation then began. Down the plank walked the alighting passengers with their bundles and babies and their inevitable umbrellas. At one village a passenger—a little too confident of the gangway—slipped and fell into the river. Such a howl of applause and merriment greeted this performance! Men, women and children chuckled and chortled with glee; and no one more so than the immersed one when he had recovered his breath. He then started to recover his lost property, which had fallen into the river with him; he was still engaged in this task when we left.

When we were in sight of any village and were yet a little

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

distance off, we could see most of the inhabitants assembled on the banks to meet the steamer and welcome the "travellers" home. The little group of naked toddlers, full of fun and merriment, was always there in full force; the inevitable pariah dog would also show up and with his yelps and barks add to the general noise and hubbub; the joking and laughing people seemed not to have a care in the world. Through the jungle growth on the banks one could see the little group of huts that made up the village and the monastery amid its thick grove of palms. The life led by these simple-hearted people and the peace of their surroundings made one feel a little less proud of the civilised Western world and its ideals.

Proceeding on our way, sometimes nearly swamping little fishing boats, much to the chagrin of the occupants though greatly to the delight of our merry passengers, we reached Kyeik Myaw, a fairly large village, with a landing-stage to bear witness to its importance. The name Kyeik Myaw is the Burmese for "Fail to please." Years back, so the story goes, this village was famous for its beautiful girls, who, however, were fully aware of their charms and cast most disdainful looks on the ordinary mortals who dared to court them; hence the name!

On the landing-stage numerous villagers were doing a good business in selling sticks of sugar-cane. The little ones were the most conspicuous amongst the sellers, and I particularly remarked one little mite, not more than four years of age, who would not have been outdone or disgraced by a Jew pedlar on the Rand. Six pice ( $\frac{1}{2}$  anna) was the price of a small stick, whilst one anna would buy a large fat and juicy cane. On departing, the passengers started to chew these canes, spitting out the fibre on the decks, which soon became thickly littered with the refuse. Beyond the "Fail to please" village the river narrowed considerably, passing between banks overshadowed by towering hills of very peculiar rock covered with jungle growth. In the distance appeared high ranges of wooded hills, on solitary spurs of which white pagodas stood out in strong relief. Everywhere there were glimpses of rich green paddy



PEACEFUL BURMA



## SCENES IN BURMA

fields, groves of luxuriant waving palms, tropical foliage and vegetation sheltering small villages.

The river pursued a most tortuous course, making so many twists and turns that we would have the sun one moment on our right hand and the next on our left. We passed numerous *houris* laden with freshly uprooted paddy which was ready to be transplanted. Much of the paddy had been damaged by the recent excessively heavy rains and many fields were still under water. Sometimes the rice is planted out of reach of floods in a "nursery," whence it is transplanted when ready to the fields.

By four o'clock in the afternoon we reached the village of Ngabyima—our destination. My companion during the trip had been superintending the duties of the various ticket-collectors, checking their issues and receipts. He possessed an excellent working knowledge of the Burmese language and seemed to be quite a favourite with the fair sex.

When we landed he took me under his wing to show me the sights of the Ngabyima, a typical jungle village. It consisted of one long main street, lined on either side with thatched bamboo huts all raised some feet from the ground. Fathers and mothers chatting and gossiping, dogs and hens roaming round, and little children playing and romping made up its life. Just outside the village was situated the *poogyne cheoung* in a thick grove of palms.

My companion was well known in the village and took me first to the village school. We mounted the little ladder which led up to the raised hut ; on the floor were seated a number of little children, who, as we entered, were at prayers. We listened to the little mites repeating a Buddhist oration after the head boy, who himself was not more than seven years old. All were on their knees, their hands clasped, their little shaven heads quite erect, their eyes reverently closed. One mite compelled at last by overpowering curiosity turned his roguish little face towards us and took a fleeting glance at the two *sahibs* standing behind. Such a lovely pair of sparkling eyes had that little one. When prayers were finished they scampered off home.

We next visited an old lady who welcomed us cordially and

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

commenced to chatter garrulously with my companion, who was, though he strenuously denied it, as big a gossip as the old lady herself. Presently entered one of the little children we had seen at school—a grandchild of our hostess. For our benefit, though not till after a lot of persuasion, this child went through a Buddhist dance, in just the same sweet bashful way a little English girl of equally tender years would have recited "Little Jim." Saying good-bye, we strolled towards the Indian bazaar, where I espied displayed for sale everything from betel-nut to a reel of Coats' thread—No. 60. These Indian bazaar-keepers generally get into their hands the produce of the village, which chiefly consists of the paddy crop, the careless Burman mortgaging his crop long before it is gathered in.

Hearing the sweet tones of the monastery bell booming in the evening air, we made our way towards the *poogyne cheoung*, where we observed the yellow-garbed priests engaged in their evening prayers. From the monastery a narrow path led to the next village, which was about two miles away. As it was still light we followed this path, through swampy paddy fields on the one side and on the other thick jungle growth—at least too thick for the indolent Burman to clear it away and convert it into paddy lands. On our way we met one or two labourers returning from the fields treading the narrow footway in single file. They showed no curiosity at meeting two foreigners in such an out-of-the-way place and passed us by as though we were one of themselves. The natives of Burma to me seemed even more impassive than other Orientals, though my stay in the country was so short that I cannot say if this is really the case.

The footpath led through ground which in parts was almost a morass; in other places we had to cross running streams spanned (where absolutely necessary) by single planks of wood. As we passed by the little huts of the village we caught sight of the oxen and buffaloes being driven home for the night after their day's work in the fields; the Burman, in common with most Buddhists, looks after his live-stock well.

In this village we made a call on one old fellow with whom

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my companion seemed on excellent terms. He spread a mat for us, on which we squatted, and while the two were gossiping I took stock of the old man's abode. It was a large hut built of bamboo throughout and thatched carefully with large palm leaves. The floor was raised several feet off the ground and consisted of bamboos split in halves, laid closely together side by side. Partitions erected with bamboo rafters, neatly thatched with leaves, divided the hut into different rooms. Of furniture there was nothing but a cradle made out of a thatched round basket swinging from a beam in the roof. A large earthenware jar—an indispensable item in a Burman household—stood outside.

When it was dark a little oil lamp faintly illuminated the interior of the dwelling, its uncertain rays lighting up the childish face of one of the old man's daughters who had joined us. She was busily engaged in scrutinising the *sahibs'* faces and eagerly listening to the conversation that was going on between the old fellow and my companion. The old Burman was perhaps the more curious, judging by the pertinent questions he put to my companion regarding my humble self. How many children had I? How many brothers and sisters? Whence had I come? Where was I going to? These were a few of the queries with which he plied my companion. When he had been satisfied on these points he asked what was my work; or was I a tourist? My companion briefly replied I was seeing the world and was writing of what I saw. To this the old chap replied: "Why doesn't he do some work?" This shrewd retort tickled us both immensely.

It was very peaceful sitting in that quiet hut as twilight slowly gave place to the silent darkness which deepened around us, listening to the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the crickets in the jungle and the slow, soft tones of the distant bells. The gathering darkness, however, reminded us that it was time to get back to our boat; so bidding farewell to our old host we retraced our steps to the river. The task of picking our way was by no means easy in the dark, and the uneven and muddy

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path was in places almost impassable in the intense blackness of the jungle. Frogs plumped into the swamps at the sound of our footsteps and brilliant fireflies flitted to and fro as we slowly groped our way along the narrow path. With much fear and trembling we negotiated the one-plank bridges, fortunately without mishap, though at times this Blondin feat brought my heart into my mouth ; and sounds of rustlings in the jungle and undergrowth whispered of snakes. When we reached our boat we appreciated a long drink and a bath.

Long before dawn we were under way again and started the return journey. The sun was just rising above the hills as we sighted Moulmein and the reflection of the sun's early rays on the graceful Pagoda in the shining waters of the river was just one streak of pure gold. I never quite realised the number of pagodas and temples that there are in and round Moulmein till I approached the town from behind the " Ridge." Pagoda after pagoda is revealed to the eye, making one realise very forcibly the grip that Buddha's teachings have on the lives of the Burmans.

My hosts decided to climb Mount Zingyaik—the highest peak in Lower Burma—and I weakly allowed myself to be persuaded to join them. In the moist heat of Burma reclining in a deck-chair gazing at the quiet life around me was more appealing to me than the strenuous occupation of climbing mountains. I begged my hosts to " do " it for me by proxy, as Mark Twain used wisely to do ; but no ! they insisted—and so it came to pass that three miserably wet-looking objects were found standing at Martaban station in the pouring rain. My companions seemed to consider it quite the usual thing to picnic in pouring rain, and when I gently hinted that the weather was too bad and that it would be better to postpone our strenuous attempt *sine die*, they both hurled at my head statistics of the rainfall for the year. I drank them in and I learnt that 192" of rain had already fallen in and round Moulmein (and the month of September had not yet passed) and that 198" was the average rainfall of the year.



## SCENES IN BURMA

Six more inches were due. They arrived by the time we reached our bungalow again.

From Martaban we took the train to a small village near the mountain I had to climb. We passed on our way stretches of paddy lands, half of them still under water. On our right lay ranges of undulating hills—the Martaban Mountains—thickly wooded and green, from which numerous pagodas peeped out, some of them completely covered with moss and lichen.

It was still raining steadily when we alighted from the train and started trudging over the muddy roads. Most of the hills were obscured by heavy clouds of mist which every now and then would lift, revealing some little temple on their summits. The higher and the more inaccessible the spot where the Burman erects his pagoda the greater is his merit. Plodding towards the hill we passed herds of buffaloes and oxen grazing. Many of the dwellings amidst the swamps of paddy fields were completely isolated, separated one from the other by a sea of water ; so the method of conveyance from house to house was by means of the small “ dug-out.”

Mount Zingyaik was estimated to be some 3000 feet in height ; after I had been climbing for an hour it seemed to me a good 30,000 feet high. At the very top of the peak—the highest peak in Lower Burma, I repeat this—a temple and pagoda had been built, and from the bottom to the top a pathway made out of boulders and stones had been cut through the dense growth of jungle. How ashamed I felt of my lack of energy in climbing up these steps when I reflected on the amount of energy, perseverance and self-sacrifice that must have been necessary for the task of creating that pathway. The path was over six feet wide, with a series of roughly hewn boulders as steps, and was bordered on either side by a low wall made out of sun-dried bricks covered with moss, lichen and climbing shrubs. On either side of this narrow pathway was thick and almost impenetrable jungle growth.

We were clad in the thinnest of clothes, as the moist heat was intense and the exercise a little more strenuous than one's every-

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

day occupation. Rain and perspiration drenched us completely. After a long climb we reached the "Rest House" that was built half-way up the mountain-side. It was a welcome sight. A mountain stream swollen by the recent, as well as the present, rains foamed and rushed over its boulder-strewn bed, making waterfalls in its rapid descent. From our position we obtained a glorious panoramic view of the surrounding country stretching away to the open sea in the Gulf of Martaban. The vast expanse of green paddy fields separated by narrow footpaths looked to us at this height like a gigantic chess-board. Large stretches were completely flooded and stood out clearly against the emerald-green of the other more fortunate fields.

At last the continuous rain damped even the ardour of my two companions, and it was decided, to my secret joy though to my feigned regret, to abandon the climb to the top. We spent a couple of hours at the "Rest House" making steady inroads in the stock of sandwiches and eggs the servants had brought up. Whilst roaming round (mountain creeks have always a fascination for me) I thought I discovered traces of gold. My energy revived speedily and for the space of an hour I searched diligently the beds of the creeks around up to my knees in running water, much to the secret amusement of my two companions. My host still has the samples I collected that day; if ever a Klondyke is found on Mount Zingyaik the credit is mine.

We started the descent, which was nearly as hard work as the ascent, as the rain had made the rough boulder steps very slippery. It was even more difficult for our native servants, whose bare feet continually slid off the slippery rocks; in order to assist them they cut large bamboo poles from the jungle, utilising these as alpenstocks. We too found our walking-sticks more than useful. None of us were sorry to reach the bottom of the hill again, as it was very tiring and at times risky work clambering over the slippery stones worn smooth by the feet of thousands. Much of the rock of these hills was of granite formation, and there existed a small industry of quarrying this stone for road-making purposes.

## SCENES IN BURMA

After our climb we rambled, wet and dishevelled, through the village to a large waterfall and there enjoyed a perfect bath sitting under the tumbling waters, a fitting finale to our strenuous day's doings. We disported ourselves here like schoolboys till late in the afternoon, when we returned to Moulmein, feeling tired but intensely pleased with ourselves. In the club that night I am inclined to think that, when saying in quite a casual way, "We climbed Mount Zingyaik to-day," I forgot to add that we only went half-way.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FROM MOULMEIN TO CALCUTTA

**E**ARLY in the morning of the 25th I boarded the B.I. paddle steamer *Rampura* to cross over to Rangoon. By nine o'clock we were out of the river and were steaming through the Gulf of Martaban. Shortly after noon we entered the Hlaing, or Rangoon river, and steamed towards the town, which lies twenty-one miles up on the left bank of the river. The Rangoon and the Bassein rivers are the only two mouths of the Irrawaddi that are navigable for deep-sea ships, though there are seven other tributaries of this river all more or less available for small craft.

Rangoon river, from a scenic point of view, is not to be compared with the Moulmein river, as its banks are low and much wider apart, the water also being of a very dirty colour. On the other hand, a more prosperous and business-like air pervades it. One catches sight of numerous launches, small steamers and native craft plying up and down, also many tramps lying at anchor—some engaged in loading cargoes of rice and oil, others unloading quantities of home goods. The commerce of Rangoon is yearly increasing and as a port it ranks to-day third in importance in the Indian Empire.

On approaching the town, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda soon came into view and was a most striking and splendid object with the rays of the afternoon sun reflected from its gilded surface.

We anchored off the B.I. wharf about tea-time. After leaving the ship I took a quiet stroll round Rangoon to obtain my first impression. Much of the town is built on reclaimed land, many of the principal streets being on what was once nothing but muddy swamp; the modern part of the town is laid out on the

## FROM MOULMEIN TO CALCUTTA

American block system. Rangoon to-day possesses some excellent buildings, a new block of Government offices being particularly imposing. A stroll through the native part of the town was most interesting. Frazer Street and the adjoining quarter was my favourite spot, with the different types of humanity that jostled each other in the crowded thoroughfare. Displayed for sale in the little rows of stalls that lined both sides of the streets was everything, from an eyeglass to a second-hand Euclid book, from articles of food to packets of notepaper, from Manchester piece-goods to the latest quack medicine. By night flaming oil lamps lit up each little stall, the flickering rays throwing shadows on the diversified types of Oriental humanity that thronged the busy streets. Indians of all castes and creeds, Chinese, Japanese, the dignified Burman and the happy-go-lucky coolie jostled each other—all busily engaged in buying or selling, shouting or quarrelling. A stroll down the Chinese quarter produced the usual sights, smells and noises consistent with a settlement populated by the representatives of this virile race. I caught glimpses of little groups of gamblers staking their last coin on Fortune's fickle wheel and heard once again the plaintive wail of the Chinese violin.

I paid a visit to the Shwe Dagon—the most important pagoda of the Buddhist world. From the farthest parts of Burma, Siam and Korea worshippers come to visit and to pay homage to this shrine at the annual festival. It is the Buddhist's Mecca.

One ascends numberless tiers of steps, worn smooth by the flight of ages, and shaded by handsome carved teak roofs supported on huge wooden pillars. One catches sight of numerous frescoes carved on the large panels and cross-beams, representing scenes from the life of Buddha and of his disciples, and scenes of torture in hell and of bliss in heaven. Still ascending, one passes little stalls, where candles, tapers and incense can be purchased to burn at the altar of the god. At the foot of the pagoda is a further number of these little stalls; also many chapels and colossal figures of Buddha. Numerous grotesque figures, half animal and half man, in all positions, representative of the acts

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

of fighting, dancing and meditation, are to be seen on all sides. At the base of the pagoda is a host of smaller pagodas, each with its *htee* and cluster of gold and silver bells which tinkle melodiously in the cool evening breeze. Bronze bells of all sizes, suspended on stout cross-beams of teak, are struck by devotees with the striker of a deer's antlers supplied for the purpose.

The original *payah*, or pagoda, is said to have gained its present size and height by repeated coverings of brick. It is regilded every now and then ; most worshippers buy a few gold leaves from the stalls and add their small contribution, which results in little isolated patches of gilt showing up here and there. Adjoining the pagoda are many monasteries situated amidst thick groves of palms and shady trees, so surrounded in accordance with Buddhist teachings. From this position a most perfect view of the surrounding country may be obtained, with the Moulmein Hills faintly visible in the distance.

It had been my intention to travel to Calcutta from Rangoon by a coasting steamer, in order to visit the ports of Akyab, Kyoukpyoo and Chittagong. However, neither time nor opportunity would permit of this ; my energy, too, was fast becoming conspicuous by its absence. So on the morning of the 28th I boarded the B.I. mail steamer *Cocanada* for Calcutta. The voyage across the Bay of Bengal took us two days. We anchored for the night off Saugor Island and at daybreak started the passage up the Hugli river, which is one of the most dangerous rivers in the world for deep-sea ships to navigate. The Hugli is the most western and also the most important channel by which the Ganges enters the Bay of Bengal. The river off the Saugor Island is very wide, being at that point at least ten miles across. Many of the mud-banks in the bed of the Hugli are continually shifting and numerous shoals lie in the fairway of the channel ; so compulsory pilotage is necessary and only daylight navigation is allowed.

The banks of the river are low, though the scenery in parts is pretty, as many green stretches of paddy lands soften the

## FROM MOULMEIN TO CALCUTTA

commercial aspect of the surroundings. Jute and cotton mills are numerous.

We moored off Eden Ghat in the afternoon just a little before sunset. As it was Sunday I took a stroll in Eden Gardens in the hopes of hearing the band play, but on arriving there I found that it could be heard every day *except* Sunday, when, of course, no one would have had any leisure time to listen to the music ! I was reminded of the Johannesburg Library : it was so typically English and insular.

Being unable to listen to the band I did the next best thing : I watched the *élite* of Calcutta, of all shades, driving up and down the Strand Road in tum-tums, motor cars, carriages and *tikka-gharries*. Being thick-skinned, I was insensible to the many withering glances on the disgrace and humiliation of being on my feet. When the society of Calcutta had vanished I sat down in the gardens and enjoyed the cool evening air, which was most refreshing after the moist and sultry heat of the day.

As a town Calcutta is extremely well built and is entirely modern. From an architectural point of view it is undoubtedly the finest town east of Suez. Its museum is one of the best in the world ; the commercial man visiting India will find ample reward in inspecting the Economic section, which will give him a comprehensive idea of the industries of the country.

A good system of tramcars enabled me to visit the outskirts and suburbs of the town ; though to " do " the town in a *gharry* is the correct thing if you cannot borrow a motor car. The hire for these vehicles is very moderate : eight annas an hour to the sensible visitor, from one rupee to five for an American globe-trotter.

I spent more than one pleasant afternoon out at the Tollygunge Golf Club, which possessed an excellent eighteen-hole course. As I had no clubs with me I contented myself by sitting under the shady trees that surrounded the picturesque club-house and watching the players fozzling their putts. This was not always the case though, as I witnessed some excellent golf ; it was of as high a standard as were the " pegs " in the hospitable clubs.

## A WANDERER'S TRAIL

Whilst I was in Calcutta a native *puja* (festival) was being held and the streets through Kalighat were crowded with a noisily devout mass.

Perhaps the most instructive visit that I made during my short stay in Calcutta was to a jute mill, of which there are a great number. The one I visited was at Kidderpore. To get there I had to drive through the spacious *maidan* (in this Calcutta has a great advantage over Bombay), and passed on my way many energetic residents taking an early morning canter. Horse-riding is about the most suitable form of exercise during the hot weather.

The process of weaving the jute into gunny sacks was most interesting to watch. The gunny export business of Calcutta is one of considerable importance ; even more so is the export of raw jute, which goes chiefly to Scotland.

As the usual measure of Unsuccess had met one more scheme of mine to find some permanent resting-place, there lay before me the only alternative of continuing my journey to Japan. Once again I am able to record a splendid act of kindness : one that gave me the opportunity of working my way to Japan in the capacity of assistant purser, and of saving a goodly sum from my slender resources. The steamer I joined was the *Napaj*, one of a fleet of steamers that traded between Calcutta and Japan, via the Straits Settlements. It needed but such another considerate action to fill me with a sense of the kindness that there is in the world—and particularly the world of commerce. Indeed, had it not been for the splendid fellowship of those on whom I had so slight a claim, but who were always so ready to extend a helping hand, always so ready to smooth my path, I should never have got through.

I travelled for four months, from Africa through Eastern lands, on just forty-three pounds, everywhere endeavouring to fulfil the small duties incumbent on me ; so the strain on my slender resources, physical and mental, as well as financial, may be imagined. It is sufficient to say that not for a thousand pounds would I do it again ! When I recall, as I pen these lines,



## FROM MOULMEIN TO CALCUTTA

the innumerable acts of kindness and hospitality, and the ever delicate consideration for my limited finances, I feel I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude ; and of the crime of ingratitude may I never be accused.

It was the 12th October when the steamer *Napaj* cast off her lines and left Calcutta on her voyage to Japan.

## CHAPTER XIX

### IN THE FAR EAST AGAIN

**P**ENANG was our first port of call. Here we took on board a large number of Chinamen who were bound for Shanghai to join the revolutionary army. Small-pox curbed their warlike spirit for a time; we left them all marooned on Quarantine Island, off Singapore, for a period of a few weeks, as one of their number had been indiscreet enough to catch the disease. We took on in their place, after the ship was fumigated, another large batch for Hong-Kong. The coolie-carrying trade on the China coast is a very profitable one. To watch the stowing away of these Chinks and their quarrelling for the best places was a favourite source of amusement. Gambling, fighting, eating and sleeping were their chief occupations on the voyage.

We reached Hong-Kong on the 30th, anchoring there on the morning of that day; it looked—by night and by day—as pretty as ever. Naturally everyone in Hong-Kong was talking of the revolution then going on. The town was full to overflowing with Chinese refugees from Canton, many of the godowns having been converted into hotels to house them. Trade was practically at a standstill and all the business men were heartily sick of the whole affair and praying for a speedy settlement. The business man is ever the best advocate for peace! There was some slight disorder in the town, as many of the Cantonese did not quite appreciate the fact that they were in British territory; the sight of a few armed patrols in the streets soon convinced them, however, that they were not under Chinese rule.

After four days in Hong-Kong we steamed north for Shanghai,

## IN THE FAR EAST AGAIN

where we berthed on the night of the 5th. As we lay off Woosang prior to steaming up the Yangtze, we found that the Woosang Forts had changed hands the preceding day. The changing hands had consisted of the Revolutionaries marching in courageously on the one side whilst the gallant defenders marched defiantly out on the other. The Chinese city of Shanghai had also been captured just before our arrival by another movement of this kind. These were, indeed, stirring times !

Everything in the foreign concession was perfectly quiet. As we steamed up the Yangtze towards Shanghai, we passed several Chinese gunboats lying at anchor, flying the old Chinese flag. They were flying no flag at all when we steamed out ; their policy apparently was to wait and " look see " which side was going to win. The weather in Shanghai was very cold, but bracing, a little too much so after the moist heat of India and Burma. Business was more or less at a standstill, the town of Hankow having suffered badly from the many fights that had taken place within its walls. The currency in Shanghai—always a most perplexing problem, at least to me—was in even a more complicated state. Whether things are good or bad, in China one always seems to come off second best when changing money.

We left Shanghai on the 8th for Japan, passing off Woosang many battleships flying the flags of all the world save China, as a reminder that the Chinese could kill as many of their own countrymen as they liked, but that they must leave in peace the nationals of the powers represented.

On the morning of the 10th the land of Japan appeared above the horizon. By noon we were in the straits of Shimonseki, where we took on our Inland Sea pilot. The ports of Moji and Shimonseki, and the shipping that lay in the harbour were gaily festooned, as the late Mikado had just arrived there on his way to a military review in Kiushu.

The shores of the Inland Sea as we steamed slowly along looked bleak and bare in the wintry sun. We anchored off

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Kobe at noon on the day following ; and once again I was on the hospitable soil of Japan.

I spent two months in Japan on the occasion of this second visit. My arrival was in no way opportune, as it was during the middle of the schools' winter term, which meant that there was no opportunity for me to get any teaching work to do. On my arrival at Kobe I learnt by cable that another billet that I had in view had fallen through. This last year of my unorthodox travels was the hardest of all. During that time things seemed to go from bad to worse ; and throughout this year I had my faith in Humanity tried not a little. Friends consoled me with the kindly reminder that the hour is always darkest before dawn. That it might be the darkness that was ushering in the typhoon was at times nearer my thought. But my friends were right.

The bulk of the two months in Japan I spent in Tokio with my friend, E. J. Harrison. This period I devoted to writing many of the pages of this book, while waiting for a signal to return to China in connection with a business arrangement ; but the signal never came.

In the short while that I remained in Japan I noticed many changes in the life of Tokio. Japan everywhere seemed to me to be sadder. And life seemed harder. It may have been that I looked through differently-coloured spectacles ; but, whatever the cause, the deadly material aspect of twentieth century Japan struck me most forcibly. Poverty and crime stalked the streets ; ironclads and similar tokens of "civilisation" were drawing heavily on the savings of the overtaxed inhabitants ; speculation, embezzlement and corruption appeared to be the order of the day. The soul of the Samurai seemed hidden.

On the last day of the year (1911) I said good-bye to Tokio and my friend Harrison, and sailed for Hong-Kong via Kobe ; again I was fortunate in arranging a very cheap passage. On 12th January I arrived in Hong-Kong, with eight dollars in my pocket, to take up a position as Foreign Correspondent to a



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large Japanese firm there. Fate, however, again intervened. A cable was awaiting me cancelling the appointment. This was the third cable that I had received carrying a similar message in the short space of six months. The only consolation I obtained was that in no individual case was there any personal reason for my being "turned down." I could not fight against revolutions and the reorganisation of staffs. To the Chinese upheaval I owe no debt of gratitude.

Some Japanese friends in Hong-Kong now stepped into the breach, and it was not long before I had arranged to instruct certain classes in English. Truly the Japanese were good friends to me! My life for the next few months in China was uneventful. The days I devoted to the work of writing up my travels, in the evenings I taught for my living, supplementing my small income by a few "leaders" in the local papers. My health during that period was none too good. I was troubled on and off with dysentery, and the muggy heat of the rainy season of Hong-Kong lowered my vitality still further. It was, however, the mental strain that at last ordered me to take a respite in the shape of a sea trip in a coal tramp to Japan and back. By June I had drafted my book; so I stole three weeks from my labours and went over to Kiushu to seek out a spot where neither a missionary nor an American tourist could be found. I chose Miike—the Cardiff of Japan. On the trip and during the week there I spent a restful time, returning to Hong-Kong much refreshed.

My only relaxation in China was swimming. Every evening about five o'clock I went with my Japanese friends in a steam launch to one of the small bays and swam and bathed there to my heart's content; some of my companions were no mean swimmers. Nothing occurred during those few months to break the monotony of life in an Eastern port, save perhaps the attempted assassination of the new Governor of Hong-Kong. I was an eye-witness of that incident, not ten yards off. It was the narrowest escape one could have witnessed.

I made few acquaintances in Hong-Kong, having neither

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the money to join the club, nor, I confess, the inclination ; I have not the makings of a club-man in me. Most of those with whom I had any acquaintance were newspaper men, whom, as a rule, I have found to be broadminded. Space forbids my dwelling further on my stay in Hong-Kong, though I could devote a chapter to various incidents that occurred, from a row with my next-door neighbour (an actor out of work) to an informal luncheon with Sir Frederick Lugard, then the Governor of the island. I have written enough ; both you, reader, and I are tired of it all. We are both awaiting the coming of the word " FINIS."

By the end of July this book was finished as I thought, and on its way to London. Then, and only then, did I decide to return home.

I had put by a little money—barely fifteen pounds—with which to return. So I decided to go via Siberia in an emigrant train, and reach London with a fiver still in my pocket. From Hong-Kong to London on ten pounds ! Impossible, my reader says. Not a bit of it ! Not only possible, but comparatively easy.

In the end, however, I did not go home overland. My plans were all laid for that end when my Japanese friends told me there was a timber tramp about to leave Hokkaido, in Japan, for Antwerp. They suggested that I should join her in the capacity of anything from a first-class passenger to interpreter. Though it meant covering old ground I accepted right away. To be frank, I was funking the Siberian trip on an emigrant train during the snows ; for you cannot go on burning the candle at both ends for six years and be just what you were when you started.

My steamer was reported due at Singapore the middle of September, so on the first day of the month I left for that port on the German mail ; unfortunately I had to pay fare—one of the few occasions when Fate left me in the lurch. Consequently I travelled third class ; but third on the German line is nearly as good as second on the English or Japanese lines. Save a run through the tail end of a typhoon which smashed us up a little, we had an uneventful passage. For fellow-travellers I



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had a young American from Manila, a Scotch engineer, both good fellows, a couple of young Japanese girls, bound, I fear (I should say, I know), for the "dives" of Singapore, an Austrian woman travelling as a distressed British subject, and one or two others of divers nationalities. The Austrian "lady" was the source of much amusement. She had been married to a "Tommy," who had deserted her; hence her claim on the British nation. For inquisitiveness and curiosity she had no rival. The Scotch "chief" warned me five minutes after we had struck up conversation. "She already knows your name," he said. "I watched her quizzing the labels on your baggage. You wait a bit and she will put you through your cross-examination: the funny part of it is, she always prefaces her questions with, 'You know, I don't want to be inquisitive.'" The "chief" was right, for Hong-Kong was not yet out of sight before the old dame sidled up to me and started operations. Her first question was pretty straight to the point: "Are you going to Singapore?" I answered briefly in the affirmative and awaited further developments. "We have a funny lot of passengers," she went on in a confiding manner, "they all seem frightened to tell you anything. Now, I hate inquisitive people, don't you?" I murmured, "Yes." She talked on for a bit and then said, "Have you been long in China?" And then, hastily: "You know, I don't want to be inquisitive." I replied to this and many other pertinent questions very discreetly, till the old dame awoke to the fact that I was giving nothing away. We got quite a lot of fun out of her before Singapore was reached; for she was as communicative about herself as inquisitive about others. We soon knew her whole history from the day she left Austria to the day she tackled the British consul at Shanghai for a free passage to Singapore to seek out her erring husband. "Let me catch him with 'that girl'" (an anonymous letter with an account of his "goings on" with another woman had brought our friend down) "and I will let her know that I am not too old to mark her yet." It boded ill for the unfortunate husband, all unconscious of his irate wife's impending arrival. I met the

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old lady again when I returned from Johore, as I was poking my head into a "dive" in Singapore; she welcomed me with open arms. She hadn't found her husband, however; he had heard of her coming and had migrated north.

On arrival at Singapore I found that the latest news of my steamer was that she would not arrive for at least another two weeks. So I found myself with an idle fortnight on my hands and very little money. "What am I to do with myself for these two weeks?" was the question I asked myself domiciled in a little Japanese hotel in the heart of the town, till I suddenly recalled a man I knew on the rubber estates in Johore. So I wrote to him: "I am at a loose end for ten days awaiting my ship. May I visit you on your estate?" Whilst awaiting the reply I was asked by my Japanese friends in Singapore whether I would care to go and visit their rubber estate on the Johore River. I gladly seized this opportunity, and that same day I embarked on a small steamer bound for Raya.

A four hours' sea trip on the small launch through the quiet waters off Singapore, studded with low islands girded with mangrove swamps, thickly timbered and green in tropical foliage, brought me to Raya. On the way I caught glimpses of little Malay villages, which consisted of a collection of thatched huts erected on piles nestling amidst sheltering palms. At many of these villages the launch stopped to take on and disembark passengers, who were conveyed to and from the shore in small *sampans*.

At the time of my visit the Japanese rubber estate had been only opened some twenty-one months; so not more than one thousand acres had been planted with rubber. Thirteen hundred acres more had been cleared and were ready for planting: the rest was in the course of clearing. It was estimated by the management that another eighteen months would see the estate all planted. This estate was one of the many worked by the Japanese in Malaya; in the last ten years they have been investing heavily in rubber. In extent the estate was five thousand acres, which is the usual recognised area for rubber



TAPPING RUBBER TREES



TROPICAL VEGETATION OF MALAYA

TION DEPART

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plantations in Malaya ; though there are some as large as ten thousand acres, but this area has been generally found to be too much for one property.

The magnitude of the undertaking to lay out a rubber estate is hardly fully realised by stay-at-home shareholders. It means clearing a large stretch of virgin land, encumbered with a thick jungle growth of timber, entwining foliage and vegetation. Every growing thing on the virgin soil must be removed and burnt, even to the weeds and trailing grass that suck nourishment from the ground, before the young rubber trees can be planted ; and this is no small task. Even then the shareholder must possess his soul in patience for at least another four years, if not five, before the trees will yield him one penny dividend in the shape of rubber.

A rubber estate in the course of clearing is, consequently, hardly what would be termed a picturesque or romantic sight. Great patches of desolate-looking ground, littered with felled, burnt and charred timber, meet the eye on all sides, where before had waved graceful trees and shady foliage. The sloping hills are barren and ugly to the eye of all—save the planter, for he terms them beautiful ; the bleak weeded stretch of land appeals to him, whilst the native jungle which so delights the visitor is to him a painful eyesore to be removed as soon as possible. Beauty is, after all, only a relative term.

After an enjoyable visit I returned to Singapore. On my return I found a letter awaiting me. It was not, however, from my friend but from the manager of the estate, and was to the effect that he had opened my letter thinking it was a business communication. Apparently, he wrote, I had not learnt of my friend's departure from Malay for England ; but, his letter concluded, would I pass the " loose end " with him as *his* guest. For true hospitality you must go to the East !

The next day saw me travelling through eternal groves of rubber to Mengkibol in the centre of Johore where the estate was ; for, needless to say, I accepted my unknown friend's invitation most gratefully.

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I must confess that to me the rubber estate managed by Japanese seemed the superior. Good roads in the foreign rubber estates (I use the word "foreign" as against Japanese) were lacking. The conditions prevailing to-day in the rubber plantations of Malay seem to me very similar to those that were on the Rand before the Boer War. Favouritism, waste, and ignorance or inexperience, are rife; the ideal system of management has, in my opinion, yet to be evolved. Such was my passing impression.

I returned from Mengkibol with my host, who was an excellent fellow—a Scotsman. In all my wanderings the best Britisher I have met abroad is the Scotsman; the worst the Australian. I can only conclude that the home training of the one is the best, of the other the worst. I must confess I never met in all my wanderings an Australian I could really trust. I hope one day Fate will give me the opportunity of meeting the real Australian.

My last night in Singapore was the "swiftest" night I have ever spent. Trust a man in Rubber to do the honours well. It was my last night in the East, and one, I fear, very typical of Kipling's words:

"Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,  
Where there ain't no ten commandments, and a man can raise a thirst."

I mixed everything Chinese with everything Scotch and English. I also smoked three or four pipes of opium out of curiosity, but to my disgust never had any beautiful dreams, as De Quincey had led me to suppose. Such was my last evening in the East—the East that *never* will be the West, the East that lures and yet repels, the East that has made many and marred more. Next day I sailed for England.

The days sped on. Ceylon, Sokotra Island, faded away. Perim was reached. Port Said was soon left and then the thick fogs off the Spanish Coast wrapped us in a cloud. All the time my thoughts were busy, roaming in space. And I had a lot to think about! I thought of myself at one and twenty, full of

## IN THE FAR EAST AGAIN

Hope and Ambition, setting out to see the world with all the enthusiasm of Youth ; and then of myself at twenty-seven, returning home with little to show for my years of travel—save the gift of Experience and Knowledge of mankind. I often wondered during those hours whether I should ever have made the initial step if I had foreseen the path that lay before me.

Few respond to the call of the Unknown that comes to us in the springtime of Life ; most of us strangle it at birth. One must be young to see the world at its best, to laugh at the discomforts and glorify the reward—but the reward of true Travel declares itself slowly, and is not to be measured in terms of cash.





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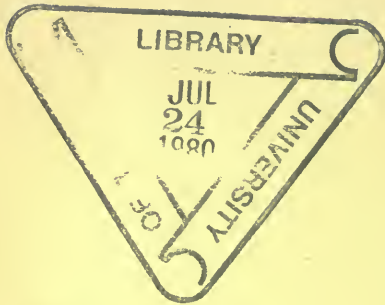
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