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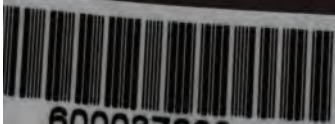
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OUR INDIAN
STATIONS
—
J. BARRAS





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THE NEW SHIKARI
AT
OUR INDIAN STATIONS.

BY
JULIUS BARRAS,
AUTHOR OF "INDIA AND TIGER-HUNTING."

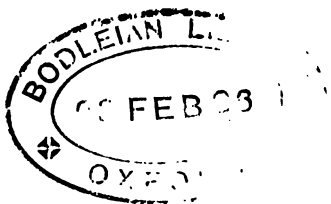
VOL. I.



LONDON:
SWAN SONNENSCH E I N & C O.,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1885.

1898. e. 7.



PREFACE.

I HAVE not forgotten that I concluded my work entitled "India and Tiger-Hunting" with a promise that I would next present myself to the Public as a soldier and a hunter in Afghanistan.

"Why then," asks the indignant reader, "have you not kept your word, instead of coming before us as an individual for whose appearance upon the scene we were totally unprepared? We do not *wish* to become acquainted with persons to whom we have not been properly introduced. Explain, then, to us what you mean by thus trampling upon the *convenances!*"

Ah! my dear friends, the cleverest of us are but poor failing mortals; and you must all have perceived from the very beginning, though without perhaps taking special note of it, that I am no genius.

You will hardly believe that the two unpretending little volumes which I first ventured to lay before you, cost me many a headache! Only with much cudgeling of the brains can I contrive to write a few plain sentences calculated to express what I mean.

How I envy the talent of those authors who can write without thinking! Alas! I am so far from being one of them, that I found a fortnight's rest indispensable after correcting the last proof-sheets of

my first work. And it was owing to the reflections that forced themselves upon me during this brief holiday, that I found myself constrained to write something more about India proper, before venturing past the horizon into the untamed regions beyond.

If only I have imparted instruction amounting in quantity to but a tithe of that which I have received through writing a book about the greatest and richest Dependency that has ever been possessed by any country, I shall have written to some purpose indeed.

During my short vacation I mingled with my fellow-men, and found them most amiable and kind. There was quite a general desire to encourage the nascent Author. "We must talk to him about his subject, poor fellow, it will please him!" they said, really meaning well. "Of course we must pose as knowing all about it; otherwise he will find no balm in Gilead," they added.

Then it was that I learnt the following lessons:— How to smile corroboratively when the Ganges was spoken of as a mountain-range. How not to look astonished when educated people smiled sweetly and said apologetically: "Well, you know, we have no personal interest in India!" Then, indeed, I felt the pity of it that I had not sufficient command of Russian to write in that language.

Well, to speak seriously, when confronted with the profound ignorance revelled in by the popular masses who aspire, through the enlargement of the British Franchise, to govern Her Majesty's splendid inheritance in the East, I could but turn a deaf ear to those Publishers who said to me in a melancholy tone, as they returned to me my rejected manuscripts: "My dear sir, the streets of London are paved with books about India!" Yes, I could only turn a deaf ear to this chilling judgment as I replied that it was but too evident the place required repaving with the same material.

Now, it seemed to me, however lofty our opinion of ourselves might be, however confident we might be of our innate fitness to govern everything under the sun, that still a little knowledge of the character, the feelings, and the everyday life of our far-away Eastern subjects might not come amiss to those who condescend to rule them. The Governor-General, on his viceregal throne, is as much under the heel of the British taxpayer as is the poorest ryot. But how is the great Vicar himself, together with his subordinates, to be appointed, criticised, and kept in order if nothing is known of the humble characters of which the masses are composed, from Colonel Barras down to poor Seetaram who spends his life chopping wood in

a forest so remote that its very name will never be uttered in Europe ?

I confess I was stirred by a gentle amazement when informed by those eminent Firms who, despising profits, are bent only on the improvement of their countrymen, that "people were tired of India—that they knew all about it—the heart of Timbuctoo or the inner life of a Choctaw Indian were now the only matters left that could interest Englishmen." "Prodigious!" I exclaimed mentally, "*prodigious!*"—but I didn't believe it. Enquiry certainly did lead me to the conclusion that the noble writings of Malleon, Kaye, Macaulay, and Warren Hastings were still unread by the million. It was, therefore, quite unnecessary that I should take up the task, so utterly beyond me, of serious History. My hope was rather that, by treating of the actual daily scenes which make up the sum of existence for the bulk of the population, whether black or white, I might direct the attention of the Public to those much more valuable literary compositions above alluded to, and which so few people appear to have perused. It was with feelings generated by such reflections as the above that I once more closed my doors and sat down to write some of my own personal recollections and trifling experiences of a life spent at OUR INDIAN STATIONS.

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THE NEW SHIKARI

AT

OUR INDIAN STATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

BHOOJ, the capital of Kutch, so well known for its workers in gold and silver, was my first place of residence in India.

The cantonments were, as usual, separated by a mile or two from the city.

They were laid out to accommodate but one native regiment, with its dozen or so of European officers, and a single battery of English artillery. All our military camps are as nearly as possible *fac-similes* of one another. Bhooj is but an infant Poona ; so my readers will have no difficulty in picturing to themselves the sort of Arcadian retreat in which so small and isolated a force lived together as a happy family. For not only were we happy, but also conscious of the fact, and resolved to make the most of our advantages whilst they lasted.

In my early youth, and before I crossed the seas, my opportunities of studying dogs and horses had been, to say

the least of it, limited. I was born, however, with a still stronger love of animals than most other people even profess; so that, notwithstanding a lack of actual experience, I found myself, on arriving in the East, far more capable of managing my own dumb friends, and even of developing their powers and qualities, than a great many elderly gentlemen whom I then met on the point of retiring from the scene, loaded with honour, riches, and olive-branches. As a schoolboy I had always been very successful with my birds, rabbits, and other small deer. Now, surely an intelligent creature like an elephant must be much easier to understand than a guinea-pig, which is but a poor little beast almost without reason?

From ferrets, therefore, to dogs was by no means such a violent transition as might at first sight appear; and I soon found myself getting on very well with a number of splendid hounds, and a couple of ponies that I was obliged to pin my faith to as I could not afford anything better.

Fortunately, the regiment to which I was posted could boast of many better and still younger sportsmen than myself. With these I naturally at once formed a partnership, which lasted till matrimony, death, or the exigencies of the Service separated us. I was very lucky in my two first "chums," Hanington and Floyd. They were both very keen sportsmen, always ready to get up at any hour and ride as far as you liked for pig-sticking, coursing, or shooting. The latter, too, had read a great deal about dogs and horses, and was so well able to apply his knowledge that he was quite our chief medicine-man. I found both of these young Nimrods in possession of several Persian greyhounds of the

smooth variety, and with these constantly we had fine runs after all kinds of wild beasts as they might be viewed crossing the open country either in the early morning or late in the afternoon.

At first I objected to greyhounds *in toto*, for, though they often had great pluck, they entirely lacked the power to tackle anything more formidable than a jackal; so, although I had an infant specimen of that breed, called Fox, which I had selected because of its early promise of great size, still she was as yet but a baby, and my first working contribution to the pack was a large and powerful pariah-dog, called Roti, who very soon became famous. My introduction to him was on this wise:—One morning, all the greyhounds had been slipped for exercise, when they suddenly sighted a large white “pye” in the distance. They all started for him at a racing pace, and we were afraid the poor brute would get a bad mauling.

We were soon upon our ponies at the spot where they had run into him, but our assistance was not needed. Scorning to fly, he had drawn himself up on some rising ground in front of his owner's hut, but with his head and long straight tail erected to the utmost. Thus he stood with such an imposing mien that not one of his assailants ventured to touch him. His master now came to the front, and peace was immediately restored.

“I should like to have this dog,” I said, to which the man replied: “It is well: he is a first-rate shikari; his name is Roti, and you can have him for six shillings.”

At the mention of such a vast sum of money we all became transported with indignation. “Surely,” said my

companions, "you would not think of giving more than one rupee (two shillings) for a pye-dog?"

On this I felt bound to haggle and battle with the poor native; but he was so firm that, notwithstanding the difficulty of acting in defiance of a general consensus of opinion, I agreed to the sum demanded, and thus became possessed of a dog for which I would willingly, in after years, have given twenty pounds. He had great courage, but not the speed or cleverness in turning of a greyhound. He could therefore only be used to support one or more of these fleeter animals after they had brought some hard-biting brute to bay. In such work he did remarkably good service. One morning, whilst out riding with him and a couple of greyhounds running loose beside me, I sighted four jackals flying for their lives across the plain. We gave chase, and, after a hard run, the one that the dogs had got on to was forced to take refuge in a thick patch of trees and bushes. I forced my way through the cover, and found the two greyhounds standing over a hole formed by the thick roots of a large tree, whilst Roti was endeavouring to force himself down this aperture.

On pulling him out and looking down the narrow channel, I could see that it was blocked at a slanting depth of about ten feet, by the gleaming eyes and glistening white teeth of a large jackal. Yet Roti, the despised pariah, not only worked his way down to the enemy, but literally pulled it out by its teeth, and then quickly despatched it. In contesting the last few inches of progress the hound's nose and tongue were bleeding profusely from the deep wounds received during the struggle, which had naturally

been a severe one, for the jackal, though less furry, is really larger than the British fox, besides having more powerfully constructed jaws and fangs. I therefore consider that Roti's performance would have been very creditable to himself and family even if it had ended here.

But the adventure was destined to have a sequel.

During all the time that we were engaged in the bushes I could hear the other jackals uttering loud and dismal cries just outside. Of course they wanted to rescue their friend ; so, since three only would have been quite inadequate to the task, I suppose they were calling in hopes that some of the large packs which hunt together during the night might be lurking within hail. Before, however, this point could be decided, we charged out upon them, and away they went as hard as they could lay legs to the ground.

As the start had been so short, they were very soon come up with, and Roti, notwithstanding the dreadful state of his mouth, at once floored the hindmost, which, of course, got a good shaking. Considering, however, the unfair advantage we had taken of this poor beast, I did not wish to kill it ; so I slipped the lash of my hunting-whip through the collars of its three assailants, and dragged them off their fallen foe. It lay very still, and apparently dead ; so I managed to throw a little dust into its bright, yellowish, wide-open eyes. This caused it to wink violently, so I knew it was only shamming death and would soon be all right again. After getting a little further, I paused behind a bush and kept quiet. In a few seconds the jackal half picked himself up preparatory to flight, but, on his glance encountering mine, flung himself down again rigidly, as good as to say : " No, no !

MAIN STATIONS

... thing of this hasty movement
 ... quite out of sight, he got up and
 ... though they had fled so far as
 ... good thing for them, for had they
 ... on the horizon, the mountains
 ... good sight in spite of being
 ... dashing in pursuit with

... deeds did Roti not only see
 ... he at once raised the voice
 ... of many discerning eyes
 ... added one such animal to his
 ... fine puppy of ten months
 ... Wolf from its very striking

... strength, and courage, it
 ... assumed that the pariah was
 ... "kill" with him alone

... of myself and the other
 ... were called in those days,
 ... of rough Afghan tramps
 ... a number of Persian grey-

... convened, and a messenger
 ... to summon the wayfarers
 ... appeared—a strange, filthy-
 ... The men were clothed
 ... a quarter of an inch
 ... whisks their shaggy

black locks were surmounted by long greasy cloths twisted into the shape of turbans. On their feet they wore either sandals or a primitive kind of shoe, down at heel and turned up at the toe. The cast of their features was decidedly Jewish, though their countenances were much more spare and bony than is usual with their European brethren. Such were, and still are to this day, the people who come from the far north and north-west to India with horses and dogs for sale. Nor did I see any other type, all the way from Jacobabad to beyond Kandahar, when I was in Afghanistan eighteen months ago.

In the East, nothing changes except under the coercion of benevolent generals and missionaries supplied by civilised nations. All that I write now may be read as the contemporary history of a thousand years hence, always excepting such places as may in the meantime become elevated and improved by the continued residence of a sufficient number of European conquerors. No doubt a great many Persians visit India, every "cold season," with goods and live-stock for sale; but perhaps Arabs and Pathans predominate.

The Pathans are Mussulmans (Mohamedans), and Afghanistan may be considered their country *par excellence*. From this land had come wandering, mostly on foot, the half-dozen strange beings who now stood before us, prepared to haggle, by signs, over the prices of the dozen or so of greyhounds which seemed to form all their property. Nothing could be seen except the heads and bright eyes of the beautiful animals, for they were enveloped in roughly-made clothing, which, from constant patching on both sides, had

I am really dead: think nothing of this hasty movement!" No doubt, on our getting quite out of sight, he got up and rejoined his companions, though they had fled so far as to be lost to view—a very good thing for them, for, had they appeared but as specks on the horizon, the indomitable Roti, who had remarkably good sight in spite of being only one-eyed, would certainly have dashed in pursuit with undiminished fire.

By this and many similar deeds did Roti not only establish his own character, but he at once raised the whole race of pariahs in the estimation of many discerning sportsmen. Floyd, in fact, at once added one such animal to his little stud. It was a remarkably fine puppy of ten months old, and he christened him Wolf, from its very striking resemblance to that beast.

With all his virtues of health, strength, and courage, it must, however reluctantly, be admitted that the pariah was so deficient in speed as to render a "kill" with him alone almost an impossibility.

Great, therefore, was the joy of myself and the other "griffins" (as lately-joined ensigns were called in those days) to hear one morning that a party of rough Afghan tramps had arrived in the camp with a number of Persian greyhounds for sale.

A meeting was at once convened, and a messenger despatched to the little bazaar to summon the wayfarers into the Presence. They soon appeared—a strange, filthy-dirty, and mournful-looking group. The men were clothed in long dressing-gowns of coarse flannel a quarter of an inch thick, and, consequently, quite stiff; whilst their shaggy

black locks were surmounted by long greasy cloths twisted into the shape of turbans. On their feet they wore either sandals or a primitive kind of shoe, down at heel and turned up at the toe. The cast of their features was decidedly Jewish, though their countenances were much more spare and bony than is usual with their European brethren. Such were, and still are to this day, the people who come from the far north and north-west to India with horses and dogs for sale. Nor did I see any other type, all the way from Jacobabad to beyond Kandahar, when I was in Afghanistan eighteen months ago.

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become, in the course of years, of enormous thickness and weight. On the word being given, these coverings were whipped off, and a painful sight met our eyes. The poor beasts were almost starved to death, and were nothing but skin and bone. No reproaches could be showered upon their owners, for they were in the same state themselves. Their venture this time had evidently turned out so badly that they were willing to take as little as eight shillings a piece for their hounds. Less even would have been accepted, but, although in those early days we were nearly as poor as these very Pathans, still five or six of the greyhounds were purchased and the sums asked for them cheerfully paid.

The difficulty now was to get a little flesh on to the emaciated frames of these poor starvelings. They were not expected to appear in public for at least a month, so each owner set to work in the privacy of his own compound to see what he could make of the problem known as getting an animal into condition.

How well I can remember one of our number, young Henry Shrub, who had evidently not kept guinea-pigs during boyhood, coming one morning to the mess-breakfast with a look of serious anxiety on his countenance. "Flirt," he said, mentioning one of his bargains by name, "is, I fear, going to die. She has swollen out during the night to a fearful size, and I can't think what is the matter with her." "You should have given her some castor-oil," we exclaimed in chorus. "I have, I have; but it has done her no good."

In consequence of this alarming news we adjourned in a body to our friend's bungalow, and took our seats in his state apartment.

The poor invalid was speedily brought before us, led by a tiny dog-boy, such as we all entertained on a salary of four shillings per mensem, out of which he kept and clothed himself entirely.

No sooner did we obtain a full view of Flirt than the chief medicine-man exploded with laughter, and exclaimed : "Why, man, you *are* in luck—you will soon be the owner of a nice little pack."

And such was truly the case, for a fine litter of puppies was born soon afterwards. One of the family, a female, was much larger than any of the others ; so I at once got a promise of her for myself. This was Fox, the first dog I ever possessed in my life, and, as a greyhound, I doubt if I have ever seen her equal since. The bringing-up and subsequent performances of this animal were so entirely unique that a brief account of her short life cannot fail to be of interest to all who are interested in the greyhound. The feeding was conducted according to the time-honoured and excellent rules propounded by Floyd. It consisted of meat, bread, and vegetables. But the training and general education were entirely of my own invention. At the age of two months, this much-prized nursling was transferred from its parent's bed to mine, in or near which it ought to have spent the next six months of its life, but instead of this I at once began carrying it out on horseback to long distances and then making it run or crawl home any how it could ! I had no intention of being cruel—I was only a "griffin" and acting like one. "This course," I said to myself, "must produce an uncommonly long-winded and enduring animal." And so it did, strange to say ; for, at ten months old, Fox

could run down all the horses and other greyhounds that ever competed with her, though she was not so fast as several others at ordinary distances. During the eight months or so that her preparatory struggles were going on I used to roam the jungles with Roti and Chloe, a little wiry-haired beast between a small pariah and an English terrier.

One morning I had made a very long excursion mounted on an old pony, called Rebounder, and followed by these two hounds. I had seen nothing, and had turned to go home, when I heard Chloe giving tongue at about a hundred yards from me. I soon perceived her in the open, barking furiously, at the foot of a long stake sticking straight out of the ground. I supposed some rat or mongoos (*Ichneumon*) had got a hole at the foot of this stick; so, having a soul above vermin, I whistled and shouted to her to come on.

But nothing would induce her to quit the spot; so, accompanied by Roti, I cantered up to where she was.

The stake turned out to be an immense black cobra, which, as soon as it saw more enemies, flung itself down and tried to escape into a thick bush near at hand. The moment it was laid out at full length Chloe seized it by the tail and ran as well as she could backwards, shaking all the time. As soon as she was obliged to stop and the snake showed signs of being able to strike, she let go, and then tried to make it take to flight again. It was evident the cobra was only able to deliver its attack and defend itself by assuming an erect position, which very attitude apparently deprived it of its powers of locomotion.

The combat was one of perseverance and endurance. So long as the snake remained upright the dog could not

close ; but, on the other hand, till it sank to the earth it was, as it were, rooted to the spot and could not escape. Although a cobra *can* make a rush when reared to its full height (for I have myself been charged by one in that commanding attitude), it must be remembered that the reptile now battling for its life was at close quarters with an active foe on whose eyes it was bound to rivet its own gaze with intense watchfulness.

Left to themselves, the battle would probably have lasted till the sun struck down one or other of the combatants. As it was, even by tilting at the cobra with my spear, I could only enable the little dog to execute her manœuvre about three times in half an hour.

For a long time Roti, though he would face a wild-boar without hesitation, kept at a respectful distance from an enemy which he had, no doubt, always told himself should be left alone. Gradually, however, as the snake contrived to get nearer and nearer to the bush, his interest in what was going on increased, and it was evident he had got some plan on hand. Suddenly, at what it considered the proper moment, the snake dropped, and darted with great speed into the babul-thorn. This was what Roti must have been waiting for : he plunged with lightning speed after it, and grasped it in his powerful jaws. The cobra, entangled as it was among the thickset twigs, could not turn in time upon its assailant, and, though the serpent was wrapped all around the dog's body as he backed violently on to the plain, its back was smashed and its powers of doing mischief gone.

Chloe, as may be imagined, joined with great glee and vigour in the final scene of destruction, and I soon had this

formidable brute dead and harmless at my feet. I measured it off on my spear, and found it to be over five feet in length. I should suppose its fangs contained sufficient poison to have dealt certain death to myself, the horse, and both the dogs, could it but have bitten us each once.

After this, Chloe killed two other cobras nearly as large as the first, and without the assistance, if I remember rightly, of any other dogs. The last of the three she found coiled up under the shelter of a wall round a well to which a number of us had ridden out after parade one morning. She had therefore, on this occasion, an admiring band of witnesses to her gallantry whilst destroying so large, powerful, and venomous a reptile. The end of this small dog was very sad.

Some people having observed a tiny but deadly whip-snake among some loose straw in a stable, at once set Chloe on to hunt it. Left to herself, she would never have engaged in such an adventure, but, urged by those on whose judgment she was accustomed to rely, she rushed excitedly among the litter, and at once received a wound on the nose which caused her so much agony that she had to be destroyed by a charge of shot.

Bhooj and its immediate neighbourhood I should describe as unfavourable to all sport, with the exception of bird-shooting, of which there is a great and splendid variety, especially in the cold weather.

For my own part I like a station where, by getting up early, a man can go out, have some good riding or shooting adventures, and be back by ten o'clock to breakfast.

Now, I scarcely think anyone will say that good sport

can be obtained at Bhooj on such pleasant and independent terms as these.

Big-game shooting, we know, always requires a good deal of preparation ; but there are many places, which we shall come to hereafter, where various kinds of birds, and the smaller sorts of wild beasts, may be looked for in all directions within two or three miles of your own door.

At Bhooj the ground is very bad for riding. The surface of the land is deeply intersected with precipitous and rocky ravines, whilst the intermediate spaces are covered with stones great and small. Besides this there are many tracts of black earth which during the dry season open out into a perfect network of deep cracks and fissures such a few horses can negotiate with even tolerable success. I was frequently tempted to put on full speed in pursuit of either a wolf or a boar, but I never once yielded to the enthusiasm produced by viewing such a quarry but what I used to come down, horse and all, in one of these odious traps. Such a mode of procedure, though in no way injurious to a youthful frame, was not conducive to success, for, by the time the pieces could be picked up and a fresh start made, the enchanting vision of a bristling hog or grizzly wolf had disappeared for ever among the thick cover which in some shape or other covered this part of the world in all directions.

In the pursuit of meaner prey, one would be much more cautious and proportionately successful. Foxes, hares, and jackals often bit the dust as they succumbed to one or two of our favourite greyhounds.

About four miles from Bhooj there is a tank called

Kokma Talao, which is a very nice place for a few sporting men to spend the day at. Large trees grow on the banks, affording a sufficient shelter from the sun to enable one to dispense with tents. I believe now a good road has been made all the way to this spot, which must be a convenience to the servants with the baggage; but the hunting-party would still naturally prefer forming a line for the enjoyment of shooting and coursing by the way. A bag of great variety may be made up *en route*, though the quantity would vary according to luck, and the capabilities of the sportsmen. One early morning, as I well remember, four of us started on a pic-nic to this pleasant locality. On the way thither we looked with more or less success for partridges—grey, painted, and black. Quail also could be found in the patches of long dried grass, and perhaps someone was even so fortunate as to secure a florican or some other bird of the bustard tribe. Deer, though frequently sighted, would be too wild to stalk without giving up the whole of one's time to their pursuit. However, the monotony of "feathers" was sure to be frequently broken by starting a jackal, fox, or hare, when an animated chase with the greyhounds would ensue.

With extreme youth, plenty of health, and a fair sprinkling of such animals as I have indicated, it would have been strange if we had not been perfectly happy as we crossed the country from Bhooj to Kokma on the morning to which I refer.

Arrived at the borders of the sheet of water which gives its name to the spot, we could see, by peering through the surrounding bushes, such a nice collection of wild-duck of

all sorts, sizes, and colours as at once caused our youthful mouths to water.

The Talao was a small one, not exceeding, I should think, three or four acres in extent; so we could not expect to get any prolonged shooting off it.

Having divided the distances and concealed ourselves effectually each in a well-chosen little lair of his own, a shot was fired, which instantly caused the feathered hosts to rise with a cutting and rushing sound into the air.

They did not at once desert this their favourite haunt, but kept dashing and swooping about in all directions with a view to settling again.

Whilst executing these graceful evolutions they constantly afforded a shot to one or other of their concealed enemies, and several mallards and grey-duck rewarded our endeavours. It was while thus engaged that I was much amused at a loud, and angry voice breaking the stillness which we all so religiously observed. It was the voice of Lieutenant Jones, and these were the words :

“ I say, young Smith, you have shot *me* ! ”

“ Well,” replied that gallant ensign, “ you shot me just before ! ”

“ Oh, then it’s all right ! ” was wafted back by the now perfectly-pacified complainant !

Such are the rules and high principles of action that obtain at sporting pic-nics where the eldest of the party is not yet twenty-one.

Fortunately all our birds, with but one exception, fell either on the shore or so close to it that they were retrieved without difficulty. One mallard, however, dropped into the very

middle of the pond, where it lay in full view, supported as it was by the thick layer of weeds which prevented it from being at all submerged.

On account of the tangled masses of aqueous plants that infested this tank, we all agreed that it would be wrong to allow any of our native attendants to swim in quest of the much-desired fowl. At the same time, to abandon our spoil to minnows and water-bugs naturally produced a latent feeling of distress in the minds of all concerned.

Breakfast-time came, and still nothing had been decided positively regarding this *cause célèbre*. As the meal proceeded, our gaze was rarely diverted from the contemplation of the dead duck and the log of wood which we now noticed floating within about a yard of it. By-and-by, I began to remark to myself that there seemed, from the smooth clearness of the water, to be a sort of winding channel through the weeds leading up to the very spot where the bird lay, and it ended in my volunteering to venture myself to swim in and fetch out the dead mallard. The distance must have been forty yards at least, and I should be out of my depth at the first plunge; yet no one doubted of my ability to achieve success, for I was not only the eldest of the party, but I had managed to acquire a great if ill-founded fame for natatory skill.

I proceeded then to divest myself of my clothing, and had actually one foot in the tank, when the log of wood before mentioned rose suddenly out of the water and displayed the gaping jaws of a full-sized alligator. With a rush, a snap, and a tremendous splash, everything disappeared for an instant below the troubled surface. Then the duck, rejected

for some reason by the voracious monster, rose again and once more resumed its former position.

I dare say some people will think that I ought now to have prosecuted my own voyage. But I did nothing of the kind: I merely dressed myself and left the mallard to its fate.

As soon as the sun had declined a little and we thought the greyhounds would not suffer from its rays, we sallied forth for some coursing. We killed, as we usually did at this place, three or four hares, which I consider very good for India, where these animals are, of course, not preserved and where they are seldom to be found except in cover too thick for dogs to kill them. Even at Kokma Talao the bushes were so numerous that similar country would be considered unfit for this sport in England.

Coursing in the East is always conducted under difficulties. Sometimes there is too much cover; at others the ground is so hard, rocky, and stony as to be really unsuited to the foot of the dog, who frequently gets not only his nails but his very toe-joints broken in the chase. Still, notwithstanding these drawbacks, we could always, amongst us, produce a few good greyhounds to give an object to the early morning or afternoon ride.

I believe there are some good hunting-grounds sufficiently near to Bhooj to be within reach of anyone who can get three days' leave, which can always be stretched into four if your commanding-officer be endowed with only the most ordinary powers of "winking."

But then even *he* was not allowed to grant this boon during the cold weather, which is devoted to drill; and I

was at that time quite unable to bear being out all day in the sun of April or May. I could therefore only envy Hanington and Floyd, who, being more fortunate than myself in this respect, used to proceed periodically to these happy regions for pig-sticking, panther-shooting, and other such enjoyments. It must not, however, be supposed that I succumbed without a struggle to the tyranny of the solar rays. On the contrary, about once a week I used to face the climate and go out, in search of wolves or wild-boar, with these two spirited young Nimrods.

Dhosai Talao was our favourite trysting-place for spending the weekly Brigade holiday at. It consisted of a large sheet of water the size of a small lake, and was surrounded by steep and rugged mountains for the most part really inaccessible to horses.

A sort of shed stood in a lofty position overlooking the tank, and in it we used to make our home during the hours that we were not actually in pursuit of game.

Even under this shelter the heat during the middle of the day was often very trying, and seemed to cause all the blood to mount to one's head and stay there.

A specially-famous character lived—one might almost say reigned—here. He was known as "The Red Boar of Dhosai," and was looked upon with a feeling almost of veneration by our three Bheel Shikaris—Natia, Rama, and Oopla.

These men were brothers, and each of us entertained one of them as his private servant. To them this boar was an object of extraordinary interest, and there seemed to be nothing they desired so much on earth as to see him run

into and speared by some Sahib of their own, under arrangements made by themselves.

Many were the Thursday expeditions made in order to carry out the deep-laid plots formed during the intervening days by our wily native Cabinet, of whom Natia was the Prime Minister. One or the other of these conspirators was always out watching this great beast, and endeavouring to reduce his meanderings to some sort of system by which we might hope to know where to find him at any time on some lucky Thursday yet to come.

But the Boar of Dhosai, like most great people, was wayward and uncertain in the extreme. He had an insuperable aversion to being "at home" to those so anxious to see him as ourselves. "Out," was his invariable reply when we called upon him, even in his most gloomy and snug retreats. Others of his species we killed as we viewed them, whilst looking for this particular animal; but the monarch himself was so slow to appear upon the scene that I should have considered him a mere thing of mystery, existing only in the imagination of our superstitious natives, had it not been for the fact that my two friends had once sighted him clearly as he stood for a brief instant between two large patches of dense jungle, into one of which he vanished like a phantom, to be seen no more on that day at any rate. Two things were, however, established—he was of gigantic size, and had a long and stiff mane of red bristles, rising like a bush behind his ears, and sloping gradually down towards his tail. In short, we were all three convinced that this was the most beautiful being of his time, and we were all distracted with a desire for his conquest.

Owing to the multifarious nature of our duties in a military camp, we were not always able to wage war together, but no party was ever made up for pig-sticking at Dhosai without at least one of us to act as guide and leader to the more occasional sportsmen.

Thus it happened that a certain Thursday morning found me, still full of hope-deferred, once more on the borders of this well-known tank, accompanied only by Lieutenant Newton, who, though a brave man and true, was as yet without much experience in this the finest of all sports in the world.

As usual, the native fraternity were loud in their asseverations that the real "Simon Pure" had been marked down this time.

"We have 'pugged' (tracked) him," said Oopla, "into a conglomeration of nullahs, out of which he has certainly not come, and the place is not far from here."

On hearing this we forgot the delusiveness of former promises of the same sort, and started at once for what we hoped would prove the starting-post. Ere long the ground began to get very much broken and intersected by many ravines, whilst rocks and bushes were also abundant. All the level places had, during the rainy season, been made to bear crops of which no vestige now remained except the dried and withered fences of cut babul, densely covered with its formidable white thorns of several inches in length. Now, as our line was nearing one of these enclosures, I suddenly saw before me the form of an immense shaggy red boar flying across the centre of it, and clearing almost instantly the further hedge, over which he disappeared completely, as it was on the very brink of a ravine. With a

shout to my friend, I gave chase at full speed, and cleared the fences in time to see which of the numerous gullies the boar had selected for his retreat, and I succeeded in sticking to him through half a mile of really very difficult country. By pursuing an upward course he debouched on to a beautifully smooth piece of tableland, thickly studded with thorny bushes, but free from stones, holes, or any other impediment to going. Here I drove the spurs into Rebounder's flanks, I fear rather cruelly, but it had the effect of bringing me almost immediately to within about twenty yards of the enemy, if I may so call the object of my then fondest desires—the great red boar of Dhosai. For it was he, there could be no doubt of it. The slanting rays of the early morning sun imparted a sort of glory to his golden tresses. How I longed to bring him to bay and become the possessor of his splendid tusks. But it was not to be. In vain did I try to lessen the short distance between us—Rebounder was, I felt, doing his very utmost, whilst the pig could doubtless have increased his pace more or less if he had been hard pressed.

I well remember the feelings that convulsed me on this momentous occasion. As I tore through the thorny underwood I quite enjoyed being pierced by it: death, I thought, in the enthusiasm of the moment, would be better than defeat. Such are the sensations of the more cold-blooded sportsmen. The really ardent are quite unconscious of having any feelings whatever during the excitement of a hunt. Still I was animated with a zeal that was certainly deserving of a better success. My Galloway was old, and had had too much taken out of him on the racecourse to be able to sustain

the great pace required of him, even over such easy ground as we were now traversing.

The contest, severe as it was, had lasted about three-quarters of a mile since quitting the first set of nullahs, and emerging on to the smooth intervening plain, when, simultaneously with decided symptoms of yielding on the part of my poor steed, the character of the country suddenly changed. It began to slope downwards, and rocks and stones to crowd among the bushes.

I knew that we must be approaching one of the huge ravines so common to this rough and mountainous neighbourhood, and through which I had really no chance of being able to follow the hog, mounted as I was on a tired horse. Regardless of the orthodox rules of sport which forbid the use of a dog in pig-sticking, I would have given anything to have seen the brave Roti on the enemy's quarters ; but I had no hound with me, and my friend had been thrown out at the start, so I was alone. My only chance now was that the boar might turn suddenly savage and come to bay, as any wild animal may do.

In this desperate hope I was still doing my best, when all at once the nullah loomed before me close at hand. It was of the first magnitude, and must have been a hundred feet deep at least, and so steep that the first intimation I had of it was the sight of the opposite slope rising rugged and abrupt before me. In another instant the pig dropped over the brink of this almost perpendicular precipice. I followed without drawing rein, at exactly the same spot, for there is nothing in hog-hunting so fatally dangerous as to try to cut off corners when in bad ground. By so doing

you know not *what* you may come to ; whereas, by accepting the boar, who knows his way, as a pilot, there will always be some sort of a footing, which, though sometimes leading the horse and his rider to destruction, is at all events a great deal better than being without any guiding principle whatever. They say that where a pig can go a horseman may always follow. I was young, and believed this devoutly as the unfortunate Rebounder floundered rapidly on his downward course. Sometimes he was balancing like a goat on the top of projecting boulders, at others he was up to his neck in some great hole the nature of which I could not discern on account of the withered grass and thick bushes which everywhere clothed the surface of this dangerous and treacherous declivity.

Happily, moments of extreme peril seldom last long, and I had barely time to take notice of the various shocks and bumps I experienced in my downward course when I found myself safely landed at the bottom of the bank. In front of me lay the bed of the river, smooth, sandy, and about thirty yards wide. From it rose the opposite cliff, which I was glad to see was not quite so steep or rough as the one I had just got over. I was pleased to see that the boar had not decided to stick to this formidable cover, which he could have perhaps done by climbing or running along the bank, however steep and difficult it might be. "Straight on!" was evidently his motto, for he appeared like a black mass against the sky, quitting the nullah just as Rebounder started to cross the bottom of it. It was a nice little piece of firm sand for the horse to pull himself together upon. The opposite ascent was not nearly so

bad as it might have been, and the boar had just gone up it by a nice little zig-zag path worn by the different animals who went that way. I had only to make haste and I might yet come up with the quarry crossing the next open space—and so on, with other golden visions.

“Bless me! what’s this?” I mentally exclaimed, as I found myself apparently in bed, with my nag on the top of me. Only a quicksand, which had sustained the weight of the hog, but had given way under me and the horse.

There we lay wallowing in this treacherous pitfall. For a time I and my spear were under the steed, who was rolling on the top of me in his helpless efforts to right himself. I soon extricated myself, and, by directing the animal’s plunges judiciously, I got him also on to *terra firma* without losing more than a couple of minutes altogether. But horses generally suffer dreadfully from an immersion of this sort, and my poor beast was so exhausted that I was obliged to lead him up to the top of the heights above us. I need hardly say that when we topped the precipice nothing was to be seen of the object of the chase. However, having very good sight, I quickly made out his footmarks, or “pugs,” as the natives call them, and was able to decide which way the pig had gone. On this I mounted again and set off as hard as I could, thus displaying much perseverance and no judgment, for I had, in reality, had no chance of success from the first, for the simple reason that I was not well enough mounted. I was not aware of this, however, at the time, so I went on for another half-mile or so, when I came to a long and gentle slope upon which were grazing a large flock of goats with a herdsman in their midst.

"Have you seen anything of a 'dookar'?" (*i.e.*, wild boar) I shouted excitedly to this man.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "a very big one has just passed right through my flock. He was terribly blown, and had to lie down for some time among the sheep to recover his wind, but a short rest put him all right, and he soon went off again at a brisk pace over the brow of the hill."

But all the briskness was gone out of my poor beast, who was literally tottering under me; so, confessing myself beaten, I slowly retraced my steps along the track by which I had come. Once more I reached the great nullah already described, and descended into its depths on the very tracks which my horse had made in going the other way. By bearing a little to the right in crossing the sandy bottom, I was able to find a firm path for Rebounder, which led us close round the edge of the quicksand into which we had so unfortunately fallen a short time before. As I stood gazing on the scene of the disaster—of which there was no trace left except the print of my spear, which had projected beyond the softest part in which we had been partially interred—a well-known voice, apparently from the clouds, smote upon my ear.

"How did you get down there?" were the very words used by my friend as he looked down at me over the edge of the declivity to the brink of which he and the beaters had followed me by means of the footmarks left by the horse and the boar.

"Well, I galloped down," was my perfectly-truthful reply, though I felt some difficulty in believing myself that I had actually done so; for, had I been invited in cold blood to

trust to Rebounder's performance of such a feat, I should have declined on the score of cruelty to animals, to say nothing of any value I might feel justified in setting upon my own bones. Thus terminated my adventures for this day, which ended in the final escape of the famous Red Boar of Dhosai ; for, the regiment being under orders to leave Bhooj, none of us ever again had an opportunity of hunting him.

I hope, however, that my readers will bear in mind the description I have given them of this chase, as it will enable them to enter into and enjoy more fully the accounts I hope to give in future pages of the glorious deeds of some of my friends who, devoting their energies almost exclusively to this sport, were naturally more felicitous in it than myself. I hope to give their stories in their own words, and shall only introduce my own humbler adventures, as I have done already, for the sake of initiating my readers into those more tedious and drier details which are so absolutely necessary to the right understanding and appreciation, not only of sport in all its branches, but of everything else "under the sun."

The ground, as I have already said, was shockingly bad for galloping in the immediate vicinity of Bhooj. Therefore, since riding was almost my only pleasure at this period of my life, I was naturally very glad when the regiment left Bhooj for the seaport town of Mandavi, the marine capital of Kutch, a city containing about forty thousand inhabitants. Here we spent a delightful time bivouacked under canvas on the seashore, for the cold months, previous to our final departure from the province.

With one door of our tents opening upon a splendid beach for bathing, and the other on to plains of practically unlimited extent and of the right sort to gallop over, it is not to be wondered at if we "griffins" felt as though Paradise had been gained unexpectedly.

Daily, when I could escape from duty, did I wander to great distances, mounted on Rebounder and closely followed by Roti and Fox. The latter was now ten months old, and already noted for her powers of endurance.

One morning I had been asked to take out some eight or nine greyhounds to test their relative merits by running a particular doe-gazelle which I always used to see in the distance when I passed within sight of a certain scanty crop in the middle of a great plain.

I found the animal just as I expected, and all the dogs were slipped simultaneously at it.

The gazelle started at a tremendous pace, and seemed to have no difficulty in keeping a quarter of a mile ahead of everything ; whilst I, on Rebounder, had much ado to keep even the last greyhound in view. This may have lasted about ten minutes, at the end of which time I found myself gaining on the hindmost hounds who served to mark the line of chase, for I could not see the leaders except when the country offered an exceptionally distant prospect. At such moments I could make out the deer far away in the distance, and followed, at a long interval, by a greyhound, a fine animal, which I could just recognise as the only English one of the lot.

Next came Fox, the sole hope of this hunt, and even she was still a hundred yards behind the representative of Great

Britain. The rest were either "nowhere" or rapidly qualifying for that ignoble locality. Even Rebounder, though aged and afflicted with painful wind-galls on his forelegs, passed first one and then another of them, all in various stages of exhaustion, of which I took rapid yet sufficient note to be able to make the required reports to their owners on my return home. Gradually there was nothing left in front of me except the two leading dogs and the gazelle, not one of whom I could see. Still I kept on in what I hoped might prove the right direction, till in the course of time I came to an uncompromising ridge of black rock forming a clear drop of about three feet.

My pony took this in his stride, and, to my surprise, landed on his legs instead of his head, as was too much his custom, especially when tired.

As we cleared this little leap, I had a distinct view of the English greyhound, lying immediately beneath me, stretched out at full length in the shallow water at the foot of the rock, and too exhausted even to look up. This at all events proved that I was on the right track, and Rebounder was invited to fresh exertions.

But nothing can go on for ever, not even a game old Arab pony; and I should, soon after this, have pulled up altogether, but I was afraid that perhaps Fox, to whom I was much attached, might be lying somewhere *in extremis*; so I was determined to persevere till my steed dropped, and then continue my search on foot, even if I had to stay out all day without food.

Before, however, this last stage was reached I spied, in the far distance, what I took to be two "chinkara" (gazelles)

fighting. Towards them I steered my course, thinking that the hunted animal might have made towards them. Before I got near enough to distinguish very clearly what this sort of tilting might mean, both combatants closed and subsided in a heap on to the ground.

As I got closer and closer, I could hardly believe my eyes ; the uppermost animal was my own Fox, lying across the body of the deer, whom in size and colour she so closely matched !

The poor dog was prostrated, but she raised her head as I dismounted, so I knew she was not dead.

I was right glad to recover her, but unfortunately there was no water that I knew of within miles, and the want of this means of refreshment added much to my anxiety.

The gazelle was a very fine one, and quite full grown. So severe had been this run, that the greyhound had only been able to inflict one vigorous death-grip in the throat, and then had let go ; four pink marks, which looked as though they had been delicately painted on the slender neck of the "chink," showed where the dog's fangs had penetrated and slit the skin. Not a drop of blood flowed, which I thought strange at the time, but perhaps there was nothing extraordinary in this circumstance.

The question now was how to get home. The dog was too completely done up to move, and Rebounder did not seem much better. Besides, there was the gazelle to be carried !

Under the circumstances there was nothing for it but to sit down on the ground, with Fox's head on my lap, and see what half-an-hour's rest would do. In less than that time,

I began to see that there was nothing radically wrong with either of my animals ; so, as soon as I had fixed the little chinkara across my saddle, I was able to start homewards at a sharp walk, leading the horse and dog.

Owing to the open nature of the country and my intimate knowledge of it, I could keep a "bee-line" right away to my own tent : yet it took me at least two hours to get there.

Now, I had started the game at about the distance of a mile from our lines ; so, taking everything into consideration, this run must have taken me over a good many miles.

All the other dogs had, as may be supposed, got back long before myself and returned to their respective owners.

Not long after this, I was out exploring in the same direction, followed by Fox, Roti, and another very fine large rough pye, that I had purchased for eight shillings, called Lion, when I put up the only white jackal I ever saw in my life. It was too far off for the three dogs I had with me to see it, so I had to ride as hard as I could to lay them on. As I was gaining on the jackal, I looked round to see what the hounds were up to. Not one to be seen ! So I felt sure they must have gone after deer, which may truly be called the courser's bugbear all over Asia.

Still I continued to chase the animal I was after, though, in the absence both of dogs and spear, I felt what an entirely bootless errand I was on. Rebounder, being a racing pony, was fast in spite of his wind-galls, so that, by the end of the first mile, I was not more than twenty yards behind the enemy. It looked very white and large, quite a prize in case I could succeed in running it down.

We now came to the natural bed of a pond, which was dry at this time of the year. It was covered with bushes ; and the ground, though very hard, was full of holes. I was afraid the jackal would dodge out of sight in this wilderness, so I put on a spurt to oblige it to keep a straight line into the plain beyond ; in this I was successful, and, just as I was myself in the centre of this critical position, the jackal dashed boldly out on the other side, not twenty yards from me.

At the sight of its strange white fur glistening in the slanting rays of the rising sun, I rashly began to ply the whip and spur. To this Rebounder replied by turning head-over-heels and landing us both with dreadful violence on our backs. I never looked to see what was the cause of our sudden downfall, for, just in the very moment of descent to mother earth, I caught sight of Roti entering the bushes behind me at his best pace.

Not a moment was to be lost in picking up horses, examining ground, or such-like trifling : everything depended on getting the dog to sight the quarry before it might enter any fresh cover ; so, starting up instantaneously, I ran as hard as I could in the required direction, pointing with my whip and shouting vociferously. Roti now shot past me, and in three more strides would have viewed the foe, when, owing to his being a slow dog, a grand chase would certainly have ensued. Judge, then, of my feelings when, at this crucial moment, he almost fell upon a fine buck-gazelle, which at once began executing grasshopper bounds in front of his very nose. For a brief instant I wished myself a lady, that I might be able to faint comfort-

ably, but, as this was impossible, I simply turned my back on the harrowing scene—the jackal becoming a mere speck in one direction, and the deer making a complete fool of the dog in the other.

Fortunately, I was too much overcome, at this stage, to experience any fresh emotions, or I might have suffered poignantly on beholding Rebounder already a quarter of a mile off, and going at a speed calculated to prove that he could win the Derby, provided he might try, bare-backed, for such a distinction. In a few minutes everything had vanished out of sight, whilst a great and unpleasant calm fell upon me as I stood alone on the vast and silent plain.

Being a good many miles from home, I felt, in the course of a few seconds, that my only alternative was to set off and tramp thither on foot with what speed I might.

Notwithstanding the extreme openness and perfect flatness of the country, I saw nothing of my four-footed retainers *en route*, but I was not surprised at this, owing to the great distances they can traverse when in pursuit of deer. Walking, however, as fast as I could, between two and three hours had elapsed before I reached my tent; so I thought there had been ample time for them all to have returned before me, no matter what *détours* it might have pleased them to make. None, however, had put in an appearance; so that I naturally felt uneasy and anxious, especially concerning Fox, whose severe bringing-up had rendered her so delicate that she never had a proper appetite, and was unable to eat anything after a really hard run. Consequently, whenever this hound was missing, I

invariably pictured her to myself lying exhausted and perhaps dying in the jungle. But my chief fears were not long in being relieved, for this favourite and valuable animal returned whilst I was at breakfast, and Roti also got safely back.

Of course, we all felt sure that Rebounder and Lion would not be many minutes behind the other two, but hours elapsed without anything being seen or heard of them. At last night fell, and still they came not.

This kind of conduct on the part of camp animals was most unusual, as they are supposed, if let loose, to be able to find their way home from any point on the earth's surface, provided the sea does not intervene. When, therefore, yet another day was on the wane, and still no news whatever of the truants, even "the oldest inhabitant" pronounced the circumstances to be unprecedented, and quite a mild excitement began to prevail amongst people of all ranks and colours.

My own feelings will be better imagined than described when I inform the reader that I was under orders to leave the shores of Mandavi for ever, in the course of four days from the time of the accident, in order to go with my friend Hanington on special duty to another province.

It was well known that either to go without a mount, or to purchase a new animal all saddled and bridled, was about equally impossible to me. Hence the interest that my case excited, and the efforts that were made by both the civil and military powers to learn something of my lost property. Some were of opinion that the pony had been stolen, but what then had become of the dog, which was as

large and more savage than a wolf? No one could have captured *him*, even had they wished to do so.

Thus the time went by till the day of departure dawned on the "patimar" (native vessel) in which we were to embark before sunset, with a view to crossing the briny ocean.

I had long given up all hope of going down to the sea on horseback, when suddenly, and as if by enchantment, I saw Rebounder, in an extraordinarily dusty and unkempt state, poking his head almost into my tent! Need I say that I rushed frantically out to greet the returned prodigal? There he stood, with the dog behind him, each led by a dirty piece of rope, and surrounded by a group of wild-looking people, who had brought these two animals in from some fabulous distance, according to their own accounts. I did not care much for details, but it seems the dog had struck faithfully to the horse till at last he had been sufficiently tamed by hunger to allow a string to be tied round his neck by those who fed him. The saddle and bridle had never once been removed, which must have been terribly trying to the poor pony. Fortunately neither of these articles had sustained any serious injury; so, having rewarded the natives for their trouble, I began to feel very much better than I had done for a long time previously—I was even in high spirits when the hour arrived for getting, with all my belongings, on board the barbarous-looking craft which was to be entrusted for two or three days with the precious lives of Hanington and myself.

A patimar is not a structure that can be described in words, so as to place it graphically before the reader who

has not seen one. Pourtrayed on canvas it would strike the beholder as something between a gigantic hen-coop and a Chinese junk. There is a sort of open shed at the rudder end which is partially closed with such carpets or other hangings as may be available. In such a state-cabin had been placed our bedsteads and other camp furniture, whilst the luggage, consisting of boxes, bundles of tents, and other things, oozed out, as it were, into the main body of the boat beyond. Amongst these impedimenta lived our domestics, with their wives and families, all mixed up with our goats, poultry, horses, and dogs. This was the *vista-view* which we contemplated as we reclined on our couches in the early mornings or during the calm hours of the moonlight nights. It was very jolly—there is no other word for it.

Hanington, who was a good sailor, declared the sea to be as flat as a board, or words to that effect; but my interior economy pronounced otherwise, and I was seasick for four or five hours.

At the end of that short period, however, I was quite well again, and enjoyed the remainder of the voyage extremely.

Owing to the absence of wind, we had at least three nights on board; and I was surprised, during those stilly hours, to find that I had a gifted story-teller in my train.

For hours at a time, I could hear the voice of Rebounder's attendant as he recounted, to a rapt audience, the deeds of a beautiful but wicked princess, whose ways were eventually made known by the voice of her own parrot. And so on with many other tales, told with all the warmth of Oriental colouring, and more than half believed in by the credulous and superstitious listeners.

Such was my farewell to Mandavi, where I had spent many pleasant months, and which is a spot I can confidently recommend to anyone who may have a passion for wild sport with horse and hound. I do not think I have ever seen a place so suitable in every way for matching first-class English greyhounds against gazelles. But such an undertaking would require much capital and a still greater judgment in dogs to ensure even a fair trial, to say nothing of ultimate triumphs. So we all went "sailing, sailing over the sunny sea" till we arrived at a little native port, called Juria Bunder, on the shores of Kattiawar, and distant by a ten-days' march from Rajkote, the military station in the interior, where the General Court-Martial, of which we had been appointed members, was to sit.

We landed, and at once found ourselves in that country which is perhaps the most celebrated in India for its immense quantities of black-buck, gazelles, and gigantic "nilgai." These are all deer of the antelope tribe, and are strictly preserved, on religious grounds, by the wealthy high-caste Hindoos, who reside here in great numbers, and prevent by every means in their power the taking of all life except that of man, who does not appear to be included in their scheme of humanity!

The truth is, being devout believers in the transmigration of souls, they live in constant dread of destroying their own ancestors, who may be wandering on the plains, furnished with horns twenty-seven inches in length, like a black-buck, or they may be buzzing round the eyes of their descendants in the accursed form of gnats and flies, so that some will not destroy even these scourges. But Hanington and I were

young Christian conquerors, come of respectable English folks, none of whom would think of demeaning themselves by wandering about an Indian maidan (plain) on shuffling off this mortal coil.

We therefore prepared to enjoy a regular campaign amongst all the birds and beasts we could find, without any misgivings concerning our departed progenitors. Pea-fowl we were obliged to be careful about, as these birds are so specially sacred that our own Government is obliged to interfere on their behalf, in order to prevent constant rioting

At Juria Bunder we found a large rambling empty house, that took in everything belonging to us; so we decided to stay here a day or two, in order to arrange about carts and other details for our journey across country, which we were determined to convert into a shikar trip as far as our limited experience and resources would admit of.

Our stock-in-trade consisted of a few good hog-spears (Hanington was a notable pig-sticker), a few dogs for running by sight, and one gun, which was my property and such an extraordinary weapon as to deserve a short description.

It was a long single-barrelled duck-gun which must have been made very early in the century, and had come down to me as a family heirloom. It was a good deal ornamented with silver, and was, no doubt, at the time of its production, as fine a weapon as could be procured anywhere.

The barrel was of very thick Damascus metal, and so choked that we experienced no small difficulty in ramming home a thirteen-bore bullet. This operation, indeed, could

only be performed by means of an iron ramrod which one of us held over the bullet while the other mounted on some elevation and worked a large stone weighing from ten to fifteen pounds on the other end of the loading-bar. At first it used to seem as if the ball would never enter, but it did at last, and its passage became easier as it descended, till it came to the last six inches, when it fell of itself down to the breech, where it had to be kept in position by a wad. Such was this remarkable engine which had been nicknamed by an apt Irish friend "The Family Piece."

It is not my intention to weary the reader with an account of the really incredible liberties we took with this ancient bit of furniture ; suffice it to say that, had we been persons with lives of any value, we should probably have been blown up at the outset. As it was, being only "griffins" with all our troubles before us, we were not only spared all accidents, but even lived to make a very good bag before we reached Rajkote. We journeyed at night in carts half-loaded with straw, in which we slept quite soundly in spite of the jolting. By this arrangement we used to wake every morning on new ground, with the whole day before us for shooting and hunting, and I must say I look back with nothing but the greatest pleasure to that happy time.

Daily we saw a great number of antelopes, mostly of the black-buck species. By casting a searching glance around the open plain, which was bounded only by the natural horizon, it was no uncommon thing to make out simultaneously several herds of these animals, grazing or lying down, in various directions. At no time do they require

any shelter whatever. Throughout the most grilling weather in the hottest parts of India, these creatures remain, whether resting or feeding, constantly exposed to the rays of the sun, beating fiercely on their black hides, which must be enduring a temperature but little short of roasting. During the midday hours they are more inclined to rest and be lazy than when the sun is lower in the heavens; so, if merely shooting this sort of game be your object, a comfortable breakfast is not only feasible but quite advisable before making a start. Having despatched that meal, then, your shikari informs you that all is ready. This need only mean that a common country cart, drawn by a pair of well-behaved bullocks, is in attendance to act as a moving screen to conceal yourself and party whilst stalking the deer.

Some people profess to look down on this method as partaking of poaching, but I think there are few, if any, sportsmen who have not frequently made use of this cunning expedient. For, although these animals, owing to constant protection, are often as tame towards natives as a flock of domestic goats might be, yet they are by no means always so, and their quickness in discovering the presence of a European is quite extraordinary. Once they have penetrated the disguise of any dangerous character, it becomes extremely difficult to get within shot of them, even if you are armed with a good rifle. Was it likely, then, that two bloodthirsty "griffins," with nothing but the ancient "family piece" to rely upon, would be visited by compunctions unknown to the rest of mankind? We were, however, quite above shooting does—only bucks with good skins and horns were considered

worthy of our prowess. So we not only had the cart, but furnished it on the top with a low cover and plenty of straw inside for the accommodation of Fox, who, in consideration of her being a born Persian, and this the month of December, could be used throughout the day to run down a wounded animal.

Thus we started on our rounds, I armed with the gun and Hanington, who was a very fine horseman, leading his steed, somewhat profanely called "The Devil," under shelter of the little two-wheeled cart. Before long we came upon a very large herd, consisting of about thirty or forty head of both sexes. We at once pretended to drive the hackery the other way, and then gradually began to circle nearer and nearer towards our hoped-for booty. As we got within good viewing distance we distinguished one fine buck, with a broken horn it is true, but it had the blackest skin we had ever beheld or were to behold again in all our lives. This was at once singled out for destruction, but, before we had got within the eighty yards which was the shooting-range of my veteran smooth-bore, we perceived a full-grown doe, among the troop, who had had her foreleg broken, but it was now healed, and she could use it for all ordinary purposes as well as ever.

Now, it occurred to us that, though we never fired at females, it would be a very fine piece of sport if Hanington, assisted by Fox, could run this animal down on his Kutch horse, which was well known for its speed and powers of endurance.

Our little scheme was soon matured, and resulted in Hanington, Fox, and the herd all starting wildly off at full

speed the instant I pulled the trigger. As the smoke cleared there lay the buck I had aimed at, stone-dead. Beyond, appeared my friend, racing after the doe as she fled, surrounded by a bevy of companions, whom she seemed quite equal to keeping up with. What was my vexation, however, to observe Fox tearing in exactly the opposite direction to the horse, in hot pursuit of the main body of the herd! Not having a mount with me, I could only jump on to the cart and watch all these fast-receding forms. As the ground was flat and bare, I could keep my eye on the horse till he was but a mere speck of white in the far distance. At last he also vanished from view, and I was left alone, wishing very much that I had not given Rebounder a holiday on this occasion. All I could do was to follow, as fast as I could run, on the tracks of the hunter. I was so long in seeing anything of my companion that I began to fear some accident might have happened to him.

At length, however, I discerned what I felt must be himself and nag.

The signs I made to attract his attention were duly observed, and we soon began to approach each other. But only very slowly, as the horse was evidently quite spent with fatigue. I had no hopes that the chase could have been successful without the dog. What, then, was my pleasurable astonishment, as my friend drew near, to see this fine antelope lying, with its throat cut, across the withers of the steed, and Hanington sitting triumphantly in the saddle behind it! More astonishing still was the sight of Fox meekly following at a little distance behind the gallant rider. This, considering that she had gone off in the

opposite direction, seemed so very surprising that I could only ask incoherently for an explanation of the run.

According to Hanington's account, it had not taken him very long to force the deer with the bowed leg on to a line by itself, as its friends naturally kept on scattering right and left, so that the animal to be pursued was soon left alone to try the powers of the horse single-handed. After a long run over many nullahs and much bad ground, he got on to terms with the doe at last. But, notwithstanding the really fine qualities of the steed, its powers began to fail at the critical moment. So severe had been the contest that Hanington told me he at last could only wonder which would drop down first—the antelope or the horse. Things were in this desperate state, when, to his surprise, Fox glided swiftly past him and pulled the quarry down, holding it by the hind-leg. This was such a much larger beast than a gazelle that she could not kill it herself, so my friend dismounted and cut its throat with the blade of his spear. "Poor Fox!" I exclaimed, "she must have been terribly done up after all this!" "Not at all," was the reply; "she did not even appear blown." How she had contrived to finish her own hunt and yet come up in time to support Hanington was certainly very wonderful. I suppose, on finding that she could not manage to capture anything out of the herd *en masse*, she must have paused, and, by her acute hearing, have caught a sound of the horse's hoofs as it galloped over the many tracts of sheet-rock with which the country was plentifully intersected. Be that as it may, she contrived to appear at the right moment, and thus crowned one of our earliest adventures in life with success.

Here I must pause for an instant, and, at the risk of repeating myself, once more entreat of the reader not to set aside my description of "shikar" in India as ancient, and therefore of no practical use or interest to Englishmen of the present day. In the East nothing changes, so that amongst Asiatics thirty years are but as thirty minutes. Four miles outside our various cantonments all is as it was in the days of Abraham and Lot.

Look at the most ancient sculpture or the oldest engravings, and you will see that the people thus depicted are identical with their descendants of 1885. No equivalent for Paris fashions convulses the Belle of the Harem, no matter how gracefully, how richly she may be attired. And the husbandman still ploughs his fields with a piece of pointed stick, whilst generations pass away like the ticking of a clock. Even the railway but serves to keep up and enhance the effect of this enchanted and trance-like repose, for it effectually localises, along a narrow line, the changes insisted upon by the importunate march of European civilisation.

I can, consequently, promise anyone intending to explore the plains of Kattiawar, that he will find the country, with its people, animals, and products, unchanged since the days when Hanington and I rode and shot over it more than twenty years ago. Now that I come to look back, I can remember that it took us exactly ten days to march from Juria Bunder to Rajkote, and that we shot or ran down in that time just thirty head of different kinds of deer. A pigmy bag, indeed, when we consider that an officer has since that time won a bet by riding out from the camp in the early morning

and shooting more than twenty bucks before noon. But, although I am certain of the truth of the above statement, I do not remember the name of this gentleman, and he has not written his annals! If he ever does so, mine will be thrown completely into the shade, and the intending deer-stalker will be able to model himself on lines vastly superior to mine and that almost pathetic instrument, "the family piece," which formed our whole battery, for we had not even an old pistol to blow ourselves up with!

Fortunately, in those early days, neither of us knew anything of "bags," great or small. All we cared about was to hunt as long as ever we could, and get as much out of ourselves as possible during the livelong day. An average of three kills per diem was amply sufficient to keep in clover all the inhabitants of our little camp, including the temporary followers that we engaged at each of our halting-grounds; and with this we were more than satisfied.

I am never deliberately cruel: I have therefore no intention of boring the reader with a detailed account of each animal that we slew. Enough, then, of the several antelopes and the less plentiful, if more graceful, gazelles which were the principal animals that fell to our gun. The nilgai was the only other antelope that we met with during this trip, and, to me at any rate, it was much the most interesting of the three sorts, as it is quite possible, with a good horse and spear, to ride down one of these fine large beasts, called blue bulls and cows according to the sex. An antelope, as I suppose everyone knows, is a deer which has spiral horns that are never shed, and many species love to inhabit great open plains where the antlered stag is never seen. The

term "antelope" is often used specifically to designate the female of the black-buck; whilst it is also the generic name for all the varieties of a large class of beasts. This is a poverty of language which often leads to confusion in the mind of the inexperienced. We had been led to suppose, from all the reports that we had heard previous to starting, that we should find the nilgai even more plentiful than the black-buck, and so tame that we should not have the heart to shoot one.

How different was our actual experience from what we had been told by people who must have been only quoting from "hearsay"! For days did we search vainly for even one of these creatures; so that I was proportionately struck with admiration, one morning, on finding myself in the presence of a long string of them, standing motionless in the centre of a low patch of scrub-jungle. As they gazed on our advancing party, they presented quite a giraffe-like aspect, with their long necks and drooping hind-quarters; but, since they are to be seen in the "Zoo," I need not commit myself by guessing at either their height, length, or weight. They are fine animals, and the trophy that rewards the lucky shot is the skin of the breast, which is thick enough to make a warlike shield, and is furnished in the centre with a long lock of thick black hair, which forms a handsome adornment, whether seen in life on the smooth blue coat of the owner or preserved in the middle of the round buckler, transformed by art into a disc of beautifully-transparent, amber-coloured leather half an inch thick.

There must have been ten or fifteen individuals of different ages and sexes in the family to which we were

thus first introduced, and, as they were within a hundred and fifty yards of us, we could not only see them well, but had every hope of getting our cart within the prescribed limits for firing. There were some imposing-looking bulls to choose from ; so, having pointed out the one we most wished for to Bapoo, who was sitting behind the bullocks, that functionary at once began to employ all his cunning in the chase.

The vocal demonstrations, which range from violent shouting to cluckings with the tongue, that bullocks expect to cheer them on their way, were necessarily dispensed with. Even their tails had to be more tenderly manipulated than usual. These much-abused appendages are, as one may say, the chief means of vicarious locomotion for the rag-clothed Jehu that sits behind them. As he squats, tucked up on a little board immediately in rear of his two quadrupeds, one or other of their tails is always in his hand, ready to receive a twist either of warning or punishment at any moment. Whenever the incidents of the road develop anything in the nature of a crisis, such a practised wrench is administered as to break the joint on which the jerk hinges. Owing to this system of driving, the caudal appendages of draught-oxen mostly resemble a much-bruised earthworm, such as the reader may have observed on a garden-walk in England.

Now, however, we were stalking ; so neither noise nor violence could be used. Tickling, scratching, and pinching were considered the proper expedients, and for a long time these means answered very well. But the nilgai were wary, very wary. No sooner had we circled almost within

range, than they would glide with graceful ease quite out of shot, and all would have to be begun over again. Meanwhile, our cattle, not being accustomed to keep up long without stimulants, went gradually slower and slower, till at last they made a dead halt.

Now, to stop when at this kind of work is fatal—worse even than a vicious rush or a Hindustani objurgation; so away bounded the herd at once to a distance of a quarter of a mile or more before they again pulled up.

My temper at the age of twenty so lacked control that I now saluted the really blameless Bapoo with a perfect volley of fierce invective, couched in unpassed Oordu much broken by rage. This was received with a resignation amounting to insolence—as it seemed to me in those thoughtless days; so I wound up my tirade with such a thump on the top of his thick turban as effectually to destroy the “set” of that becoming head-dress for the time being.

Notwithstanding this serious check, we continued our field manœuvres for at least another hour, fraught with episodes similar to the one already recorded. Sometimes the bullocks were in fault, sometimes their driver; I was never wrong, never!

Bapoo, I have no doubt, felt convinced from the first that I was exactly like all the other youthful Sahibs he had ever been obliged to put up with—*i. e.*, an extraordinary mixture of perseverance and impatience; hence his ever-ready complacency under my unreasonable sway.

It will hardly surprise anyone to learn that the upshot of this my first attempt to shoot a blue-bull ended eventually

in my firing at a prodigious distance, the whole herd scampering frantically out of sight, and my own return home empty-handed. "But there are nilgai to be had," said I to myself, "and I must get one. Carts," I added mentally, "are evidently a mistake, so I shall go forth like—well, like Gordon Cumming," though I had only the most hazy recollections of the deeds of that celebrated sportsman as gathered from his book perused long years before.

There are no blue-bulls in Africa. Nevertheless, Gordon Cumming was my great prototype as I one morning summoned to my presence two trusty Indians, called, let us say, Poorun and Mahomed. With these two good fellows a plan was concocted which they entered into and approved of. Having borrowed a quantity of well-worn and very dirty native raiment, I caused myself to be completely draped therein. The various flowing cloths of which it was composed were kept in position by strings tied round my brown sun-helmet and elsewhere according to the necessities of the case.

Thus everything, from my white face to the long gun, was at all events partially concealed from view; and I was certainly disguised till I resembled nothing human. Though the reverse of what is called a fine man my shoulders, *au naturel*, would be about twice the width of those of an ordinary native, and were, besides, surmounted by a tall and wide-spreading sun-hat. Furbelows arranged outside and over all this framework could only produce a vision at once gigantic and strangely terrifying to the startled antelope. But there was no warning mirror to betray me to myself, nor was it to be expected that Oriental gravity

might smile a caution. We started, therefore, each with his own thoughts.

We were not long in seeing a few head of the game we were in search of, and dispositions for the attack were at once made. "Indian file," with myself in the centre, was very properly adopted, and, had I been even a camel, the nilgai might have let us get near them, in spite of their dislike to that animal. They would at least have known the nature of such a beast, whereas at sight of me they raised their crests and gazed as who should say, "What is this so 'weird and so wild' in its attire?" In vain did I try to circumvent them by creeping up nullahs or behind lines of straggling bushes. They always contrived to get wind of me, and invariably foiled all my innocent artifices.

At last I became desperate, and prepared to commit a crime!

This was to shoot a cow.

I was alone; no one would ever know—except, perhaps, Hanington, and he would forgive me. No voice, no "spirit medium," whispered to me that, years afterwards, I should, whilst writing the confessions of my jungle-life, feel constrained, in the interests of truth, to record this black deed against myself!

After this, who can ever guess whence the avenging light may shine on our secret deeds of darkness?

Naturally, after working hard half the day and getting nothing whatever, I began to feel so depressed and blood-thirsty that I could not resist the temptation to try and get the better of a fine solitary cow that I observed grazing in the distance, accompanied by a large calf, which was, how-

ever, quite independent of her. As, unaccompanied, I drew nearer to these two animals, they seemed less inclined to flight than any others I had met with; but even they exhausted all my former tactics, and would, like the others, have escaped had I not remembered that females of all kinds are often tempted to a dismal fate through the pangs of curiosity. Acting on this happy inspiration, I flung myself on the ground on the shady side of a large sheaf of jowar, behind which I lay *perdu* for some minutes, at the expiration of which time, by taking off my hat and stretching myself along the ground, I contrived to obtain a view of the two nilgai. They were standing still as statues, staring at the little stack of grain behind which they had seen me vanish, but they were perceptibly closer to my place of concealment. I now began, as they advanced, to draw my hat back towards me with little jerks—a proceeding that tickled their imagination so amazingly that ere long they were standing stamping their feet and snorting at a distance of not more than forty yards from me, presenting, however, nothing but a front view. This was well within correct range of the old gun, if I could only hold it straight; so, making the best use I could of my own helmet both for rest and cover, I launched the fatal bolt. The aim, I am glad to say, was perfect, and the quarry fell without a groan.

Poorun and Mahomed now rushed frantically upon the fallen prey with a view to cutting its throat whilst the life was still in it. This operation is called “halal,” and no faithful follower of the Prophet may eat of any flesh on which it has not been performed.

In this case the beast was dead, but blood flowed

sufficiently to swear by, and nothing more was required to satisfy the conscience of my hungry followers. Not having a cart or any means of transport beyond their own backs, my two worthies sharpened their knives and prepared to load themselves with all the best parts that they could carry. As they commenced this work I took particular notice of the sky in all directions, and found that not a single bird of any kind was in view. Soon, however, I could discern a black speck low down on the distant horizon. It rapidly grew higher, nearer, bigger, and was followed by others like itself, which quickly resolved themselves into a string of those large vultures that look so majestic on the wing as they steer their swift and lofty course through the heavens on pinions that appear scarce to move. Even as we took our first few steps to leave the scene, these harpies swooped, with the sound of a rushing whirlwind, on the offal that remained and greedily proceeded to make a clean sweep of it.

But it is time now to inform my fireside readers in Europe that the rules for the destruction of wild animals vary according to the method of procedure. Thus, to run down a nilgai or other antelope, spear in hand, no matter what its sex or age, provided always it is neither itself an infant or likely soon to produce one, I have heard described, by many a good man and true, as a great feat which few even of the best Arab horses were able to perform.

I am inclined, however, to think that if the experiment were tried oftener, success would crown the efforts of the hunter much more frequently than has hitherto been supposed. It is only natural that they who profess that noblest of all sport, the measuring themselves, lance in

hand, over a wild and broken country, against the untamed inhabitants thereof, should far prefer the mighty boar to all other antagonists. His powers of flight are so much less, whilst his abilities to deliver battle, when overtaken, are so much greater than those of any other beasts that can be induced to take the open and afford a glorious run.

“Why, then, discourse to us of nilgai?” asks the intelligent reader.

To which I reply, firstly, that variety is allowed to be charming; and, secondly, that a fine wild-boar, whatever it may once have been, is now a comparatively rare animal, at all events in those countries that are suitable for hunting him. I suppose the greatly-increased use of firearms amongst the natives is the principal cause of this state of things.

But, whatever the reason may be, I have certainly found the prodigious amount of hard work and immense number of blank days sufficient to cool the ardour of all who like to fire either themselves or their guns off at least once during each outing. Nothing, I am persuaded, could afford more splendid enjoyment than for a couple of men, owning a few good mounts each, to proceed to the plains of Kattiawar and daily try the merits of their cattle against the blue-bulls of those desert wastes. But, as I should indeed be sorry to inspire any enterprising young Nimrod with a false inspiration, and thus cause him to start forth on an enterprise replete only with disappointment and expense, I think I cannot do better than give a detailed account of the few brushes of this kind that Hanington and I had with nilgai. I shall therefore set forth our deeds under this heading in another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

ALTHOUGH, as I have stated in my first chapter, we were disappointed at the comparatively small number of the nilgai—called “roj” by the natives—which we saw during our entire journey of ten days, yet I do not for a moment believe there was, or ever will be, any real scarcity of those animals.

We were bound by duty to arrive at Rajkote on a certain day, and were therefore forced to journey along the beaten track to the immediate right and left of which our explorations were necessarily confined. Had we been differently situated we should have had no difficulty in daily finding any number of these large antelopes to choose from.

We were nothing more, be it remembered, than two very happy “griffins” doing a journey and getting all the enjoyment we could by the way.

For my own part, I was certainly not mounted so as to undertake any very special deeds with the spear, for, though Rebounder had once been a superior Arab Galloway, he was, by the time I got him, old and worn-out.

Hanington, on the other hand, in addition to being a fine rider, was very well mounted indeed; but still he had only the one horse, which had to be used sparingly for the chase,

seeing that it was obliged to perform a daily march, no matter what state it might be in.

One morning, whilst riding out alone, in order to join the rest of the party who had preceded me, I accidentally fell in with a three-parts-grown bull-nilgai. It was a large animal, and just at the age when they are supposed to run best. It was not more than two hundred yards from me, and the ground was very open ; so I could not resist the temptation of giving chase. In less than half a mile I got completely the better of the animal ; indeed, I was as it were rubbing shoulders with it ; but, having no weapon of any sort by me, my only hope of effecting a capture lay in the chance of being able to run it to a standstill. In this, however, I was doomed very soon to be foiled, for the antelope seemed always able to keep up his moderately-rapid gallop, whilst Rebounder's pace fell off perceptibly till he was left hopelessly behind, and the pursuit had to be abandoned ; but I have little doubt that Hanington, on his white steed, would have captured the beast under the same circumstances.

I cannot say that I felt my defeat very bitterly ; on the contrary, I was quite pleased with the adventure, for I at once jumped to the conclusion that it would be an easy matter to run down a blue-bull, and was not long in starting forth bent on this deed of prowess.

Armed with a spear and accompanied by Roti, I roamed the great plains, which at this dry time of the year, when every crop has been gathered in, are withered to whiteness. They even appear much more barren than they really are, for, in addition to a great quantity of stubble, there are tracts of long grass left wild and untouched in every direction.

But all is bleached to one uniform colour by the continuous action of the sun undimmed by a single cloud, and presents an appearance of tempting, though treacherous, smoothness to the too-confident horseman as he starts at a racing-pace in pursuit of his game, for he may at any moment come upon a "drop" into a nullah of thirty feet in depth, or his steed may put his foot into one of those holes that infest the Indian "maidan," and which, though natural formations, are often more thickly sprinkled and much worse to encounter than any quantity of rabbit-holes in an English warren.

Sparsely-scattered shrubs, with here and there a tall and straggling "milkbush," form the chief under-features of this flat expanse. Trees are only observable in the neighbourhood of the villages, which thus appear like groves dotted irregularly on the face of the landscape. For some time my unassisted search for a solitary nilgai proved fruitless, but at last I spied a full-grown cow standing alone at about three or four hundred yards from me. She proved in good running condition, and made off at great speed.

I should think Roti must have been about as fast as a good foxhound; yet Rebounder, notwithstanding his infirmities, was able to keep the lead, as there were no obstacles sufficient to throw him out of his stride. As we flew o'er the plain, I at once found myself gaining on the antelope; but I could not tell whether my progress were reliable or otherwise, as so many wild beasts seem quite to like anyone riding about twenty yards behind them for any distance that may be agreeable to the equestrian. It is only on trying to lessen this short interval that you discover

that the animal is playing with you. As you urge your steed to a last desperate spurt, and he duly answers to the call, you find that, without any visible effort on the part of the intended victim, the measured distance which it has fixed upon as safe remains ever the same—not an inch can be gained.

When the struggle reaches this point, the contest is practically decided, and has to be abandoned as a matter of course. I was very glad, therefore, as I approached this nilgai, to observe that her nostrils were dilated and her eyes staring in a manner that showed she was evidently doing her utmost to escape.

This time it was for the pursued instead of the pursuer to make those short agonising bursts, and to find them unavailing. For the last three minutes the hunted creature appeared to my excited brain as though planted before me, just out of reach—neither of us seemed to move. It was evident that the race could not last over a few more seconds ; so, making what I felt was to be a final appeal to poor old Rebounder, I found myself, as I thought, within striking distance, and aimed a vigorous thrust at the heart of the antelope. I had, however, miscalculated the distance, and the spear only inflicted a wound in the flank, on receiving which the nilgai bounded desperately forward, whilst my pony as suddenly reduced his pace. I should now at once have pulled up but that Roti dashed past me and took up the running. He got close up to the quarry, but, from never having been entered to any game so tall, bulky, and large of limb, he seemed quite taken aback and unable to make up his mind as to the vulnerable point of his enemy.

Thus the pair, in close proximity, continued to get further and further from me, and at last were almost out of sight, when I suddenly became aware of a large dog-wolf close to me, and evidently running on the blood-stained track of the wounded nilgai.

How I longed for a fresh horse, that I might witness the *dénouement* of this strange adventure, for I felt sure either that this new and formidable enemy would pursue the antelope to its death, or that he would fall in with Roti on his return journey, when a fierce battle might be expected to ensue. I purposely tried to appear unconscious of the presence of my peculiar companion, but I contrived, nevertheless, to observe certain specialities about him which I have never seen repeated in any of his family. He, on his side, was evidently ill at ease in my company, for he seemed ever to have the sidelong glance of his yellow eyes fixed upon me. He also appeared unaccountably reluctant to dash ahead of me, as he could so easily have done ; so that I now suppose he must have fancied the blood he was running on had flowed from some wound in the horse, which with a man on its back was evidently more than he felt equal to attacking.

Now, I hardly know whether to feel more depressed on my own or the reader's account in having to record nothing but a sudden and most prosaic *finale* to an adventure that leads up quite naturally to a highly-dramatic finish, such, for instance, as my return to camp with the wolf in one hand, the nilgai in the other, and Roti following behind, having cleverly contrived to strangle them both ! Such an ending would be quite delightful for those who may care to peruse

my story, but I should be well aware all the time that I had in reality lost both the animals referred to, and myself become an unblushing romancer. This, then, is what really happened :—After keeping company with the wolf for about a quarter of a mile, we came to a track of black sheet-rock very smooth and free from all loose stones or other *débris* ; nearly flush with the ground were one or two scarcely-observable holes, into which the wolf suddenly darted and disappeared for ever from my sight. Of course I dismounted and examined the spot, when, the more I looked, the more difficult I found it to realise how such a large beast could have passed through so small an opening. It was no use marking the locality with a view to digging, for the rock was solid and the fissures natural, so that nothing short of blasting would have had any effect.

After this, there was nothing further for me to do than to return to our tents, in a sad and shattered frame of mind it is true, but always hoping for better luck in the future. The third and last time that I ever tested the speed and endurance of the nilgai in a fair race over an open plain occurred either a few days before or after the efforts which I have just described. On this occasion Hanington and I sallied forth, spear in hand, and, as far as I can remember, totally unaccompanied by any persons or dogs. After a considerable ramble, we at last fell in with a single nilgai, in open ground. Again it was a cow, but we pursued all the same, and, as usual, gained fast upon her at first. Before long, however, we saw that she was making for what is called a “kroon” or “beer” of grass, which is a tract, more or less vast and irregular, left with tall crops of uncut

hay standing upon it. To force our antelope through this on a straight line, and cause her to break favourably on to the "maidan" beyond, we were obliged to diverge so as to place fifty yards between us. As we advanced into the grass we found it constantly increased in height and density, till at last it was perfectly blind going. Nothing could be seen but ourselves and the heads of the animals above the herbage. But all was progressing well and I was confidently anticipating a victorious termination to the hunt, when all at once everything seemed to come to an end and to vanish suddenly from before me. With my usual bad luck, I had fallen into the commencement of a well, which some ill-advised native had excavated to a depth of eight feet or so and then abandoned as unlikely to hold water. My situation now was really perilous, for there was only just room for Rebounder to stand still in this narrow tenement; so every time he reared I found myself in danger of being flattened against the rough stones projecting from the sides of this horrid hole. To dismount would certainly have led to my being trampled to death; so I sat tight till I saw some roots or bushes growing on the brink, by means of which I quickly pulled myself out, and ran to the top of the mound formed of the earth thrown out by the miner, to see if I could make out anything of Hanington, but he was nowhere to be seen; whilst Rebounder, viewed from this elevation, at the bottom of his pit, which was further deepened in appearance by being surrounded by high grass, seemed as though hopelessly entombed in the bowels of the earth. Great, then, was my astonishment and relief, whilst scanning the horizon for a village whence to obtain

ropes and labourers to pull him out, to find him most unexpectedly by my side. Some of the earth on which I was standing had fallen in again, and had enabled him, with that agility natural to any pony with no weight on his back, to scramble out of his unpleasant position. I had not the faintest idea in which direction Hanington had gone, so it was no use trying to follow him. But when we did meet he told me he had had a capital run. The nilgai had been so pressed that it leapt the wall surrounding a native village; but the white horse had been equal to the same feat, and had stuck cleverly to the chase all through the narrow winding streets of the hamlet, no doubt much to the wonderment of the inhabitants. Fortunately none of them were run over as the hunter and the hunted sped wildly round the labyrinth till, with another bound, they again cleared the barrier and once more urged their way across country.

At last success seemed really to have crowned the plucky rider, for he drove his spear clean through the antelope! But, alas! affairs only reached this climax when in close proximity to one of the tall straggling milkbush-hedges already referred to. Through this the wounded nilgai dashed wildly, followed, at a few yards only, by Hanington. Far as the eye could reach on both sides of this weak fence the land was as though it had been swept and garnished, with nothing left on it for a rabbit to hide behind. Where, then, was the huge beast that had just received its death-stroke? Gone! vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed it up! Nothing remained in proof of the story but the gory lance dyed in blood to half its length.

Now, my gallant friend had only one defect—his eyesight

was not good ; so I can only suppose that the unfortunate beast, the instant it felt itself out of sight for a moment, had flattened itself out on the bare ground in such a manner as to cheat the eye of all but the most sharp-sighted.

I have myself seen hunted beasts execute this manœuvre with perfectly amazing effect. With their legs tucked under their bodies, and their heads, ears, and necks laid out flat along the ground, one may almost tread on even a large animal before seeing it. For, once having adopted this last despairing resource, nothing will induce the poor brute to move a muscle.

If we had possessed any experience, of course we should have put on some natives to search for and bring in the body to our tents. As it was, we packed up our things and continued our march without making a single enquiry ; so that to this day it must be a matter of conjecture whether the vultures or the nearest villagers regaled themselves on the flesh of our last nilgai—for it *was* our last, and I can scarcely remember to have seen another in all my long wanderings after leaving the Plains of Kattiawar.

Thus must this interesting animal vanish for ever from my pages.

During the whole of the ten days that it took us to get from Juria Bunder to Rajkote, I cannot remember that we even once saw or so much as heard of a wild-boar. Perhaps they might have been found if we had known how to set about the search ; yet, had they been at all plentiful, we must have fallen in with them, considering that we ransacked every bit of cover we could find in that hundred miles of country. Arrived at our destination, we at once took our seats as

members of the general Court-Martial, to attend which we had been sent all the way from Bhooj. It was a dreadful trial. The President evidently felt sure of his responsibility if doubtful of his forensic powers; whereas the junior member considered that, if he were as ignorant as he had a right to be, it was an outrageous thing to make him the first to pronounce sentence. Yet such is the inexorable decree of Military Law. No one, in short, felt thoroughly comfortable and in his right place, except the prisoner—a most excellent and worthy person, whom I had much pleasure in acquitting, after making quite two months' holiday out of him! Even on the days when the Court sat—since the hours of attendance were from eleven to four—I had the mornings and evenings to myself, and I employed them principally in coursing.

I was fortunate here in picking up a very fine thoroughbred English greyhound, of the Newmarket variety, which was only for sale because it had been recently bitten by a mad dog; so the gentleman who owned it had been afraid to keep it, on account of his children. He had given it away, and I now purchased it for seventeen rupees (thirty-four shillings).

I used to rise every morning before it was light, and scour the jungle with this dog, called Vulcan, accompanied by Fox and Roti. But, though the country was very favourable indeed to this sort of exercise and I found such rides most enjoyable, still I never, at this time, met with anything but jackals, foxes, and a few hares, all of which were run, and killed in the ordinary way.

Meanwhile, the High Military Tribunal sat daily in the

mess-room, endeavouring, by the blazing light of its intelligence and wisdom, to illuminate certain mysterious passages in the accounts of a warrant-officer, who, after all, turned out to be blameless.

After many days of patient investigation—during which the whole Court was supported by regular “tiffins” and irregular “pegs” obtained from a too-facile mess-man by going outside for a moment—the trial at last terminated. But before the sentence could be fulminated, it was necessary that the proceedings should be sealed up and sent on long and occult journeys, in order that great and distant personages might satisfy themselves and the public conscience by seeing that the i’s were all dotted and the t’s properly crossed.

I have only been twenty-eight years in the service, which everyone must know is not long enough to find out all that happens to even a minor Court-Martial from first to last.

However, Hanington and I, even at that early age, made out clearly that during the enforced suspension of the Court we could go forth into the jungle on ten days’ leave. But what direction to go in? That was the subject of many an anxious debate. Our deliberations on this point were unfortunately not so free as they might have been, for we were beguiled by a flashy native, clothed in many-coloured raiment and armed to the teeth with weapons that were at all events terrible to look at.

This rascal promised us a perfect plethora of all the forms of sport which we could desire, if we would only allow him to lead us to a large town called, I well remember, Than, situated in a jungle sixty miles distant. On the march to

and from this place we were to find riding-ground, with suitable game on it, such as must be seen, for neither the tongue nor the imagination could depict it.

There was no resisting a tale so fascinating as this, and we hailed with unbounded pleasure the morning when, at four a.m., we started on our first stage for the Land of Promise.

But when daylight broke and revealed to our expectant eyes a country thickly covered with scrub-jungle, we turned dismayed on our gorgeous leader and exclaimed :

“Why, Ali Morad Mahomed Khan Bahadoor” (for he had many names), “what is this ?”

To which he replied :

“This, Sahib, is mere kutchera (rubbish) which you must always expect to find when within so short a distance of a cantonment. It will go on clearing every day till the maidan will become the cleanest that you ever saw !”

And thus he led us on with delusive hopes amidst ever-increasing cover, till it was too late to wend our steps in any other direction.

At last, Than, a fortified village enclosed by high mud-walls, stood before us. It was built upon the bank of a large and deep sheet of water, of five or six acres in extent ; and on the bosom of this transparent little lake floated hundreds of wild ducks, in endless variety of shape, size, and colour.

“There,” said our detested guide, “there’s shikar for you !”

“Ducks !” we shouted, “ducks ! Do you think we came sixty miles, and expended the priceless boon of ten days”

leave, to shoot a few wretched birds?" I can't remember whether we accompanied this remonstrance by giving the fellow a good beating, but I should think we must have done so. At first we stood irresolute, for, what with disgust at finding we had been led a wild-goose chase and the fact that the "family piece" was but ill-adapted to deal with such frivolous and flighty sort of game, we turned our backs haughtily on the feathered hosts. As we did so we were confronted by a deputation, consisting of the leading inhabitants and rulers of the town.

They had come to beg us not to shoot the wild fowl, and offered to supply us gratis with any quantity of flour and and milk that we might consider would do instead of game!

On this a fine spirit of revenge took possession of us—our deadly weapon was quickly loaded almost to bursting, and immediately discharged, under the very noses of the deputation, into the thickest part of the feathered flock.

We then adjourned to another tank and did the same thing, springing ourselves, clothes and all, into water six feet deep, and diving for the wounded birds, which vainly endeavoured to escape by lying flat at the bottom. But the water was beautifully clear, and there was no difficulty in pouncing on their outstretched necks and reappearing upon the surface, trophy in hand. In the excitement of the moment I forgot all about the lurking alligators. There are numerous well-attested instances of crocodiles killing people in the water, where, of course, a man has no chance against such a brute.

However, none of these repulsive creatures showed themselves on the waters of Than, where, as may be imagined, we made the shortest of stays and then returned to Rajkote as fast as we could.

It was not till some time after our return that we learnt that our wily shikari was a native of Than, and that he had taken us there in order that he might pay a visit to those dear to him.

This was another instance of suffering for want of due precaution, for we might, at no great cost, have laid relays of bazaar-ponies, and have galloped out in a few hours to ascertain the nature of the country before allowing the impedimenta to start on such a disastrous trip.

The business of the Court-Martial was satisfactorily wound up, and the prisoner acquitted, very soon after our return to camp, when nothing remained for Hanington and myself but to start on a march of several days for the seaport of Gogo, there to embark for Bombay, whither our regiment had been sent during our sojourn at the delightful little station where we had made our *début* as judges in the land.

The country we travelled through was not so good for sport as on the line we had pursued from Juria Bunder to Rajkote, and we arrived at Gogo without meeting with any adventures that would interest the reader.

Previous, however, to embarking on board the *pattimar* I presented poor Roti to a native baker, who I thought would make him happy. For I was poor, and could not afford to take a large kennel to an expensive place like the Presidency town—where, too, there would be no work for

dogs of his sort. But I nevertheless felt the parting acutely. When we got to Bombay we had naturally to live in subalterns' quarters, where our spirits were much tried by mosquitoes, fleas, and moonshees, from which we only escaped to be pounced upon by all kinds of military authorities. But we were young and almost unconscious of the wrongs which were inflicted upon us. Indeed, I was *quite* unconscious for some time, as I was here struck down with a malignant fever, under the influence of which I was delirious for a whole month, and should certainly have died but for the extraordinary kindness of the commanding officer and his wife. They took me into their own house and nursed me with such devotion and skill that I recovered just in time to start with Hanington on the Persian campaign, throughout which we served with a very fine corps known as the "Light Battalion."

Bombay I have already described elsewhere ; so I need only add that, unless a pack of foxhounds happens to be kept by general subscription, when good runs with jackals are to be had in the immediate vicinity, no sport worth mentioning is to be met with except by getting into the train and going some distance.

As to the Persian campaign, it would surely be quite out of place to write an account of it in a book of this kind. Besides, all our doughty deeds are they not chronicled in the History of England? If they are not, all I can say is they ought to be.

I should think anyone going to Persia would meet with excellent sport for the hound, spear, or falcon ; for, both at Bushire, on the coast, and Mohumara, situated about sixty

miles up the Tigris, the country seemed to consist of vast plains free from bushes and very suitable to riding over.

In those early days I took the military profession so very seriously that I thought I should never be made an adjutant if I took my dogs to battle.

Poor Fox had died during my own illness. The news of this bereavement being communicated to me too suddenly, I really had a relapse, which caused my life once more to hang in the balance for a space of forty-eight hours. Perhaps if she had been alive, my principles would have given way and I should have smuggled her on board among the Sepoys ; as it was, I made a great effort and got all my favourites billeted among friends till such time as I might return to claim them. The upshot of all this military zeal was that I got all the way to Mohumara and landed there with nothing but a solitary greyhound, the only one I had been able to get at Bushire—no horse, no gun, nor any means of procuring these articles. Indeed, I had no food—nothing but dates to eat for the first twenty-four hours. Thanks, however, to the extraordinary ability displayed by Captain (now General) C—— in organising the mess of this newly-raised regiment, we not only lived well, dating from the second day after landing, but were at once able to seat and entertain sixty people at dinner. On routing the Persian hosts, those warriors fled, and left, among other things, some greyhounds upon the field. One of these I captured myself, and thus became the owner of a nice brace of animals. Accompanied by these two faithful friends, I used to take very long walks into the interior, generally without any other attendants.

One morning, having started long before it was light, dawn found me on an immense plain, far out of sight of our tents or any other human habitation.

In front of me loomed two beasts, which, from their size, I mistook for very large wolves. They kept trotting on in front of me, and then stopping to look back. At last I slipped the two dogs, and ran as hard as I could on the chance of their being able to bring at any rate one of the pair to bay.

The greyhounds were both very fast, and soon came up with the objects of the chase, which turned out to be nothing more than two foxes with white-tipped brushes. We killed one, after a very pretty course, and found it a little bigger than the common Indian sort, though not so large as an English hare. The air was clear, yet I suppose it must have had magnifying powers, at that early hour; and then, too, there was not a pebble or a blade of grass to diminish the importance of these solitary inhabitants of the wide desert. Hence, no doubt, the exaggerated size of these little quadrupeds as they first became visible in the early dawn.

Notwithstanding my very extensive rambles over the solitudes of Mohumara, I fell in with very little game during my few weeks of residence at that place; so I began to long ardently for the advance on Teheran to be sounded. In the course of such a long march, one would surely meet with many adventures! And so, no doubt, we should have, only, just at this critical moment, the British Government chose to make peace, as usual, at the most inappropriate time. All the great expenses and preliminary difficulties having been

met and overcome, of course we ought to have marched on to the capital.

Such a proceeding would not have cost our own taxpayers more than one or two gigantic camps of exercise, and would, at the same time, have vastly pleased the great bulk of the aborigines. They did not mean to fight with anybody, and would so much have liked the ready-money payments and other traits of British Justice, which they would have contemplated as pleasing novelties all along the line of march. But it was otherwise ordained, and nothing now remained but to pack up and get our things carried back on to those ocean-steamers in which we had come from India, and that were lying moored in the river Tigris, about a mile and a half in our rear.

In those early days my impedimenta amounted to very little—scarcely enough, indeed, to test the powers of a really able-bodied Persian porter. These were fine tall men and possessing great physical strength—one alone could carry a box containing four dozen quart-bottles full of beer, with a large bag of tent-pegs on the top of it.

Their method was to lie face-upwards, with their shoulders on the loads they were to transport. Others then adjusted the burdens, which always finished with a rope that formed a loop across the forehead. I have seen rows of them reclining in this way till all were made ready, when the mucadam (foreman) would go all down the line and pull them up by their hands into a standing position. They would then start off on whatever journey was required of them.

At the risk of seeming very ungallant, I must say the women of the working-classes were not what one would have

expected after seeing their male relatives. All those that I saw, on entering different villages, appeared just like such little delicately-made persons as I had been accustomed to meet with in India. Even their costume was similar, consisting as it did of little else than an ample dark-coloured cotton sari, and sandals or stout slippers for the feet.

The men, however, were much larger and more muscular than those of India ; so, with their assistance and our own working-parties, everything was speedily shipped, and we all found ourselves once more *en route* to Bombay.

As I was steaming into the middle of the river another vessel was just arriving with stores from the Presidency ; the name of the new-comer was signalled to us, and then I knew that a beautiful Arab horse I had purchased in Bombay had at last arrived to join me. He was a day too late for the fair, and would have to sail all the way back to India—poor brute !—without being unloaded. This I knew, but I did *not* know that my native horsekeeper would never once remove the tight knee-caps with which he was provided, from the day I took leave of him on my first starting from the Presidency town, till the moment when he at last rejoined me at Belgaum many months afterwards.

This describes the native mind much better than I can pourtray in words the dreadful state of my poor nag's legs, which were deeply scored with apparently indelible rings above and below the knee-joint. But I was already getting schooled in the art of making the best of things, so I did not allow this annoying incident to vex me for more than five minutes.

Meanwhile, as we are mercifully ignorant of distant ills

that are being worked against us, I was able to enjoy whatever a man passionately fond of the land may find to like on board ship. And I would ask the reader to note this phrase, for even now a most frightful and tragic storm was impending over our unconscious heads—a storm the mere announcement of which was destined to appal and chill our souls as no mere roaring of cannon, no crumbling of mountains shaken by earthquakes could have done. But we knew nothing, and we were happy, as the good ship, urged by steam, bore us swiftly over the surface of the calm and sun-lit sea.

During the hours of twilight I had many conversations with my own native officers and men, when I was secretly much pleased with the anxiety they one and all felt as to their chances of getting a medal.

In vain I spoke to them of "batta" (six months' gratuity).

"Money," they answered, "is no doubt very nice in its way, but a medal will give us 'abroo' (honour); if we only get that, we shall care nothing for the 'pice' (coin)."

I think it was whilst on board this vessel that I heard the following very interesting story from Captain (now General) Wallington, who was himself an eye-witness of what took place:—Before the declaration of peace, this gentleman had been ordered to proceed with a body of artillery on a further voyage up the Tigris. Owing to the tremendous force of the current and the difficulty of always feeling sure as to the channel suitable to an ocean-steamer, it was only possible to proceed during the hours of daylight. As the shades of night approached, the vessel would be moored in deep water till the morning.

Once, while thus at rest during a very dark night, one of the artillery-horses, through some accident, fell overboard and was instantly swept out of sight at a speed that rendered all help to the poor animal quite out of the question.

The first thing in the morning, however, everyone was on the lookout to see if they could, perchance, observe the form of the missing steed, for the country around was flat and open, and there was no reason to suppose that the animal, if he were fortunate enough to effect a landing, would wander to any great distance from the bank, where there was certainly plenty of water and more fodder than elsewhere.

"See!" exclaimed someone, "there he is." Yes, he was all right, and grazing contentedly in a poor patch of cultivation which was mixed up in a straggling sort of way with low scrub-jungle.

"Why," said another person, "there is a pig following him about."

On this, telescopes and binoculars were brought to bear upon the distant scene, which was nothing more nor less than the horse being stalked by a lion!

In vain did the beast-of-prey use all its cunning to advance, under cover of the bushes, to springing-distance. The horse always seemed to know the whereabouts of his enemy, whom he invariably foiled by trotting just at the right moment into the centre of another scanty grainfield and there grazing, with such feelings as only another horse could describe, for few human beings would think of eating under these circumstances.

At last the lion judged the time had come, and, with a

bound swift as lightning, was seen flying through the air with a force and precision that seemed to mean instant death to its intended victim.

But an artillery-charger, trained to the arts of war and armed with iron hoofs, is not so easily to be made mince-meat of. All were delighted to witness the fine defence made by this courageous courser. Lashing out vigorously, he received the lion with such a "right and left" that the blows could be heard like the sound of a flail by the people on board the steamer. Not only did the monarch of the forest fall crumpled and worsted to the earth, but, unable to renew the combat, he slunk back and vanished into the jungle whence he had come.

Doubtless it has taken longer to narrate these deeds than it did to enact them, or the horse would not have been left to fight out the battle by himself.

Immediately on the lion being sighted, my friend, together with several other sportsmen, started in all haste to the rescue; but, before they could get to the scene of action, the encounter was over, nor, though they made every effort, were they able to come up with the retreating foe. The horse, on the other hand, had had enough of his ill-sought freedom, and ran neighing up to the advancing party with every sign of pleasure. A long and deep gash on the flank bore witness to the narrowness of his escape, and no doubt convinced him, as I hope the story has my readers, that lions are to be met with in this part of Persia.

Thus beguiling the voyage with the relation of our several experiences, we sped onwards to Bombay. In due course of time the lighthouse was sighted, and all became bustle

and turmoil to get the men and baggage ready for landing.

Having taken my share of this work, I went below, for packing of my personal property, just as the pilot was coming on board. This done, I returned to the deck with that smirk of satisfaction which seems to say: "I have now accomplished every duty in life, both public and private; if you have all done the same, we can now admire one another."

But no answering smile greeted my expectant glance, nor did the sound of even a solitary voice strike upon my ear. Many familiar forms I saw, but they all wore a strange look, as though they had but just heard the crack of doom. The very air seemed loaded with some terrible mystery under which all were spellbound.

"What," I said, grasping the arm of the man who was nearest to me, "what *is* it?"

"Have you not heard?" he replied. "The Bengal Army has mutinied *en masse*, and murdered its officers; and our own native troops are thought to be on the point of doing the same!"

On this I also became dumb, and opened not my mouth—how could I? What might words avail in the presence of such a tremendous catastrophe?

In so supreme a moment, few, very few, were mean enough to care for their own puny lives. We were as men blinded by the sudden extinction of a bright light! A mighty empire reeling, our brothers and sisters slain by those who should have been ready to die for *them*! A rebel host drunk with the blood of its own leaders! Such was the

frightful vision which seemed called up from the lower regions to confront us on our return home from the wars.

But it was no vision ; it was true ! Said I not rightly that a storm was lowering o'er our unconscious heads, such as might dwarf the fiercest raging of the elements ? The high-souled and the brave may face death without flinching, but who can support the sight of the friends he has loved and trusted turned suddenly and without warning into demons black in heart as in colour ?

What, we asked, may our own men be thinking ? Though the news of the outbreak was so successfully suppressed that no hint of it had reached any of the Europeans whilst in Persia, yet was it possible that the Sepoys might have been well informed of what was going on, and perhaps had even at this moment plans of treachery ripe for execution ! Inwardly, as one may say, each side scanned the other ; but Asiatic duplicity was well matched by British phlegm, and on neither side was any change of manner, countenance, or voice observable—unless, indeed, a prolonged and set stare into one another's eyes, when speaking, might be counted as such.

But thoughts can rarely be read with sufficient certainty to justify a line of action, and vainly did we try to fathom the souls of the dark race that owed us obedience. Their faces were as they had ever been—like masks. Time alone could show whether the Bombay Sepoys would resist the fatal example set them by those of Bengal, and remain faithful to their officers and to the salt that they had eaten. But for the moment we could only feel as though standing on the very brink of a dark abyss. At such a moment it was,

of course, impossible for me to leave my men even for an instant, and I at once gave up all idea of going to sleep at an hotel on the night of landing. No tentage could be got off the ships during the first day ; so the men slept, wrapped in their blankets and with their arms beside them, on the turf-esplanade in front of the residents' houses ; whilst I had my bed arranged in the centre of them, and passed a delicious night *à la belle étoile*.

I slept quite soundly and without the least care, for I said to myself: "What is the use of trying to defend myself single-handed against a multitude of armed soldiers?"

All the men, however, of my regiment, the 15th Bombay Native Infantry, behaved with the utmost loyalty and devotion throughout the long hour of trial known, as the great Sepoy Mutiny of 1856-57.

We did not tarry more than two or three days in Bombay, and were soon on the march with two other companies to join our respective corps at Sattara, Kolapore, and Belgaum, all of which stations were in as critical a state as can well be conceived.

The march was a most difficult one, for the rains had set in and there was no metalled road ; but we did not mind our hardships, for none of our men had been tampered with, and they seemed anxious to show by every means in their power that they were uncontaminated by the spirit of rebellion.

After passing the great mountains by the pass of Khandalla, about midway between Bombay and Poona, we encamped for a day near the famous caves of Kalee. These

were really imposing excavations, and covered with beautiful carving on the solid rock. No one should pass them by without going to see them.

For a few pages yet to come, I shall be obliged to refer incidentally to that stupendous theme—"The Mutiny." I would fain have avoided the subject altogether, as unsuited to this light account of how I passed my own leisure hours, but this great convulsion was so inseparably mixed up with every detail of my life at this time that I feel constrained occasionally to refer to it.

At Sattara we were detained for a week or ten days on duty ; so I used to ride all over the country with my dogs, with a view to hunting any kinds of wild beasts that I could find. The jungle itself was well suited to such sport, but for some reason or other there was scarcely a fox, hare, or jackal in the country. Even the deer were scarce and very wild. I therefore cannot recommend Sattara to those who like to get up early and have a chase before breakfast. It was whilst halted here that, on making one of the customary visits to the row of hospital-tents provide for our sick men, I observed a good deal of excitement around the tenement occupied by some men who did not belong to me. I turned to my own native officer and asked if he knew what it was all about.

"Certainly, sir," he replied. "The sick of the 100th Regiment are lying in those quarters ; one of them has cut off his own tongue ; it seems that, whilst passing through this very place on his way to the wars, he vowed to the goddess Bhowanee that, if she would bring him safe back from Persia, he would make her this present, and now he has done so."

On this I made my way up to the entrance to the tent and asked the sentry if the man were within.

"Oh yes," he said, "and here is his tongue on the top of this tent-peg; I am keeping the kites off, for they are trying to swoop on it, in spite of the people being so close."

I glanced at the bloody trophy, and wondered, as I passed into the ward, how he could have succeeded in amputating so completely this *bonne bouche* for his ferocious female deity.

At the sufferer's bedside I was confronted by the first native hospital-assistant, whom I at once knew for a Brahmin by reason of the sacred string round his neck. This person immediately explained to me that the Sepoy had cut off his tongue in the firm belief that Bhowanee would reward his piety by making it grow again.

"Good! very good!" I said. "And now, Mr. Gyadin, attend, if you please, to what I am about to propound. You are," I continued, "a high-caste Hindoo, and therefore a believer in Bhowanee; but you have also studied science, and have become a passed member of the Faculty, under the full light of the British Raj. Recall for a moment the spirit of all the wisdom that has been so lavishly poured out upon you by many successive M.D.'s, and tell me your own genuine opinion—will or will not this man's tongue sprout again?"

Now, considering that I was not a missionary—nor even a seriously-minded young man—my conduct towards this native gentleman was priggish in the extreme. The thoughtless levity of youth could alone excuse me for placing the poor

man in such a dilemma. There he stood in speechless immobility, as he was doubtless calling on Bhowanee and the Vedas to inspire him with a proper answer. But these high authorities were silent, and neither would their disciple utter a single sound ; and, having enjoyed his confusion for a few seconds, I strutted off with much self-satisfaction.

Ten days later, on again visiting the scene, I found the Sepoy able to utter some blurred and indistinct sounds which might almost have been mistaken for words.

"There," exclaimed Gyadin, "you hear he *can* speak ; his tongue *is* growing." And his triumphant look added : "Make what you can of it !"

It was now my turn to be struck dumb—I could only stare at this brazen-faced Brahmin, from whom I turned without a word, and never again made any attempt to convert the heathen—they are so slippery.

As well as I can remember at this distance of time, it took us nearly two months to march to Belgaum. We had met with abundant signs of the mutiny by the way, and the above-mentioned station was itself a hotbed of disaffection. However, I was too junior in rank to feel very responsible ; so I only thought of the outbreak when I was ordered on piquet or distant outpost duty for the purpose of suppressing it. We were all ordered to go about armed, and even to attend the mess provided with some weapon. But this command I evaded, as I thought it wrong to allow any want of confidence in my own men to appear in my conduct. I felt that I was liberally paid by the taxpayers to trust and make the best of them. This was very nice for me, as, from this point of view, I felt justified in continuing to live in a

cheerful and cheap little bungalow which stood in the turf roadway between the lines of the two native regiments which were at the same time the guardians and the terror of Belgaum. How the one corps remained true as steel—not a single man being even accused of complicity by the other side when the police investigations came to be made afterwards—and how the other, yielding to adverse influences, was for months on the verge of open rebellion, are all matters of history and need not be gone into here; suffice it to say that, being in the very midst of the two battalions, I felt there was nothing cowardly, or selfish even, in going to bed and sleeping soundly every night of my life, without bothering about guns and things which would have been sure to have gone off at the wrong time. Then I should have been tried by Court-Martial for causing a false alarm, perhaps condemned to death on the scaffold! On one occasion only, I yielded to conventional feelings. Once, in the dead of night—I knew not the hour, for I could not afford watches and clocks, at least none that would go, and, besides, the bugle blown just outside my hedge always called me to duty, so I did not require them—in the dead of night, then, I was roused by the sounds of a regular riot in the lines of the 129th Regiment N.I. A great and general running about and shouting was going on. Well, I thought it really seemed as if something outrageous was going to happen at last; so I got up, and loaded the “family piece,” which still constituted my whole battery. I then lay down again, and tried to think what the Adjutant-General would consider it was my duty to do under these very peculiar circumstances.

But, owing to my lowly position, I had never been able to study the minds of great functionaries sufficiently *de près* to be able to fathom the springs of their high policy.

First I beheld myself as in a vision running half-clothed down the camp to raise an alarm. This might be the proper course, but if it were *not*—what then? On the other hand, suppose I went to sleep, and everybody was murdered—would this not be worse?

I revolved this question with ever-increasing rapidity in my mind, whilst the noise in the lines grew louder and more general till it resembled the swarming of gigantic and angry bees.

Doubtless in a few minutes I should have come to some determination, but such was the effect of self-examination and the well-sustained hubbub outside, that I actually fell asleep, and never woke till the next morning, when all was calm, bright, and sweetly peaceful, just as though the mutiny were nothing more than a traveller's tale! Nor was I ever able to find out anything about what had occurred in the hostile camp during the night. The crisis—for no doubt it was one—had passed off. I was the only European near enough to hear the sounds of alarm; and even my own men persisted in saying they had heard nothing, which must have been simply untrue. But they, poor fellows, like myself, lived at this time between Scylla and Charybdis. One faithful native adjutant, on sending up word to the European officers that an attempt would be made in half an hour to murder them, was asked why he had given such short notice.

“Sahib,” he replied, “if I had given a day's warning,

nothing would have happened, and you would yourselves have had me tried and condemned as a spreader of base and groundless charges, promulgated to raise myself by pulling down others. For you well know the mutineers never commit anything to writing ; so that, until they have actually done something, nothing can be proved against them."

Such were some of the many difficulties that surrounded us all during this harassing period.

Belgaum is perhaps, taken for all in all, the nicest of all the stations allotted to the troops of the Bombay Presidency. Not only is the hot weather extremely moderate as compared with other places, but the air and red soil are wonderfully propitious to the growth of trees and flowers.

Never elsewhere, in my whole life, have I seen such a gorgeous display of every kind of blossom, whether of the tropical or temperate zone. Only the pelargonium, or variegated geranium, whose graceful sprays look so lovely in the hothouses of England, was conspicuous by its absence. I once sent a packet of the seeds of this plant, from Covent Garden, to the clergyman who lived in the Fort and was an ardent floriculturist, and he succeeded in bringing two of the little germs to life ; but they refused to flower, and I heard no more about them. Long afterwards I learnt that they could not bloom, if grown from seeds, till their third year of life ; so now I often wonder whether they survived after all, and lived to become the parents of a numerous and splendid progeny.

Of course I took immensely-long rambles all over the surrounding country with my dogs, and found a fair sprinkling

of jackals and foxes—but no wolves; and hares, as usual, were so scarce as to be not worth mentioning. There was plenty of good open ground, intersected by nullahs, to ride over; but, as in the Deccan and most other districts, the surface was hard, rocky, and so covered with stones that a good greyhound scarcely ever had a good run without being lame for at least a week after it—a state of things which necessitates either the keeping of a large stud or being satisfied with one weekly excursion. But I liked to go out twice every day; so I kept a numerous kennel. Yet I would often be reduced to only one greyhound, supplemented by a pariah-dog or two from the lines.

It would be no use whatever, in such countries as Belgaum, Kolapore, &c., in trying to train first-class English greyhounds to course gazelles, for no dog's feet would stand the wear and tear whilst taking the exercise required to get him otherwise into condition. Still, there is quite enough sport with foxes and jackals to give a never-failing interest to one's morning and evening rides. Besides, the really ardent sportsman, when all his hounds are lame, can take a turn at panther-shooting, as these animals are to be found within ten or fifteen miles of the place. Tigers can also be obtained; but, one way and another, the expenses of this last sport would work out to a considerable sum, and, besides, can only be indulged in at stated seasons, and when leave can be obtained. Alas! this latter indulgence is every year getting rarer and more difficult to get.

Nowadays men think themselves lucky if they can get away from their duties in time to finish the short evening by a game of lawn-tennis with the ladies. However, there

are still ways and means of getting into the jungle if you are well determined to go there, as I was to the last ; and I feel that, even in these days, I should be able to get a great deal of enjoyment out of the wilds around Belgaum.

But the mutinies were still going on, and I found myself one morning ordered to proceed to take charge of a detachment of one hundred of our men stationed near a large native town called Baghulkote, about sixty miles from headquarters. This was tantamount to being sent on a pic-nic of indefinite duration, which I thought would be quite delightful. My preparations were made in the course of the day, and I set off in great spirits, surrounded by my dogs and mounted on my really fine Arab horse, called Mazepa. At the first halting-ground, my tent was erected under a large tamarind-tree, beautiful but false, for the ground under this kind of timber is peculiarly liable to a dreadful kind of bug, called "joos" by the natives, whose bite must, I should think, be quite dangerous to anyone not in good health. Fortunately, these assailants set upon me instantly, without waiting for the night ; so I was able to have my tent removed at once, but not before I had received several punctures that left marks as large as a sixpence and of a deep plum-coloured hue. Tamarind-trees, then, should be avoided when forming a camp.

Of the six or seven marches that I made to reach Baghulkote, one only is impressed upon my memory.

I had sent everything on, and myself followed in the afternoon, with only two greyhounds. Whilst the sun was still well above the horizon we started a fox, and, of course, we went after it. Eventually, we ran

the animal to earth, and then I unexpectedly observed that the sun had long gone down, and that it was already nearly dark ; from this, I was aware that I had had a much longer chase than I should otherwise have believed. I had not the least idea where I was ; and never, I thought, had I beheld so dismal and deserted a plain. Not a light or other vestige of the dwellings of man could I see anywhere ; and it also struck me that I had, throughout the run, noticed neither herds nor flocks grazing. Afterwards, when describing this great solitude to an old inhabitant, he said : " Why, of course, you were on the well-known plain of Lokapore ; it is seven miles in length, and is reckoned uninhabited." But Baghulkote was the only name I had thought fit to commit to memory before starting. I was ordered to go there, and it mattered little what either it or the intermediate country might be like. Besides, I had so often been the victim of bad descriptions that I now never went beyond asking the cartmen the name and distance of the next camping-ground. By the time I got there I should know what it was like, and not before.

Kaladghi, I had been told, was the designation of the spot where this particular stage would terminate. As I did not remember to have heard the name before, I was unable to conjecture whether I was to expect a native village of some size, or merely a few huts, with a tree to show where travellers were expected to erect their tents. I had always said to myself with regard to any new locality : " I shall see it all in good time."

But now I began to think I should have a bad time before getting to Kaladghi ; for, in addition to the gathering shades

of a night not yet lighted by the moon, a terrific thunder-storm began hurrying up from all the points of the compass at once. Soon the blackness of the heavens, the darkness of the soil, and the complete arrival of night caused such a pitchy obscurity that I am sure I could not have seen my horse's head in front of me. However, before it had got quite so bad as this, I had dismounted, so as to be able to keep to the little foot-track which I had selected as most likely to lead me to my destination.

The thunder now began to peal and crack overhead, whilst the lightning burst in blinding flashes, illuminating everything with its lurid glare. It showed always a long, white, sinuous line in front of me—the path that I was no doubt glad to find myself still upon, though not by any means sure that it was leading me in the right direction. Heavy rain now descended, and made my plight as dismal as it could possibly be. At this time of the year, the nights were cold, and the prospect of wandering about till the next day, with no food either for myself or the poor dogs, was gloomy and depressing in the extreme. Fortunately, the tempest was of a short duration as it was severe whilst it lasted. The rain had hardly time to wet me through before it ceased, and soon the darkness began to decrease. I was just beginning to feel more hopeful, when the little track I was on brought me to the brink of a nullah sixty or seventy yards wide and filled with shingles.

Now the problem was how to traverse this and again pick up the pathway on the other side. To effect this I turned round and observed the exact line by which I had come, and then struck in precisely the same direction diagonally

across the nullah. My prudence was rewarded, on getting to the other shore, by finding myself actually on the narrow track.

“Well, well,” I said to myself, “if I don’t get to Kaladghi, I must arrive somewhere or other before long.”

I had scarcely made this cheering reflection, when I suddenly stumbled on a magnificent broad highroad, such as one might expect in the middle of Poona. “Bless me!” I inwardly ejaculated, “what’s this? Am I dreaming, or do my eyes deceive me?—a highroad here in the heart of the wilderness!” And then, before I had gone many more yards, another great thoroughfare, intersecting the one I was on at right-angles! As I stood, irresolute which of these to pursue, the newly-risen moon broke beautifully, and for the first time, through the dark masses of the dispersing clouds. I was surrounded by tall gaunt houses, roofless and without windows. I stared in speechless amazement at these spectres, and then at last began to remember that I had heard, some time in the past, of Kaladghi as one of our deserted and ruined camps! I hurried on and came almost immediately on a small low traveller’s-bungalow, kept in good order by the State. A loud barking of my own advanced lot of greyhounds and streams of light from the open door, revealing my servant bustling round the table laid out for dinner, produced one of the most pleasant revulsions of feeling that I ever remember to have experienced in the whole course of my life.

Though I never stayed more than a few days at Kaladghi, I saw enough of the surrounding country to feel sure that plenty of good sport could be got there. For instance,

there are always gazelles (chinkara) on every maidan, and these ought to afford splendid runs with such greyhounds as I am convinced could be bred by anyone with a little money and plenty of perseverance. Hawking, too, could be carried out in all such situations with great success. I think it was here that I witnessed the only instance I ever saw of the black-buck being run into and killed by the cheetah, or hunting-leopard.

Many consider this a low class of sport, but I think it is quite equal to partridge-shooting, besides being a beautiful sight. I shall therefore describe as well as I can what I saw.

On arriving, with my friends, at the place of meeting in the jungle, we found a few rough-and-ready-looking natives in charge of three carts, or rather small two-wheeled platforms, drawn by bullocks. On each vehicle sat, in an erect attitude, a beautiful leopard, strongly chained and with a hood over his eyes, similar to those used for hawks. We were soon under way and driving towards the herd of antelopes which could be seen grazing in the distance, and which had been marked down before hand. There was no difficulty in getting the carts to within a hundred and twenty yards of the deer. Then one of the cheetahs, a fine male, was unhooded and set free.

Its departure from the gharry and its decision in choosing the most covered line on the open plain for rushing on its prey, were so instantaneous and rapid as to be quite marvellous. It seemed to vanish from the cart and appear simultaneously halfway towards the fine blackbuck it had singled out for attack.

When at about thirty yards from the unsuspecting troop, they suddenly became aware of the deadly peril they were in. One and all sprang into the air with galvanic bounds, and no doubt expected to escape easily by flight.

But the hunting-cheetah is, I suppose, for a hundred yards, by far the fleetest of all wingless things; and this one was soon in the midst of the affrighted throng, which scattered wildly and panic-stricken in all directions, as their leader—a fine black-buck—was struck down in their midst. There he lay, alone, in his death-agony, in the deadly clutch of his beautiful and relentless foe. We all ran as hard as we could, and were soon surrounding the strange group. Neither animal moved, for the buck was paralysed by fear—his starting eyeballs and dilated nostrils alone gave evidence of life. The cheetah, on the other hand, with his body spread out over the prostrate form of his victim, seemed to strain every nerve in pressing his prey against the earth as, with his long sharp fangs buried in its delicate throat, he continued the process of strangulation: he was very motionless, but his eyes were fixed upon us with a glare of extraordinary ferocity that became intensified as his keepers rushed forward and seized the deer by the hindleg. The brute now growled fiercely, and, tightening his clutch, looked so extremely dangerous that I was far from envying those who were in such close proximity to him. But they knew their trade. With a long sharp knife they cut the deer's throat, and caused the warm blood to spout in torrents into the face of the half-wild beast, whose whole frame now seemed to thrill with ecstasy. One of the operators, in the meanwhile, caught a quantity of the crimson life-stream in

a wooden bowl, and forced the steaming fluid under the very nose of the excited leopard, who, quitting his hold, at once began to lap with avidity. Whilst engaged in this process, the leather hood was swiftly clapped over his eyes, and the collar, with two chains attached, was adjusted round his neck.

Whilst this was going on, a third man had cut off one of the buck's hindlegs, and this, the "lion's share," was held close to the bloody chalice, which was no sooner emptied than the brute seized the meat thus provided with a vice-like grip. Each chain was now grasped by a different man, who, by keeping apart so that the tether remained taut, kept the leopard between them in such a way that neither was within reach of his claws or teeth. Then the third individual, who had ever retained his hold of the shank-bone of the leg-of-venison, gently drew the cheetah to the little cart that had now been brought close up. As soon as the beast felt himself against the edge of his own familiar chariot, he sprang lightly upon it, and proceeded to demolish his succulent *morceau* at his ease.

I now inspected the carcase of the deer, with a view to ascertaining, if possible, how the cheetah had been able so instantaneously to strike down such a powerful animal immediately on getting up with it. I at once observed a single long deep gash in the flank, which was evidently caused by the decisive blow. But I could not imagine with what weapon the leopard had been able to inflict this very strange-looking wound, for, as I have mentioned in another volume, the cheetah has a foot like a dog, and its claws are not retractile. Turning then to the beast, as it sat on the cart,

I inspected it closely, and saw that the dew-claw, which in the dog appears such a useless appendage, is represented in this brute by a terrible-looking talon exactly suited to the infliction of such a gash.

Though it is very unusual for the hunting-cheetah to keep up the chase for more than a hundred and fifty yards when once it has started for the final rush, yet I have heard of one well-authenticated instance—related to me by an eye-witness on whom I can rely thoroughly—of a determined race, at top speed, of at least six or seven hundred yards, which ended at last in a “kill.” This occurred at Hyderabad, in the Deccan, and was performed by one of H.H. The Nizam’s hunting-cheetahs. This looks as though these animals were capable of a tolerably-long-sustained effort, though it is more consonant with their natures to desist if they are not successful in the first onset, and to try another stalk. I may here remark that they are always caught when full-grown in the jungle, and then trained to do the pleasure of their captors, on whom I have never heard of their turning. Thus they show a reliable docility foreign to the true felines.

I have often wondered whether it would be possible to obtain a hybrid between one of these beasts and a good greyhound. If so, a splendid animal for hunting purposes would, no doubt, be the result.

Though I have seen great numbers of these cheetahs in captivity, I have never come across one wild in the forest; nor did I ever witness any of their trained exploits except the one just described as taking place in the neighbourhood of Kaladghi, in the small inhabited portion of which

camp some officers of irregular cavalry still remained in command of a considerable body of their men.

But this fact, together with the cheetah-hunt, was the fruit of after-experience ; for long before daylight, on the occasion of my memorable first arrival, I was up and *en route* for Baghulkote, where duty, not unmixed with pleasure, called me.

CHAPTER III.

BAGHULKOTE is reached by two or three days' marching from Kaladghi.

As it is not an interesting place in itself, nor likely to be ever visited by any of my readers, I shall not say very much about it.

The town, outside which lay my little detachment, consisted of twenty thousand inhabitants or more during the time of the great annual fair, and of about half that number at other seasons of the year.

The country consisted of large open tracts of black-earth-soil ; but there was very little game upon it excepting antelopes, and for these my dogs were not good enough. Being fond of riding, however, I used daily to traverse great distances, with my greyhounds, in quest of sport. Sometimes it would be eight or nine o'clock at night before I could get back, and then I generally had to pass through a grove of pitchy darkness immediately before getting to our tents.

This wood was firmly believed by every native in the place to be regularly taken possession of, after sunset, by dread beings whose greatest pleasure was to inflict unspeakable misery on man.

This copse, during the hours of daylight, was commonplace ; at night it was, to the natives, full of such awful

mysteries that my butler assured me nothing would induce anyone to go through it alone when darkness had set in. There are so many of these enchanted groves around our Indian stations that I should not have remembered this one but for the following circumstance :—

One afternoon I had been lured to a greater distance than usual, and had finished up with a long run in the contrary direction to home : to save time, therefore, I had galloped back to camp at such a pace that only one greyhound, called Sappho, had been able to keep up.

The next animal who appeared was her own brother, whose name I have forgotten. They were both very splendid animals, aged about eleven months, and in grand condition. The dog, immediately on arrival, flung himself upon the ground and began to die. His sister seemed fully aware of the approaching death of her brother, for she ran round and round him uttering piteous cries, and at last curled herself up with his head in her lap. Thus they parted. The dog's lungs had burst from over-exertion, but my butler shook his head and said: "His lungs were all right when he started—what should they burst for now? You should never have allowed him to encounter alone the demon of the enchanted wood : it is the Shaitan who has killed him !"

"But," I argued, "I often go through it alone."

"Oh," he said, "it is all right for you—Sahib-Ko maloom hai" (the Sahib knows)—this with more head-shaking.

I *did* know what he meant. The natives think that the English in India are themselves a hell-born race who, whilst the spell lasts which gives them power to sway the East

are similar in nature and superior in authority to all the other spirits of air, earth, and water.

Some day, they think, the curse pronounced by the greatest of devils upon them and their "gods" will be worked out; and then will surely come the triumph of the holy followers of Brahma!

Such has ever been the gist of opinions obtained by me in many conversations with the genuine children of the soil, whom I have succeeded in inducing to state what they really think. Few people care to know what may be trotting through the native mind. And others, though they may have invited confidence in the most solemn manner, have done so in the belief that something flattering would be imparted to them; these are, consequently, so outraged at being told we are nothing but a herd of unclean spirits, that violence is sometimes resorted to on the spur of the moment.

Now, the fear of a bleeding nose naturally leads to reticence; and thus many spend a lifetime in India without bestowing a thought upon the ideas of its two hundred millions of inhabitants, who, if inferior, are still our fellow-subjects, and consequently, in my humble opinion, worth studying.

After remaining a few weeks only at Baghulkote, I was ordered to take my detachment to a place called Badami, about twenty-five miles further on into the wilds of the southern Mahrata States, where nothing but the Canarese tongue is spoken or understood. We found the country very nice and pleasant for marching through, and plenty of good riding-ground, though not well stocked with game for coursing.

When at about six miles from our final destination, the track led us past one of the finest "tanks" I have ever seen, covered with every species of wild-duck, though there were no geese. Armies of variegated waders occupied the shallows; whilst snipe were abundant among the reeds. So large was this sheet of water that it was quite sufficient work for one day to shoot all round it.

On one occasion I took a little ammunition, shouldered the "family piece," mounted my pony, and rode off alone, to see if, by stealth or cunning, I could get a duck for dinner.

Arrived at the hamlet on the banks of the "Talao," I made signs that I required one coolie to go with me to fetch anything I might shoot out of the water; but the whole population, numbering about eight souls, all shrieked, held up three fingers apiece, and then, whether squatting down or standing up, they all became motionless. This was repeated many times, till I at last began to see I must either take three men or go without one.

This was very awkward; for, being only a self-supporting subaltern of two years' standing, of course I had no money. However, on showing them all I had in one hand, and explaining by a sweeping gesture that the whole of it would be divided amongst such as might go with me, we all started amicably in quest of adventures—and we had one, sure enough!

Shortly after getting under way, I saw before me a fine fat mallard, swimming placidly about in all the confidence of a fowl that had never heard of a real old-fashioned duck-gun. To slay the luckless bird, and see the coolie first

engaged dash into the water after it, were the acts of the same instant ; but, before he got halfway towards the booty, I saw that something was wrong. He called out, in smothered and (to me) unintelligible Canarese, to his two supporters on the bank, and then sank, but only for a second, when his head regained the surface, and, taking in a fresh stock of air, again disappeared. Each time that he executed this painful manœuvre, another fold of his long turban unwound and floated away in the eddies made by his drowning body.

I was distracted. How could I rush in, weighted with ammunition and laced up in heavy shooting-boots and gaiters? No doubt any other Englishman would have bravely sprung in and drowned himself ; but I didn't! Casting a wild glance around, I beheld the two assistants standing together, a little way off, like two dirty-white crows. They had their fingers on their lips, and were nodding and muttering together, without attempting to do anything. I was so exasperated at this sight that, without any idea that it would do them any good, I flew at them like a tiger, jammed their heads together, and thus shouted to them in Hindustani :

“Pigs! what did you force yourselves upon me for, if only to bear witness to my disgrace? It is shameful that this man should be drowned before our very eyes !”

Now, strange to say, I had unwittingly adopted the only line of conduct that could have been of any use ; for, on being thus violently assaulted, these two wretches thought I had overheard their whispered plot to let Luximon drown in order that they might secure the whole guerdon for themselves. For the certainty of sevenpence extra, and the

possibility of future damages from me, they would suffer the friend of their youth to perish. Such must have been the meaning of their conduct, for, on my displaying this unexpected and fiery energy, they both skipped down the bank, each with his unwound turban in his hand.

One now entered the water, holding on by the end of his ally's strip of cloth, which was many yards long ; and then, on getting to the end of his tether, threw his own over the very face of his rapidly-drowning fellow-creature. Luximon was not slow to grasp the linen coil, and was speedily extricated from what was so nearly proving a watery grave. He was so loaded with weeds as to resemble, on landing, some aquatic monster rather than a man. No sooner had he recovered his breath than he wanted to go in again for the duck, as he said he now saw a clear channel through the weeds.

This was a much finer trait of native character than that exhibited by the other two ; but, of course, I would not hear of his making the attempt. If it was understood to be a service of danger, I would either go myself or leave it alone altogether. I decided to leave the bird on the water, and walked on, with the three coolies close behind me—at least I thought they were there ; but I was mistaken, for, in a few minutes, Luximon pushed himself in front of me, with a broad grin, and the duck in his hand, which he had run back for and retrieved all by himself, poor fellow !

It is too long ago for me to remember what pecuniary reward I bestowed on so much valour ; but it could not have been much, even if I had given all I had.

Badami itself was a much more picturesque and romantic

looking place than Baghulkote. The village ran as it were up a wide and deep gorge which included a large tank of thirty or forty acres in its embrace. Our little camp was on a clearance on the banks of this sort of Mere, and my little hut had been built so as to overhang its waters. It was open at the ends; so I could recline in my armchair and watch the troops of both Entellus and common grey monkeys, who would come and sport or drink water among the natives, who also came in large numbers down the terraced steps, to fill their pitchers or to bathe and wash their clothes. Among them was often conspicuous the naked figure of a leper, whose whole body was "white as snow." He looked strange among his fellows.

On the high rocks that formed the entrance to the Pass stood two European forts, one on each side. They had been built by the French, and were now striking-looking ruins. Below were the tombs of those who had built them; and rarely does a European eye rest upon their graves.

I found plenty of riding-ground in this country; and no doubt there were also panthers, and possibly even tigers, within twenty miles or so among the hills, but I was not at that time able to go after them. It was here that I tried the experiment of running down black-buck with greyhounds, after a heavy fall of rain. I had essayed it before; but, even in the softest ground, I had always found them fly from the greyhounds with the greatest ease. One morning, however, I observed some who had taken up a position in what was but little better than a quagmire; so I slipped the two or three small greyhounds I had with me at the herd. This time, at any rate, I ought to have made quite a bag; for the

deer were totally unable to escape, and either stood butting at the dogs or creeping into bushes. I had none of my big dogs with me, and the small ones only ran in a bewildered manner among the animals, which seemed so much larger than they had expected. At last a fine buck, with long horns, gained a sort of raised causeway, and set off for *terra firma* with those mighty bounds which had so often proved attractive to my foolish hounds. Away they sped, to catch, as it were, the speed of thought, only to fail in the attempt, as they had so often done before. Meanwhile, when the coast was clear, the others picked their way out of the heavy black-earth-field, and retreated, at their leisure, to pastures new.

Shortly after leaving Badami and rejoining headquarters at Belgaum, the whole regiment set out for Kolapore, a place about seventy-five miles on the road to Poona.

Throughout the whole distance, the country was favourable to coursing and shooting; but the time, on such occasions, is wanting to make the most of the decidedly meagre distribution of game.

I would, for my part, go any distance to see some greyhound or half-bred mastiff, reared by myself and the pride of my heart, distinguish itself in the chase or the fight; and it is for those who share such feelings that I write these lines. Those who must have constant "kills" to keep up their ardour would not find sufficient inducement, whilst marching through the southern Mahrata country with a regiment, to quit the ease and shelter of their tents. For no doubt it is very hard work to march with troops and shikar at the same time; yet I never missed one single opportunity of

doing so myself. Nothing, however, worthy of record occurred during this journey, and I think we were all very glad when it was over.

Kolapore is the capital of one of the southern Mahrata States, and is governed by the joint wisdom of a rajah and a British political agent. At the time I was there, the native ruler was so dreadfully out of pocket that he was not able to purchase a spaniel from the European barracks without the consent of his English mentor. After this, who will say that our government is wanting in paternal minutiae? Our camp, too—partly for sanitary reasons, but no doubt also largely with a view to economising the soil—had been constructed on some high ground composed of a sort of natural concrete, called “mohrum,” on which nothing whatever will grow; gardens, such as they are, are made by mining little holes and filling them with rich soil brought from below. The result, especially to people coming from the bouquet camp of Belgaum, is lamentable in the extreme.

But what to me, though ever passionately fond of them, were flowers, when compared with the Rajah's falconer?

Let me pause to describe this delightful person.

Though young, handsome, clean, and dressed at all times in spotless white raiment, yet was his appearance but as vile dross, compared with his virtues and talents.

Notwithstanding my genuine regard and admiration for this young man, I am sorry to say that, owing to the lapse of time, I cannot recall his name; so, since he was a Mussulman, we had better style him Mahomed.

Mahomed, then, was wonderfully well skilled in everything pertaining to the art of falconry—from the catching of them

out of the heavens to the flying of them at all kinds of game. He and his family were the servants of the Rajah, who lived in the city of Kolapore, about two miles from the cantonments, and, of course, all the falcons that he caught and trained were State property. But he had leisure time, and of this he bestowed so much on me that I soon understood the whole subject as well as he did himself.

From the first, I was resolved to have a hawk of my own—more than one would have entailed a man to look after them, and this, when I inspected the balance-sheet and found a total of nothing in my favour, was obviously an impossibility.

Of what kind, then, should be the one sole object of my adoration?

To settle this knotty point led to long and most instructive conversations with Mahomed, and a careful study of all his noble and lovely birds.

First came a pair of peregrines—both females, of course; for, as my readers are doubtless aware, among birds of prey the male is one-third less in size than his consort, who is also superior to her lord in strength and courage.

“A good peregrine,” said my counsellor, “is the bird that would suit you, there can be no doubt about that; but, unfortunately, they are foreigners, imported from a great distance, and so costly that they are quite beyond your reach. Besides, even when you have got them, there is no knowing how they will turn out. For instance, this bird”—and he pointed to the elder specimen, which, in its adult dress of light blue, with breast of snowy white flecked with lemon, brilliant orange-coloured feet, and large round eyes

of liquid black, was indeed a thing of matchless beauty—"this bird," said Mahomed, "is a coward! The other," he continued, "though as yet so inferior in splendour, is equal in size and strength to her companion, and is at the same time game to the backbone, as you shall see some day when we go out together."

Then he showed me another large hawk, called the "baz." It had short wings, a long tail, and very curious talons, one of the front toes and claws on each foot being so much smaller than the others as to look as if they belonged to some other species. In plumage it was not unlike the peregrine, but its eyes were of a splendid yellow. This bird, though handsome, powerful, and easy to procure, was also voted unfit to be my winged companion. It shows very poor sport, indulging only in a succession of short and rapid dashes at its prey. If unsuccessful in the first few lightning-like passes, it whirls off to the top of the nearest tree and there sits till the lure is shown it, when it descends and suffers itself to be recaptured. I am assured that, should it get lost owing to the thickness of the jungle, it can always be recovered eventually, as it will never wander very far from the place where it has been set free.

The baz, then, could only be recommended to anyone who meant falconry on a large scale. Such a person would, no doubt, often find situations for fitly using this hawk.

After this we discussed the smaller birds, the commonest of which, and by far the most generally used, is the little "shikra." It greatly resembles the sparrow-hawk in size, shape, and colour; indeed, the only difference I could observe was its being flecked instead of barred on the breast. The

finest game at which this little creature can be flown is the partridge. It is carried in the hand, and then flung at the partridges as they rise. Its method is much the same as that of the great baz, and is, consequently, much more suited to a string of natives beating about the bush, than to a youthful Briton wishing for a gallop on horseback o'er the boundless plain.

For this latter purpose, it seemed, there was nothing to equal the "turumtee," or merlin, a lovely little miniature peregrine, a native of the country and easy to procure. Mahomed would descant enthusiastically on the merits of this little fellow. He said they were trained to hunt in pairs, and were the only ones in creation who could overtake and bring down the bluerock-pigeon as it might be descried winging its way at full speed across the firmament. One, he continued, would always keep above and the other below the flying quarry; and, between them, they would generally succeed in bringing down their bird after a long and arduous race.

Well, a brace of such falcons as these seemed just what I wanted, if I could only see my way to managing two. My deliberations, however, on this point were cut short by Mahomed informing me that turumtees were much too delicate to be entrusted to the care of anyone who could not look after them as exclusively as though he had no other pets. He assured me that these proud little merlins would inevitably be ill, and most likely die, if they were put, but for one day only, on mutton or any other butcher's-meat, though it might be of the best.

Never would Mahomed, it seemed, present them with any-

thing else than a small bird with the life-blood still flowing in its veins.

“Well then,” I said, “what sort of a hawk am I to have?” To which he replied: “You must certainly let me provide you with a ‘luggur,’ which I shall catch, train, and bring to you in a fortnight’s time.”

Meanwhile I went forth from time to time, under the guidance of my new friend, to learn all I could of the business.

I particularly wished to see the best of the peregrines fly at a very large and handsome black-and-white crane, to the pursuit of which it had been trained. This bird was not common, and we made many long expeditions without seeing a single specimen. At last, one morning, in the midst of a great plain and far from our own homes, we descried a solitary individual of the sort required. As it stood in motionless meditation on one leg, I mistook it, at first sight, for a little man; but Mahomed knew his friend at the first glimpse, and immediately unhooded the falcon and set her free. With inconceivable rapidity did she sight and give chase to her distant foe, who with equal celerity became aware of his danger, and, spreading his broad pinions, rose in circles through the air. The peregrine was not long, however, in gaining the ascendant and swooping like a thunderbolt on the comparatively awkward form of the crane. But the latter was very far from being the clumsy creature it appeared; for, just as the hawk seemed on the top of it, it executed a most extraordinary wriggle. Its legs, neck, and wings all seemed to double up together so that one could not tell whether it were upside down or not.

The result was that the falcon missed her grip and plunged fathoms down towards the earth, whilst the crane hurried ever onwards towards those distant morasses to seek safety with her mate. The falcon rallied splendidly, and, with an upward shoot, began at once to make up the distance she had lost. At first the pace was very severe, and I began to fear I should lose the birds; but gradually the flight became much slower, as the hawk, learning caution from repeated failures, contented herself with floating immediately over her victim and only making short dashes whenever the upturned beak of the enemy was for a moment diverted. At such times a few flying feathers would testify to a fortunate hit made by the peregrine; and the crane would, perforce, sink many yards from her lofty course till, at last wearied out, she began to descend steadily on a long slanting line.

In a few seconds both had vanished from the horizon; but I had marked the spot where they must have reached the earth, and, on galloping up, I found them both under the steep bank of a shallow stream.

The crane was leaning against the acclivity; whilst the falcon, on her short legs, was hopping around and making vicious clutches in trying to fix on to her long-legged opponent. Both were dragged and drenched to the skin, and the hawk certainly was totally unable to fly an inch.

To jump off the horse and grasp the unfortunate crane by the neck was a thing very easy to accomplish; but whether Mahomed, on arriving upon the scene, gave it the "happy despatch," or whether he wrapped it carefully in a cloth and took it home to join the other inhabitants of his aviary,

I cannot remember. In any case, the recovered falcon must, according to custom, have been made merry on a minced crow, served on the back of the bird she had hunted down, and which she thus supposed she was devouring.

This was the largest quarry I ever saw taken in hawking, as I never had the opportunity of witnessing the capture of a gazelle or other four-footed beast, except a hare, in this way.

At the expiration of the stipulated fortnight, I was much delighted, one afternoon, by the arrival, at my bungalow, of Mahomed with a beautiful young luggur, perched upon his gauntlet-covered fist. She was a fine bird, and strongly resembled a small peregrine. She had the same large dark eyes, and was similar in shape and general colouring, though the markings on the breast were quite different. Having put on the glove provided for me and transferred the bird to my own hand, I took off the hood; and we looked at each other for the first time. She eyed me, shook out her plumage, and showed herself perfectly tame and confiding. It was with feelings of positive pleasure that I handed to Mahomed the (to me) large sum of thirty shillings, which was the price we had originally agreed upon, without any of that haggling which, in the case of any other native, I should have felt bound to indulge in.

With Selina—for such was her name—we had many exciting chases after crows and ravens. Once I nearly lost her by flying her at a “paddy-bird,” which is a sort of dwarf crane and much easier to kill than a crow. But it seems these birds must be specially trained to each variety of fowl that they are to hunt, and Selina evidently knew nothing of such low things as paddy-birds; so, on being

cast off, she sailed majestically to the top of a high mangotree, and there began to look out for something on her own account. I was new to the work, and had forgotten to bring the lure, formed of a bunch of crows' wings and pieces of raw mutton tied on it, from the tent, where it was now hanging.

"Watch her!" I cried to Hanington, who was with me, and then I flew at top speed to recover the missing article.

"She is gone," said my friend, when I came panting back. "Do you see a small speck floating over that flock of sheep on the distant hillside?"

"I do! I do!"

"That," he said calmly, "is your Selina!"

I thought I had never known agony of mind till then. To run after her would, indeed, have been fruitless; and was it likely, at that distance, that she would pay any attention to, or even see, the lure which I was now waving frantically in the air at the end of its long line, shouting desperately the while, as is the custom among Eastern falconers. In a few seconds, what was my joy to see the black speck becoming rapidly bigger, till in less than half a minute Selina, with her wings stiffly extended and her dark orbs fixed upon my countenance, was flying straight into my face! I was too overjoyed to think of snatching away the lure and causing her to swoop and play over it, which, Mahomed always insisted, was the only proper thing to do before letting them grasp the feathers and begin to feed on the piece of meat bound tightly thereon. No, no; I was only too glad to let her settle at once, clap on the hood, and turn my mind to other sport for that day.

It is not my intention to weary the reader with many accounts of the pretty and exciting hunts that we all enjoyed so much with this nice bird at Kolapore. One or two will suffice to show the nature of the amusement.

The crows, by doubling and taking advantage of any cover there might be, would often afford a flight of a mile or so, and show much wonderful and determined cunning whenever opportunity offered.

On one occasion I saw one of these impudent black gentry of the largest sort perched high on a telegraph-wire stretched across the top of an adjacent hill. Altogether, I dare say it was enjoying an elevation of eighty feet above us; so, on the falcon starting in pursuit, it was able to execute the movement of towering with peculiarly striking effect, and the hawk was obliged to rise spirally to get above her game. The instant she had accomplished this and was immediately above her prey, the raven pointed his long beak towards the earth, closed his wings, and, followed in the same manner by his assailant, descended at a terrific pace. Immediately beneath him grew an umbrella-shaped babul-tree, thickly matted with long and dangerous thorns. On this the wary old bird had evidently counted as a poser for the enemy; for, gallantly and without hesitation, it dived headforemost through the perilous thicket, and then skimmed swiftly along the ground in the direction of a vast banian-tree growing about five hundred yards off.

So far the stratagem was quite successful; for Selina, refusing to risk impalement on the long thorns of the babul-tree, gave herself an upward wrench and shot up high into the air, but only to dart with renewed speed after the scudding raven,

whom she succeeded in fastening on to at about halfway from the new goal. Both birds came whirling down together to the ground ; and the proceedings would now have terminated in a capture but for the misplaced zeal of Ponto, a pointer belonging to a friend who formed one of our party. This foolish brute, on seeing the birds come to land, made for them open-mouthed, and would no doubt have killed both but that the falcon, seeing her danger, loosed her hold and again soared aloft. This enabled the crow to escape into the mango-tree, minus some tail-feathers ; whilst the hawk flew round and round the spreading branches. We were soon up on our ponies, from which we dismounted and threw a shower of stones among the foliage. This was followed, unfortunately, by a whole flight of crows ; and we feared Selina might give chase to a fresh bird, for which she was no longer fit. She, however, very cleverly recognised her quarry by its torn tail, and at once singled it out for pursuit. A fresh scurry now ensued, which lasted, I should think, for another mile, at a great pace.

In this last burst we were well led by my young friend Browne, who rode very well and had a fast pony. It was this young gentleman who cleverly marked the two combatants as, tightly clutching one another, they fell into the very centre of a thick prickly-pear-bush. I was soon on the spot, and discovered Selina wedged among the thorns with her talons buried in the breast of the crow, whilst her own leg was grasped in the long beak of her antagonist, who was at the same time doing all the mischief he could with his claws. With some difficulty I worked my way in among the thorns, and brought the captor and the captive

into the light of day, where short work was made of poor "corvus."

No one will be surprised to hear that I was very fond of my only falcon, and that even now my grief still seems fresh when I think of her sad end.

Selina, I need hardly say, was accommodated with a perch in a very nice room next to my own. Yet those who know anything of India will be prepared to hear that, even in this blissful retreat, the poor falcon shortly became infested with vermin!

"What," said I to Mahomed, "is the remedy for this sort of thing?"

"Oh," he said, "I will give you a preparation of 'buch' made into a sort of paste; you must smear this all over her, and every parasite will perish!"

I followed these directions to the letter; but what was my horror, on next going into the room, to see Selina hanging by the legs from her perch and looking as if she had been dead for a month!

It was well Mahomed was safe with his Rajah, for, had he been present, friendship would have certainly given way to grief. I should have beaten him! It seems that the buch, immediately on being applied, should have been carefully washed off again; but this he never told me. Indeed, with the exceptions of Mahomed Barker and Roopa, mentioned in a former volume, I have never met with any native who could guide you, even in his own special subject, so completely as to render thought for oneself superfluous. For instance, this really-intelligent falconer never told me why I was wrong in carrying Selina about unhooded and on

my bare hand. She was such a pet and seemed careful not to scratch me even by accident. Her successor, however, was of very different mettle, and it was from her that I learnt the use of the gauntlet. One morning, while taking a turn in the garden in the manner indicated above, a bird, such as my captive had been wont to dine upon when free, suddenly hove in sight. The effect of this vision on the hawk was magical : her body became as it were tightly compressed in her own plumage ; her half-extended wings quivered ; whilst her eyes were fixed on the wished-for prey with supernatural intensity. Vibrating with excitement, she tried to rise, but could not, as I was firmly grasping the jesses. In the agony of her excitement, she now clutched her living perch with convulsive energy, causing my blood to flow freely. Nothing would induce me to let go or to strike the hawk, which would have caused her to forget all she had learnt, and to relapse permanently into barbarism. All I could do was to turn away my head, and try to rise superior to all human feeling. Whilst thus fruitlessly engaged, I suddenly felt myself released and heard the hawk shaking her feathers. I looked round and found the temptation flown out of sight, and the falcon sitting on my wounded hand quite happy and totally ignorant of all the mischief she had done.

Though I thoroughly mastered every detail of falconry as practised in the East, from the catching of the wild birds to hunting with them when trained, I do not think it advisable to go deeply into the subject in these pages, and for this reason:—Falcons, when at last their tedious education is finished, require such constant daily, I may say hourly, supervision that no sportsman could be expected to undertake them

without at least one well-qualified attendant. This was just what I found it, in after years, impossible to procure, short of engaging a whole family of people and spending much more time and money on this branch of sport than at all suited me.

In those early days, however, Mahomed offered to desert his royal protector, and serve me exclusively, for twenty rupees (two pounds) per month! I often since wished that I had closed with his offer and gone slowly into debt for that amount. But we do not always see at first sight what is for our advantage; so Mahomed and I were never more than temporary allies.

Now, of course, anyone starting with a good falconer would learn everything from him much better than he could by long and tedious instructions from me. I shall therefore conclude my observations, for the present at any rate, on hawking by describing how Mahomed caught birds to feed his falcons with.

Having distilled some extraordinarily-sticky brown-coloured birdlime, called "goolur," from the juice of the Burr, or great Indian fig-tree, he would endue with this adhesive compound the thin end of a long thin stick, exactly resembling a full-sized fishing-rod. With this weapon over his shoulder would Mahomed go forth till he met with some sparrows chattering on the eaves of a low-tiled roof. At once he would hold the rod so as to be foreshortened towards them; and then, having got within range, he would make a sudden lunge, when one or more unfortunates would infallibly be seen adhering to the end of the stick. These were removed without being killed, and their heads inserted between his

fingers, with their bodies outwards, till his hands looked as though he had large boxing-gloves on. I learnt how to do this myself well enough to catch birds out of the hedges, but I never acquired sufficient accuracy to work among the roofs, where an error of half an inch would be destruction to the wand—a valuable weapon and one difficult to replace.

I asked Mahomed if he could catch crows in this way.

“Certainly,” he replied, “but they are so full of deceit (*dugha*) that I can get twice their weight in sparrows at a quarter of the outlay of time and trouble ; so I only start off for a crow when I require one for special purposes.”

Such was Mahomed and such my experiences of hawking at Kolapore.

I can only add that I believe a young man fond of riding across country could get more regular enjoyment out of this sport than from any other in India.

Hawks and suitable game to fly them at could be found to fit any country. Where the cover is thick, the short-winged sorts, such as the baz and the shikra, would be in request ; whilst the peregrines, luggurs, turumtees, and other long-winged varieties would be reserved for stretching across those boundless plains which are always to be found at no great distance from any of our Indian stations. A good trainer should be obtainable at one pound a month, and an assistant at half that sum. There would be no other expenses, as these men would not only catch and train the hawks, but also the sparrows and other small birds to feed them on.

Though, in writing of Kolapore, I have dwelt principally on sport with falcons, yet was the surrounding country

quite favourable to coursing and small-game-shooting; pig-sticking and tiger-hunting were not to be had, however, under distances requiring ten days' leave of absence.

The next place I went to was Poona, a place which I have already fully described in another volume. I need therefore only say here that every species of shikar is to be obtained in the neighbourhood.

It is the headquarters of pig-sticking; and it is from this camp that the famous meeting for the Bheema Cup is organised. Panthers, if not tigers, are also tolerably close at hand; but I always think it is best to decline big-game-shooting till one can see one's way to getting at least a month of it, for the preparations for one day should be as complete as for sixty, or failure will probably be the result. And, even when the most expensive and perfect arrangements are made, it is seldom that Fortune is so propitious as to allow of the destruction of the first tiger that has been marked down; but, at all events, something good will certainly be bagged before a month is out.

I do not consider a man to be a "shikari" unless he can enjoy riding over the country or beating the forests on the chance instead of the certainty of meeting with some of the wild animals he is in search of.

At Poona, if you are determined never to have a blank day with your greyhounds, all you have to do is to purchase or breed animals that can run down the fleet gazelle. Or, if this be too much trouble, be content with killing occasionally a hare, fox, jackal, or wolf—all of which, including two of the latter, succumbed to the prowess of my favourites whilst living at this station.

If the reader should wish to match his hounds against wolves, he should proceed to the Bungalow at Loonee, fifteen miles distant and on the highroad to Ahmednagar. There are some large hills, close to this place, out of which wolves can be driven by a line of about twenty beaters, and forced to cross the plains below. I went often, and never failed to see several of these animals ; but my dogs at that time were not good enough to enable me to give a satisfactory account of them.

It takes time and patience to form an efficient pack of wolf-hounds. How I worked to this end, and with what success, must be told in another volume.

From Poona I went to Aden, which is, I should think, the most difficult place in the whole world to describe accurately. Very few Europeans have ever seen it, because, be their residence on this mighty rock one of years or of hours only, their hearts are always fixed on some distant land and their eyes fast-closed to the marvellous and savage beauty which is ever spread pathetically and in vain before their melancholy gaze.

The first that the traveller can see of Aden is a black cone projecting above the sea at a distance of some thirty or forty miles from the deck of the good ship which has safely borne him so far. This is the topmost peak of the old volcano which rises abruptly out of the ocean to a height of eighteen hundred feet. It is called "Shum-shum," and on its narrow apex, reached only by a final flight of steep steps hewn out of the solid granite-looking rock, is perched a small hut, crowned with a flagstaff and inhabited by sufficient signallers to keep a ceaseless watch night and day

for the first appearance on the horizon of the mail-steamers from England, India, and the Colonies.

— Immediately on one of these messengers from other lands, or its lights, being sighted, the man on duty fires a cannon confided to his care for that purpose, and runs a flag up, so that all may know of the arrival of news, letters, and even, perhaps, of friends who are dear to them.

Even those who happen to feel the least interested in one of these frequent announcements are nevertheless conscious of some sensation every time the cannon speaks, as though a stone had been thrown into the "Slough of Despond."

Gradually, as the steamer draws nearer, other seared and forbidding peaks emerge from the depths of a clear sea out of which not a scrap of seaweed can be procured to place in a drawing-room-aquarium: there is nothing but the commotion of the steamer to trouble the pellucid and mirrored depths as the vessel glides past Lighthouse Point and takes up her allotted berth in the harbour, from the heights surrounding which many bright and cheerful residences look down. And yet gloom, or rather a severe preoccupation mingled with flurry, has been the expression chiefly observable on the countenances of the passengers during the last half-hour. They are saying to themselves:

"We will not—no, we will *not* suffer ourselves to be swindled as we have hitherto invariably been by the Arabs, Jews, and Somalis who, the instant the vessel is at rest, will swarm upon the deck waving ostrich-feathers and jingling black coral and other trash under our very noses."

Some, whilst thus meditating, assume a look of perfectly

awful firmness as they stump the quarter-deck, with their hands in their pockets, clutching their money. These are the first victims !

So much outward show of resolution is generally put on to hide the inward wavering of the poor soul who is speedily to be seen surrounded by a number of the vendors of these tempting wares which he so much wishes to purchase at the lowest price ! Now, what *is* the lowest price ? Why, next to nothing, of course ! But even that mathematical expression will not give the precise sum in rupees and annas which should reward the enterprising and nearly-naked Somali for the tail of the last ostrich which he has succeeded in catching in the desert, or the lump of hideous black coral which he may be supposed to have just brought up from the bottom of the vasty-deep, where so many of his interesting countrymen are even now searching for sixpences thrown in for the display of their diving powers by the more volatile of the passengers, and which too often turn out to be but the tops of sodawater-corks !

Here is a state of things ill-calculated to lead the mind to the observation of scenery or to speculations concerning the many phases of the remotest past, of which Aden in these days is a blackened and even terrible monument.

In those far-off ages when the Mastodon and the Megatherium were still not born or thought of, what lurid flames, what showers of fire and lava must have lighted the midnight sky in these still-heated regions !

But the P. & O. emigrant has no time to think of out-of-the-way things of this sort. He must finish his bargaining ; then he will land, and, if there is time after getting some iced

brandy-and-sodawater at Dhosabhoy's, he will take a look round and see what sort of a place it is. In pursuance of this laudable notion, he is just about to settle with one general dealer for a whole pile of things which he has put on one side, when up rushes Mr. Smith, of London, and exclaims excitedly : " My dear fellow, what *are* you doing? You will get everything much better and cheaper on shore at the hotel."

This, of course, is fatal to the whole transaction, and poor Jones lands with all the work to do over again, whilst he sits vainly endeavouring to cool himself and his temper with iced drinks in the verandah of the aforesaid inn. If he at last buys something, he returns to the ship weighed down with a sense of having been outwitted, and begins eagerly enquiring amongst his acquaintances what prices they may have paid for trophies similar to his own spoils. On the other hand, if he has bought nothing, then he has got nothing, and this, to the ordinary travelling-mind, is a thought so grievous to be borne that for days it will obliterate every other consideration—and Aden still remains practically unseen.

Well, then, the foregoing considerations, together with the fact that there are still millions of persons who have never visited our " Gibraltar of the East," have decided me to give an elaborate description of this remarkable place.

Let us imagine that we enter the small and thoroughly-land-locked harbour at about daylight, and that our mental pitch is raised sufficiently above the distractions caused by the onslaught of Jew pedlars and Somali divers to enable us to pay some attention to the wonderful panorama which is offered to our view.

On the one hand rises Shum-shum, which, springing as it does from the ocean on which we are floating, gets a majestic effect from its altitude of eighteen hundred feet. It is separated from the border of the haven by many lower ranges with peaks, and little tablelands on which are clustered houses, or rather bungalows, which in some cases may be said almost to overhang the water. Chief among these are the Political Residency and the large dwelling of the P. & O. Company's Agent. This quarter is known as "Steamer Point," which during the eight or nine hot months of the year enjoys a climate ten degrees cooler by the thermometer than that endured by the gasping and numerous inhabitants of the crater, which is a place to be described further on.

Opposite to Steamer Point rise isolated islands of rock, which mark as it were the contrary side of the port, and seem to be from two or three hundred feet in height. They are close enough to be well within view, and I think the general effect on the eye is that of a small circular-shaped haven, terminating, at the extremity facing the entrance, in a perfectly flat coast-line of white sand. This is the isthmus which connects this strange promontory of mountains with the mainland of Arabia. Straight across it you would again come to the sea in a distance of less than a mile at the neck. This neck is traversed from shore to shore by a rampart defended by cannon. This may be considered as the commencement of the fortifications and the entrance to Aden from the land side.

To see the whole place properly in the six hours allowed for coaling purposes would, of course, be impossible. This should be the work of three days at least.

I shall, however, for the sake of succinctness, take the reader, without pausing, to all the main points of interest just as though they could be seen in the same time that it takes to tell of them.

Armed with an umbrella possessing a thickly-wadded cover, you jump into a boat ; and in a few minutes you land at a little jetty where, if you are fortunate enough to be unimpeded by acquaintances, you can engage an intelligent native who will show you everything there is to be seen, if not at "the lowest price," still for a sum which is indeed infinitesimal as compared with your passage-money to and fro, your outfit, and other pecuniary sacrifices that have had to be submitted to before leaving your native country.

Accept, then, the services of a paid guide, who will lead you off the pier and across a natural square to the hotel, which, in common with a row of shops, you will find wedged against the last rocky descent of mighty Shum-shum, whose peak is, however, quite shut out from view by the nearer masses. Here you will get a refreshing bath, plenty of good ice, and an execrable breakfast—for, with the exception of game killed in the cold weather, there is nothing fit to eat in Asia.

This meal having been ordered for nine or ten o'clock, your guide will engage a "hack buggy" and commence showing you the place.

Half an hour is sufficient to enable you to drive round about the Point itself, and to take stock of the numerous bungalows, constructed sometimes of stone and with flat roofs, at others of "wattle-and-dab" and thatch. Picturesque little tenements they are as they crown all the lower

eminences so as to catch all they can of that refreshing sea-breeze for which this particular quarter is so justly celebrated.

The messes of the unfortunate regiments condemned to inhabit the crater always have branch establishments here for the convenience of such as may be able to get short leave of absence, or be ordered by the medical officer to go away for a change of air.

Having finished the inspection of this really agreeable sanatorium, your Jehu will turn round, retrace his way past the hotel, and commence the business of driving you to the "Camp," which is built in the bottom of the crater, five miles off. The road is wide and so beautifully kept that, if it be not too hot, one experiences a sense of pleasure in driving along it. Close to your left-hand are the salt waters of the harbour, enlivened by numerous craft, which become smaller, owing to the increasing shallowness of the sea, as you advance inland, till at last there is nothing but Somalis to be seen near at hand, paddling about in the hollowed-out trunks of date-trees. On your right-hand rises at once and precipitously a mountain-rock, seven or eight hundred feet in height, which recedes, however, occasionally, as you journey onwards, showing in some places upward-sloping valleys filled with stunted bushes and many-coloured beds of stones. A few very fine ravens are always to be met with along this route. They are said to be the original birds imported many years ago. Though they are very healthy and cheerful, it is asserted that they have steadily refused to avail themselves of the lofty eyries by which they are surrounded to build nests and raise up seed

unto themselves. Such is the wisdom or folly of the ravens.

The road for the first three or four miles is quite flat, and fit for all the beasts, whether of draught or burden, that enliven it to show off their best paces. Here may be met the well-appointed English carriage-and-pair; the nice little private Tonga drawn by two handsome and well-got-up ponies; besides scores of such vehicles as the one under whose hood you are sitting, and which were known in my time as American four-wheeled spider-buggies. Then there are the various vessels, if one may so call them, patronised by the natives—funny-looking, gaudy little pagoda-shaped carts that remind the travelled Anglo-Indian of Taboots on wheels. These are drawn by a couple of trotting bullocks, and are occupied by perhaps five full-grown natives, with the interstices filled up by children or babies that appear to have been grown for the express purpose of fitting in.

Of carts carrying stores and of pack or riding animals there is also a goodly show. Chief among the latter may be noticed the fleet Arab dromedary. I have often ridden picked beasts of this sort without any attendant up behind, and I can testify to the ease with which they passed the swiftest of wheeled vehicles. Thus mounted I was returning from the Point to the Camp one evening, and going at a great rate, when I overtook a wild Arab, who at once matched his camel against mine. Each was determined not to be beaten, and we really seemed to fly along the level causeway. In vain did I ply the office-ruler to urge my brute to victory—the instant its nose protruded beyond that of its com-

petitor, the latter, on a mere word from its skilled jockey, at once made up the distance.

I am sure we must have been going quite ten miles an hour, perhaps more, till we got to the foot of the corkscrew winding that leads up to the outer edge of the crater. Here the pace was slower, yet still quite equal; and I began to think the run into the heart of Camp would be a dead-heat. Three-quarters of a mile brought us to the portcullis at the top of the winding ascent. Through this I dashed, and rushed full speed down the steep descent into the crater. This proved too much for my *désert-friend*, who not only pulled up, but raised dismal notes of warning for me to do the same. This naturally only caused me to go faster, for it would have been too mortifying if my rival had again overtaken me in finishing on the flat.

By this prudent course I secured the victory for Europe, as I never saw anything more of the representatives of Asia.

But, as you journey from your steamer to the Camp, the only races you are likely to see are the involuntary ones performed by tippy sailors bestriding donkeys and driven along in herds by cunning and mendacious Somali boys who, when they have got poor Jack well on his journey, suddenly cease those blandishments of stick and voice which have hitherto been, it would seem, the cause of progress, and an immediate stoppage of the procession in the result. If money can be produced then they may resume the ever tenour of their way—otherwise they must get off, and walk; for nothing will induce the Aden donkey to proceed without all those persuasions which no one except those in whose charge he has lived and suffered all his life can administer properly.

It is, therefore, advisable for the enterprising traveller to remain content with the spider-buggy in which I have already started him from Steamer Point. He will get pleasantly over the first three or four miles of road winding between the seashore and abrupt side of the sterile mountain, till he arrives at a spot where the road branches in two directions—one continues much in the original direction, and leads to the fortified isthmus; the other turns to the right, and conducts you, by a series of corkscrew turnings, to the main gate, which is situated in a deep rent in the side of the crater. This doorway may be said to be hundreds of feet high, and is composed of a solid perpendicular rock on both sides, which forms a winding passage up to the portcullis that closes it. Such an entrance, if faithfully defended, would be in itself impregnable; but it is rendered doubly so by the batteries of artillery that frown impressively down upon the advancing tourist as he slowly ascends the outer declivity of the old volcano. At this portal the visitor finds himself in the midst of a mixed guard of European and native Indian troops, through whom he passes unquestioned during the hours of daylight, and at once finds himself looking down on the great flat plain which, enclosed as it is on all sides by high and precipitous mountains, forms the bottom of that crater in which so many Englishmen are doomed to gasp away a considerable portion of their lives.

The figure of this strange esplanade is irregular with frequent juttings and recesses. It is more of a wide oval than anything else, and, I should think, would be about a mile and a half at its greatest length, by three-quarters of

a mile in width. There is a sort of contraction, near the centre, which seems naturally to divide it into two camps.

The smaller and hotter half, next to the main pass, is allotted to the lines of the native troops and the houses of their luckless commanders.

The larger half, which is not much better as regards temperature than the other, is devoted to the accommodation of the European infantry, artillery, commissariat, and a large bazaar.

The bungalows and church are all built on low elevations which are to be found projecting from the sides of the basin. This gives them a picturesque appearance, and favours the illusion of catching the breeze every faintest breath of which is effectually shut out by the vast block of Shum-shum.

I have myself, during the months of May and June, burnt an unshaded candle on my roof, and found the flame as steady as in a room in London ; whilst the air seemed loaded with the scent of the unhappy crowds seething in fitful slumber immediately beneath me.

As you descend from the main pass and journey onwards through the various camps, you have the ranges of Shum-shum on your right, which, by the time they have circled completely round behind you, are called the Munsoorie Heights. These form a complete natural rampart, seven hundred feet in almost perpendicular altitude, immediately on the left-hand side of your road, and are strongly fortified along the crest.

The Munsoorie range has been pierced by a long tunnel, through which the Isthmus can be reached ; but you would,

in the first instance, pursue your original course, and, soon after passing this opening, you would find the block of the mountain broken and affording approaches through detached masses to the sea. Here are built the European barracks ; but, as I said before, being on the wrong side of the promontory, none of the delicious and invigorating gales that always fan the Point can be felt here during the nine hot months of the year.

Beyond the barracks, again, and at the extremity of the position opposite to the main pass, a bay with a good beach is reached : this is called Holkat's Bay ; and one is tempted to hope that here at any rate some fresh air will be obtainable. But no ; for the further end of this cove is as it were embraced by a great black arm thrown out from the parent mountain which causes the same death-like stillness to reign in Holkat's Bay as elsewhere.

This spur is known as the Heights of Mashag, whose most elevated point is five hundred feet from the sea. A road leads up to the top, and several bungalows have been erected upon it. Here, at last, you find again the long-lost wind from the sea ; and the climate is even superior to that of the Point.

During a portion of my career, I lived, the solitary occupant of this hill, in a pretty little bungalow that just crowned its summit. This great rocky eminence was beautiful—yes, extremely beautiful. Rising black and rugged out of an ocean of marvellous clearness, I could sit in my thatched verandah, sheltered from the sun and soothed by the zephyrs, whilst the fishermen appeared below me supported on such tiny canoes that, what with the brilliancy of the atmosphere

and the mirror-like reflective stillness of the waters, they appeared as though floating in mid-air surrounded by quantities of fish and flocks of white seagulls that were busily helping to catch them.

The effect of the pyramidal height on which I sat was enhanced by a gigantic flagstaff which sprang into the air almost from my very doorstep. Tall and solid as the mightiest mainmast, it was used for running up signal-flags and conversing with the ships at sea. On its yardarm generally perched a pair of beautiful ospreys, which would descend like lightning from their dizzy post of observation and snatch from the greedy seagulls the fishes of their choice.

Such a scene could only be matched, not surpassed, by the effect of night.

Notwithstanding the dew—which, though copious and perhaps unhealthy, was too warm to be felt—I would always have my cot placed out at night under the light of the star-lit skies.

The signalmen were gone : I was alone upon the hill.

The deep black ravines that ran almost up to my bedside, if they were striking by daylight, now assumed a mysterious and unfathomable aspect. In every direction the existence of man was concealed by the intervention of mountainous rocks, whose scorched and torn contours told plainly of the agonies of Nature in past times.

Anon the moon would rise from behind some scowling buttress, and vainly endeavour to extract a smile from the heartbroken genius of the place. Grand and impressive the scene might be—cheerful, never.

Such were, and still are, the days and nights on Mashag.

Returning from this place, we can, on getting into the Camp again, visit the famous tanks, which I shall describe further on; and then, by passing through the tunnel which is opposite to them and is a quarter of a mile in length, we can wind our way among the mountains and arrive, after a mile or two of travel, at the Isthmus, the immediate entrance to which, from this side, is through a second and much shorter tunnel.

The Isthmus consists of a good-sized plain of forty or fifty acres in extent. The exact space and size have been determined by the engineers who have connected the sea at the end of the harbour with the waters on the other side of the neck of the promontory by a high rampart, or curtain of masonry, which takes in the out-running spurs that form the huge natural bastions of this part of the fortifications.

And now I will ask you to imagine a vast invading army approaching our citadel from Arabia Felix, the only land-side of Aden. For many days they would have marched over a perfectly-flat and generally-sandy country, till they would at last find themselves on a constantly-narrowing isthmus, terminated suddenly by the uncompromising wall already described, and which, together with the lofty pile of mountains starting out of the sea behind it, is bristling with cannon, mortars, and other engines of war. On their right would be the little haven, with our shipping; and on their left the open ocean. They must either storm the works or retire. It will not take the traveller long to mount this rampart, whence he can at once obtain an exhaustive view of the situation—in one

direction the flat open country, with the sea on each side ; in the other an amphitheatre enclosed by lofty hills, and studded with the barracks and houses of the large detachment of European and native soldiers who inhabit this first front of the first line of defences.

Across the *terre pleine* of the Isthmus, and opposite to the mouth of the tunnel by which we have entered, is a narrow postern for egress. This passage is strongly defended by nature as well as by art ; and as we emerge from it we find ourselves almost in the water of the extreme end of the harbour.

Here we must stand still for a moment and collect our perhaps dazzled faculties for a final look round, without which we may even now return to our ship with but a hazy idea of where we have been to or what we have seen.

Immediately to our right the road makes a sudden twist and is promptly closed by a barrier-gate wedged between the rock and the sea, and affording no more space than is required for a loaded camel to pass through as they come in long strings, bearing wood, hay, and other provisions from the interior.

At this point is placed a sentry, who is sometimes stolen upon and struck to the heart by the murderous dagger of some wild Arab devotee, who looks upon such a cruel deed as a sure passport to heaven. Such is ever the religion of bigots ! Close at hand one may observe the "Pier of Obstruction," which, however valuable as a military work, was to me only known as a splendid place to bathe off, for, notwithstanding the depth of the water, no one using it to dive from has ever been molested by sharks. In front of

you winds the highroad by which you are to return to Steamer Point after seeing all of Aden that you possibly can see during the short time allowed for the necessities of your vessel.

Almost at starting on your homeward course, you pass, on your left-hand, the corkscrew ascent to the main pass, up which you went in the morning, and which is the only road by which an army could enter the works should they be landed from ships in the port.

If I have not written in vain, the reader will by this time have perceived that Aden is a huge mass of rocky mountains rising precipitously out of the sea and connected with the mainland of Arabia by a tract of sand.

There are a great many deep wells sunk in the crater-plain of Aden—two or three of which, strange to say, yield excellent drinking-water. But the greater number produce a brackish fluid which, though beautifully clear and sparkling to the eye, is bad to the taste, and causes cancer in the stomachs of those natives who, in the absence of better drink, are forced to partake of it.

The water-supply of Aden was formerly dependent on what was brought either in canals, or on camels from the interior during times of peace.

When, during hostilities with the natives, these sources were cut off, there only remained the mere nominal quantity obtainable from the wells and whatever more there might be stored in the great tanks before mentioned.

Some of these great reservoirs are of immense antiquity, but they have been greatly added to and increased in number by the British Government in modern times. They

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themselves, together with all other vestiges of man, would be swept into this extremity of the Red Sea, called the Gulf of Aden.

As it is, the cataract is generally sufficient to fill the empty reservoirs to overflowing. Then the sky clears; and, if you can find a dry spot in your own house, you may sit and watch the little white puffs of dust that mark the houses falling in the Bazaar.

The officers' quarters are built well enough or are sufficiently like sieves not to come down bodily; but there is a good deal of havoc among the stables and outhouses on these occasions when Nature replenishes the cisterns.

But, in addition to what is done for us by the wells, the tanks, and water brought from the interior, the thirst of Aden is further slaked by the efforts of powerful condensers which, by their steam-power, convert the ocean into gallons of refreshing beverage and endless tons of ice made by steam. My own opinion, based upon experience, is that condensed water is not altogether wholesome. The human stomach seems to thrive best on a mixture swarming with microscopic whales, toads, snakes, and other monsters invisible to the naked eye.

I think I have now fully described Aden such as it might be seen any day by the more intelligent and enterprising of the P. & O. passengers, or even as it might appear to the vast majority of such exiled dwellers upon the rock as only wake up now and then to notice something. But there are others who go to this place and are even obliged to reside there. I have myself encountered in this weird region ardent sportsmen, contemplative philosophers, and men

with brilliant and yet not distempered imaginations. For them may be said to exist another and still more interesting Aden, an account of which will fitly open the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

IT cannot be denied that there are many and serious impediments to the enjoyment of life during a prolonged residence at Aden.

If you are among those condemned to live in the crater, the climate, during nine months of the year, is sufficient to excuse any act of despair to which a man might be driven.

Secondly, there is the sense of confinement naturally engendered by having to live in frowning fortifications out of whose portals you are forbidden to emerge.

Thirdly, owing to the remoteness of the place, which can only be approached by a more or less lengthy sea-voyage, people make the mistake of selling or giving away everything they hold dear on being ordered for this station, and thus find themselves cast upon these burning rocks with such feelings of smouldering woe that they can never think or speak of Aden except as "that hole." Many excellent and clever people sink, at this place, into a state of existence calculated to sap the strongest mind.

The monotony of sitting in the same house all day and every day is only varied by an evening drive or ride along the highroad to Steamer Point and back.

The prospect of such an existence is surely enough to appal the boldest ; and I really feel that it would be unkind

even to draw the dismal picture if there were no means of possible amelioration. But there are many.

Allow me, for instance, to describe my own solitary little pic-nic, in the middle of the hot weather, to the top of Shumshum. Failing in my endeavours to rouse anybody from the depths of their own gloom sufficiently to go with me, I decided on a solitary ramble to see what it might be like up there. Previous to my own departure, I despatched a couple of servants with a basket containing a good breakfast, the book I was reading, a strong pair of binoculars, and a couch to recline on during the heat of the day.

At the first streak of early dawn, I issued from my quarters, accompanied only by my faithful dogs, lately imported from England. Two, called respectively Hector and Miss Sweetie, were remarkably fine greyhounds ; whilst Cora was a Berkshire mastiff, from whom I hoped to obtain some cross-bred puppies. My way led into a deep and wide recess in the rocks at the Native-Infantry end of the Camp, opposite to the main pass.

Almost at starting I met an unclad savage driving a donkey loaded with skins full of water. This vicious animal charged at my mastiff, and then, evidently mistaking her for a lioness, turned panic-stricken and fled. The inflated skins performed a somersault to the ground, and the water was, of course, all lost.

Being always full of consideration for the natives, I presented the owner of my assailant with sixpence, which was just three times the value of the lost cargo.

He contemplated the pretty little coin as it lay in his extended palm, and said : " Is this all ? "

Quick as thought, I whipped it out of his hand and bestowed this piece of silver on a still blacker and less clad subject of the Queen who happened to be passing at the moment.

The astonished pagan received this unexpected windfall very differently from the proud owner of the ass. For an instant he gazed with ecstasy on the silver disc, and then, raising it to his lips, kissed it passionately.

Such are some of the varieties to be found in the Somali character.

Leaving behind me the little gaping throng that had assembled to witness this trifling scene, I soon found myself close to the ancient temples which terminate this corner of the valley, and immediately before me rose the steep pathway that led to Shum-shum.

After climbing some five hundred feet, I had conquered the lower heights, and found myself on a spacious upward-sloping plain, from which an extensive view was to be obtained in all directions except onwards, where the topmost peaks shut out all but themselves and the sky from the sight of me, their solitary beholder. I looked, and was at once deeply impressed with the melancholy and lifeless grandeur of the panorama offered to my contemplation. Black was certainly the prevailing tint of the mighty block rising from the blue sea and piercing the azure sky. Yet, in the softened light of the early rising sun was the sombre hue relieved by an extraordinary variety of even brilliant colours. The whole of one steep mountain-side, for instance, showed almost as green as grass; whilst another, including a large valley shelving down to the Point road, was of a bright

red and studded plentifully with bushes, deep-rooted and boasting of more verdure than could have been expected in such a situation. Then there were plenty of light-coloured strata and patches to be seen among the blackened peaks and ridges. So that the scenery, though always severe in the extreme, was not monotonous.

As I stood taking note of all that was around, above, and below me, my ear was suddenly saluted by the sharp barking of a fox.

I instantly secured my dogs, and hid with them behind the nearest boulder.

The cry of the Aden fox is different from that of his still smaller Indian brother : the latter has a pleasant little chuckle like a person laughing ; whilst the former utters but one loud, harsh, and prolonged note. In colour, also, they are different, the Indian variety being of a silver-grey and with a black tip to his brush ; he of Aden, on the other hand, is a pale-drab colour all over. As I could imitate exactly the note of this little beast, I now proceeded to call him up from the precipitous depths in which he was meandering ; and very soon his enquiring head popped up within a few yards of where I was concealed. Our eyes met for an instant, and then he vanished instantly by the way he had come.

I may here mention that I succeeded in killing three of these foxes within the " Works," and found them all decidedly larger than any to be met with on the plains of India. I did not slip at the one I am now writing about, as he was on the brink of a precipice which would probably have proved fatal to my dogs. On the disappearance of the fox, I continued my way along the comparatively-level pathway, and

was soon at the foot of the final abrupt rise leading to the topmost point of Aden. The ascent, if rough, is not at all difficult, though it would be so, quite at the last, were it not for the long flight of steps cut out of the solid rock on the top of which the hut of the signallers is perched.

The view from this spot is extremely fine, and enables the beholder to see, with one sweeping glance, the shape of the Rock of Aden, together with all its details, from Steamer Point to the little white specks on the sands of the Isthmus which mark the cavalry-outpost of Kormaksa that it has been deemed safe, of late years, to locate some four miles beyond the curtain and postern-gate already described in a former page.

Seaward, of course, the prospect, in this clear atmosphere and at a sheer height of eighteen hundred feet, strikes the eye as grandly spacious. The ships—dotted about in all directions and, owing to the distance, apparently motionless—look very picturesque; whilst little streaks of smoke announce the whereabouts of those travelling by steam.

Having spent the day in the enjoyment of a delightful change of climate, I proceeded to return home by the light of the moon.

Who is there that will not bear witness to the splendour shed upon the most squalid surroundings by the orb of night? Think, then, of the effect of her rays as they flooded the land and sea such as I have endeavoured to place them before the mental vision of the reader. What by daylight had looked grand and imposing, appeared by night gigantic and strangely overpowering. I could hardly recognise the

various promontories and cavernous abysses which I had passed in the morning.

At last I reached the stone on that middle height on which I had sat and held limited and hypocritical converse with the fox in the early dawn. Here I once more reposed and awaited such thoughts as might come to me.

The scene was to me the justification of the many legends devoutly believed in by the Arabs concerning this remarkable corner of their native land, now a portion of the British Empire. These people, being the children of the Sun, are not so browbeaten by his rays as to be unable to notice the latent beauties of Nature.

Here they assert that, before the curse, bloomed the Garden of Eden, as believed in by the followers of Mahomed; whilst one dark rock is pointed out as the spot on which Cain slew his brother. In those far-off cradle-times of the human race, they believed that Aden was the spot chosen by the Almighty for His most lavish blessings. Copiously watered by the rain of heaven, they think that then the abrupt hills and deep valleys were covered with verdure and running waterfalls, and that a line of mighty kings ruled here, surrounded by a luxurious and splendid court. At last, however, intoxicated by happiness, the people forgot God and became steeped in wickedness. Nevertheless, all went merrily till the reign of King Add, the most splendid and the most depraved of all the monarchs that the world had yet seen. Under him, bejewelled Aden glittered in the sea. But her beauty was as the beauty of a harlot—fatal, poisonous, rotten! At last the measure of her sins was full, and, as she had been gloriously

endowed, so should she now be suddenly and fearfully scourged.

In the midst of the most gorgorous *fête* that the mind of man can conceive, when the whole mountain-pile of hill and dale was decked and illuminated so as to resemble one vast throne on the summit of which sat King Add in indescribable splendour, the fatal knell was struck. It was midnight, and the revellers were indulging in their maddest pranks and worst joys, when suddenly from every mountain-peak spouted torrents of liquid flame, to be met only by a deluge of fire pouring from the skies of molten brass above. In an instant of affrighted agony, every soul passed from earth to a dreadful doom; and Aden has ever since been peopled but by passing aliens. Yet once, the tradition assures us, every year, at the darkest moment of some moonless midnight, the scene is for one instant brilliantly illuminated, and Aden appears to the favoured seer in the garb she wore at the instant of her destruction. During that lightning-flash King Add may be discerned still sitting upon his golden throne, but bowed down with ages of that remorse which is not repentance—for he still gazes with palsied frenzy on the more-than-human loveliness of the dancing-girls as they gracefully bend and sway before him.

Such is the blinding vision which comes and goes annually, in the twinkling of an eye as a warning and a promise to the faithful. From it they are to learn the punishment of sin, and yet be able to foster the hope that the days of expiation will at last be accomplished, when the apparition of beauty will suddenly become a reality and

Aden will once more become and for ever after remain
THE GARDEN OF EDEN!

Everything, even the wildest legend, has some foundation; and I thought this story was well based upon the mysterious and striking aspect of the colossal ruins of Nature in the midst of which I sat. Doubtless many a superstitious and ignorant Arab has been so far worked upon as actually to see, by means of an optical delusion, the phantom-spectacle believed in by so many. For my part, I was content to think that Aden deserved to be described rather more elaborately than as

“THAT HOLE!”

But Shum-shum, with its heights and depths, is by no means the only place to which the weary inhabitants of this place may repair to spend a happy day.

There is Gold Mohur Valley, which is well worthy of a visit.

Situated at the foot of the above-named great peak, it takes its name from the numerous trees and bushes, chiefly, though not all, of the acacia tribe, which are sufficiently independent of rain to maintain, with the aid of the copious dew that falls, a stunted existence among the dark rocks of this wide and spacious basin.

Chief amongst these modest triumphs of the vegetable kingdom, stands the Gold-Mohur-tree, so well known for its gorgeous beauty to all who have ever dwelt in Bombay.

The valley is best reached by boats from the sea; and the traveller is at once greeted, on landing, by the distant view of a comfortable little chalet erected for the benefit of those who wish to pic-nic there. The best time to choose

for going to Gold Mohur Valley is in the middle of the cold weather, just after any rain there may have been.

Then, in addition to enjoying the extra freshness of the gnarled and knotted trees, you may search for that exquisite white flower known as the Aden lily. It is as large, elaborate, and lovely as any to be met with in the hothouses of England. For years these things of beauty have been hiding themselves in the drought-stricken earth, when at last some sweet showers fall and a garden blooms in a single night.

I should think it might satisfy anyone's ideas of romance to assist an English sylph to pick her dainty way among the dark and solitary rocks in quest of these floral gems !

"But we are not romantic!" exclaim the brave subalterns of the marching regiment quartered there, "and we hate legends about King Add and all those niggers. So what are *we* to do?"

To these I reply by advising them to cultivate sport.

Since the outpost has been established at Kormuksa, anyone may get out on to the open sands of the Isthmus, where he can exercise his greyhounds, horses, and falcons, besides meeting occasionally with something for them to hunt.

One evening I proceeded with Colonel Gordon, his wife, and another friend for a ride in this direction for the purpose of exercising two first-rate English greyhounds that I had brought out with me a week or two before.

Just as the sun was set, a small object started, like a swiftly-propelled cricket-ball, from before my horse's feet. The two dogs, Hector and Sweetie, at once gave chase to what proved to be one of the hares peculiar to this

country. It was very small, light-coloured, and endowed with such marvellous speed and endurance as is granted only to the desert-born. Considering the high class of the two greyhounds, this was the most extraordinary course I ever saw—Sweetie, a Wiltshire dog eighteen months old and in excellent condition, was run to a standstill; and Hector, a splendid scion of the Jason strain, eventually killed without her.

I was on a remarkably fine Arab horse; but, even less well mounted, there would have been no difficulty in keeping up, for, the ground being quite good and flat, one could always take short cuts, and leave all the turning to the dog, who only triumphed after the severest struggle he ever had in his life.

We took the hare home, and, when it was cleaned, with the skin on, it only weighed one pound and three-quarters. Yet, owing chiefly to the way it had been killed and, next, to the smallness of its bones, every atom of it was delicious, and it made an excellent and satisfying second-course for five of us.

Such skill had it shown in the art of flight, that I was afraid I should lose my valuable greyhound, who was above all price. For a week at least he had to be muzzled every time that it was deemed necessary he should leave his couch, and his dinner had to be held up to his mouth when he ate. Every portion of his body was so sore with the wrenches and turns he had been obliged to make, that it was unsafe to touch him with his jaws free. I had seen this dog kill hares quite single-handed on the steep hills of Alton Albany, in Ayrshire; and subsequently he did the

same over the cruellest rocks and chasms to be found in India.

We may assume, then, that the Aden hare can run well enough to afford some excitement to such as care not exclusively for lawn-tennis and afternoon teas. Besides, there can be no doubt that the asperities of the Arab temper are softening daily and with great rapidity towards the once-hated English "Kaffir." In practice, though not in theory, they are already so much attached to us and our rupees that I should myself feel perfectly safe in wandering alone as far beyond Kormaksa as it would be possible for a good horse and my greyhounds to take me during the day.

Of course, I might have been assassinated in those wilds, but I am more likely to be murdered in London; and surely it was better to run the remote risk of death in single combat with a Bedouin fanatic than to recline in an armchair and slowly poison myself with alcohol?

The difficulty, in my time, was not with the native tribes, but with those in authority over me.

I never got high enough up to understand the conduct of the Olympians.

If I applied for leave to ride beyond the limits, permission was refused me with a warmth that persuaded me I was dear to the gods; but when I aspired to sitting among and consorting with them on the Heights, they seemed to take a sudden dislike to me, and their manner became strongly repellent.

I think it is a pity that persons who are not of much value should be prohibited from rambling about the

country and making friends with the inhabitants. The real wild man likes a sporting Sahib with a lot of nice dogs and guns about him. At all events, both in Arabia and Afghanistan, they always seemed very much pleased to see me—excepting, of course, the lower and more brutish of the population, with whom I had, occasionally, altercations.

I was quartered at Aden in 18—, and formed one of the little force sent out against the Turkish General who commanded at Saana, and who, with or without the connivance of the supreme authority at Constantinople, took to making war on the allies of England.

This led to our marching out to Lahej, where, at a distance of twenty miles, reigned the most important of our friendly and threatened sultans.

This famous campaign, for which no medals or other decorations have yet been given, is so thoroughly known to history that I shall only endeavour to amuse the reader by describing what I saw of the country and the people.

The first place we came to was Shaik Othman, about seven miles from Aden, where we arrived without any incidents worthy of record. Here there is a large kind of bungalow, of the origin of which I know nothing; but it is extremely convenient for anyone who can get leave to go and spend the day there. As the ground is quite flat and good going for horses, if you like your company you can make a very pleasant excursion to this place.

From Shaik Othman to Lahej the country only varied in that, here and there, tracts of sandhills twenty or thirty feet high were to be met with. Though these hillocks were so soft and deep as to prevent any traffic over them, they

in no way impeded our progress, as they were more or less detached and the ground was good in between.

As we approached Lahej, cultivation was going on; and I remarked that every ploughman was armed with his long matchlock, and, in most cases, the coil of cotton necessary for firing it was kept lighted.

Lahej, in the distance, presents an imposing appearance, with its tall white palace rising from the centre. But a nearer inspection reveals that it is all of mud throughout, the palatial residence only being whitewashed.

In many respects we had a pleasant time of it whilst in camp at this place. There was not much shooting to be got, but still there was some. Bustards, I believe, were seen, but were too wild to come up with; and the gazelles, also, were very wary; but several pretty partridges were shot, not unlike the "Frenchmen" to be met with in England, only of a bluish tint.

It was during one of these shooting-excursions that a circumstance occurred which showed the severity of Arab law—whenever there might happen to be any at all. A game-pie which it was confidently asserted would turn out the *chef-d'œuvre* of the celebrated Meera, cook to Colonel Evans, had been prepared for the encouragement of the party.

They started after an early breakfast and in great spirits. The latter, however, were destined to flag, owing to the scarcity and shyness of the game. It was, therefore, eventually decided just to taste the pasty and then return to camp and have a regular State luncheon, which should be wound up with this exquisite confection.

It is no exaggeration to say that, as the moment drew nearer and nearer for the enjoyment of the *bonne bouche*, there was a good deal of eye-twinkling and hand-rubbing, and the word "pie" was uttered often and unctuously by men who were still hungry and had saved a place for the last delicious morsel !

At last the word was given to bring the much-coveted dish ; and, sure enough, after a harrowing delay, it came—held up between the finger and thumb of the agonised Meera, whose feelings of dismay were too great for words and could only be expressed by signs. It was of tin, and not only empty, but it shone as though it had been polished by the tongue of some ravenous dog.

For a moment a sort of stupor seemed to hold every intending-reveller spellbound, only to give place to looks and cries of rage.

The Interpreter and General Manager of His Highness the Sultan was instantly summoned to investigate the circumstances attending the heartless rape. Standing at the door of the tent, he cast a rapid and searching glance around him : swiftly his piercing eye fell on the graceful form of an Arab who, clad in a handsome silken bournouse, was slumbering under the shade of an adjacent cart.

" Behold," said this proud official, " the villain to whom I myself handed over the pie of the Government this very morning !" And with this he violently tugged the sleeper with one hand whilst he held up the empty platter with the other.

Altogether it was such an unwonted and terrifying tableau that met the gaze of the startled thief, that, in the flurry of

the moment, he glared at the rifled tin and then tapped first his lips and then his stomach, so that natives and foreigners alike might know what had become of the missing paste.

This naïve confession, however, instead of mollifying the company, produced such a storm of indignation that the poor man of the desert was afraid to stick to the truth, and, as soon as he could articulate words, they were to the effect that he had not so much as smelt this tempting concoction.

“Liar!” shrieked the Interpreter as he fell upon the culprit and tore open his mouth with both hands and then literally stopped it up with his nose. “I can smell the whole pie!” he continued, after inhaling deeply. “It is here! here!” He then added a word or two in Arabic and turned towards us to make further apologies in Hindustani.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate porter, assuming a sitting position, set up such a frightful and prolonged howling that I at last turned to the Interpreter and asked him how it was that a man who had shown such levity in eating delicacies prepared for the higher powers should now display such agonies of grief at the recollection of his crime.

“Why, of course!” replied this energetic officer of State, “I have sentenced him to have his right-hand cut off: therefore he is weeping.”

“Good heavens!” I exclaimed. “And do you mean to say that the Sultan would inflict such a terrible sentence for so slight a fault?”

“Certainly!” replied the man. “The pie was Government property; therefore the thief who stole it could receive no less a punishment than the one now awarded.”

“ Well,” I remarked to the meeting generally and to the owners of pasty in particular, “ do you not think that to have sat for several minutes under the belief that your hand is to be chopped off, is sufficient expiation for having devoured the remains of this most toothsome conglomeration ? ”

This proposition was assented to with generous alacrity by my brothers in arms ; and the graceful form of the liberated delinquent was soon seen disappearing with great speed through the mirage of the desert-plain.

After being encamped for about a fortnight outside the capital of Lahej, a further advance was determined upon towards the far-distant city of Saana, where lay the large and hostile army of the Turks ; for, anomalous as it may appear, we were actually at war with a general and troops sent out from Constantinople to Arabia whilst professions of peace and eternal love were being made between the Cabinets of the Sublime Porte and London. No doubt a diplomatic mind would be able to explain away this trifling discrepancy in two words ; but I cannot find those magic syllables, and must therefore content myself by stating facts exactly and expressing my own thoughts truthfully.

Our first march was of eight miles, and brought us to a village called Huski.

The country through which we passed was irrigated, and, wherever the water reached, the crops were of extraordinary luxuriance.

A grain called jowari seemed the staple product—at all events at this time of the year. Selecting an average stalk of this corn, I measured it and found its length to be

thirteen feet ten inches. Tracts of land thus covered would form a safe retreat for even the largest wild-beasts, provided the mountains were near enough to afford an asylum at harvest-time ; but I had no leisure to do more than course such foxes as I could find prowling about in the early morning—before mankind had got afield.

Of course, I was not without some interest in the character of the mixed Oriental army that we were advancing against; and, curiously enough, I happened to have engaged, as a private servant, a strange being who eventually became known to my friends as *Abdoola*, or the *Aden Orphan*, and who had actually served as the faithful henchman of a Turkish officer at *Saana* itself.

I have no hesitation in saying the *Orphan* was one of those unsolvable enigmas which so often stand sphinx-like before us.

Born of Indian parents, on the *Rock of Aden*, death deprived him, at an early age, of both father and mother ; so that, for want of care and proper nourishment, his great heart became enclosed in a stunted and misshapen body, whilst his acute mind had never received a single hint that education might mean the road to greatness.

The force of will alone could have carried this feeble creature to *Saana* and back ; and then think of his natural tact and cleverness in avoiding death by the *bastinado* !—for the honest *Orphan*, through lack of proper explanations, had grown up with the idea that everything belonged to him. For instance, he tried the *Brahma lock* of my treasure-chest so severely that it refused to open even to the right key for ever after, and I had to get a new one in consequence. On

being remonstrated with, he showed no signs of shame—on the contrary, his manner was that of a young man who had been kept out of his own in spite of everything he had done to help himself.

One evening, when this interesting individual had made the final arrangement of my dogs' dinners, he said, shaking his head reflectively: "This is *exactly* how I used to feed my master in the Turkish Army! Yes, yes! there is no difference whatever—chowpatties (*i.e.*, flour-cakes) broken up in a dish; then comes the mutton, chopped small and mixed therewith; and, finally, over the whole is poured the gravy, mingled with the onions and other nice vegetables boiled in it. There is no difference—absolutely none—I can swear to it!" said the Orphan.

"Dear me!" I exclaimed, opening my eyes in admiration and astonishment. "Then these people are really first-rate soldiers and can rough it splendidly—they are not like us?"

"Like you? Well, do you know that their big general, when in the field, lives in a small bell-tent made of a single sheet of canvas precisely the same as you have got for your black cook?"

On hearing this I became full of envy, until it occurred to me that I was born in England, like all my ancestors before me, and that I was formed by nature for the Arctic regions.

To oblige the taxpayer, I had penetrated far into the deserts of Arabia Felix (for it is in this division that Aden is situated); and therefore I concluded he would wish to maintain a tent for me in which I could be kept alive at any rate till I had finished the campaign.

In return for the really-valuable information given me by this retainer, I allowed him, next evening, for a treat, to accompany Lieutenant Banff on a bird's-nesting expedition among the distant and straggling acacia-trees.

I watched their departure, accompanied as they were by my mastiffs and greyhounds. All looked very happy together at starting.

On their return, however, I saw at once that unforeseen circumstances had attended this adventure. The features of the usually-truculent Orphan seemed filled with a kind of sour disapproval of everything; whilst a desire to laugh was all I could make out from the face of his temporary master.

This, briefly told, was what had occurred:—On arriving at the foot of a babul-tree, taller and more densely clothed with thorns even than the others, the practised eye of the gallant Lieutenant perceived a nest near the top of it.

“Now, Abdoola, do you think you can get up to that bird's-nest?”

“Can I? Why, of course I can. I should like to see the tree in Arabia, or anywhere else, that I could not walk up like stairs!”

And, on this occasion at any rate, he was as good as his word; for, to do him justice, he cared nothing for his skin, and his costume belonged to me.

“Two eggs! Shahbash! (hurrah!) there are two eggs—I can feel them with my finger! Truly our fate (nusseeb) is great in finding eggs this time of the year! But how am I to bring them down in safety?”

“Why, you booby, put them in your mouth, of course.”

“True, true!—the Sahibs know everything!” And, having

placed the delicate treasures carefully into the receptacle indicated, our friend prepared to descend with much caution.

But he had hardly commenced his downward course when he suddenly came fluttering and sputtering to the ground, regardless of what might happen to him in the way of broken bones or scratches.

In truth, owing to the moisture of the new climate, the two eggs, which were quite rotten, had gone off, each with a little explosion, against the palate of the poor Orphan, who now stood listening to the recital, apparently struck dumb with indignation !

This occurred, I think, at Zaida, the furthest point that we were destined to reach, and about forty miles from Aden. Owing to the brightness of the sand, the brilliant green of the tall crops, the contour of the hills, the blueness of the sky, and the clearness of the atmosphere, I considered the beauty of the place striking and of a type that was quite new to me. But, alas ! it was also famous for a fever of its own of more deadly virulence than any other known even in eastern latitudes. Many suffered terribly from it ; and some, including the reigning Sultan, who had accompanied the force, died under its malignant attacks. For this reason alone, a move must have been made to the front, without delay ; but, unfortunately for our martial ardour, peace was concluded just at this time, and we all marched back rapidly to Aden, there to resume the monotonous tenour of our lives, which so few will take the trouble to vary even with those sports and pastimes which lie ready to their hand.

The sea-fishing, for instance, is excellent in its way ; for

the finny tribes are extraordinarily abundant, and, I have been assured, are of greater variety than can be found assembled together in any other corner of the ocean throughout the globe.

I myself can speak to the tiny little variegated fishes that I saw swimming about in the drawingroom-aquarium of the P. & O. Company's Agent. I had no idea, till I saw them, that the ocean contained anything so delicate, brilliant, and lovely. I think they are called "sun-fish." Imagine half-a-crown (nothing thicker), furnished with a tail and two little fins, swimming about edgewise and reflecting every hue of the rainbow in golden metallic colours: then you will realise what I saw in that pretty glass tank! It is only with the greatest difficulty that these little beauties can be caught alive; so that they are seldom seen even by those who live on the shores of the seas they inhabit.

But what will the reader think of the undoubted appearance of the great sea-serpent itself within a few hundred yards of the beach where we all used to bathe during the cooler hours of the morning and evening?

Till a few days ago I was one of the most devout disbelievers that the world ever contained regarding the existence of this monster; yet have I at last been really forced to change this one of my most cherished opinions! My conversion was on this wise:—

Whilst engaged on this chapter, I happened to remark, in conversation with Major H——, on the great variety of fish to be met with at Aden; and this led to his relating to me the following circumstances, which I have his permission to repeat as nearly as possible in his own words:—

“One early morning, while sitting in the verandah at the artillery-mess-bungalow down at Steamer Point, we all suddenly saw a strange serpent-like form, only a few hundred yards off from the shore, raise itself perpendicularly out of the sea, and, in this upright position, take a survey of all it could see. Having maintained this attitude for several seconds, it went down with a great splash, but only to rise again in the like manner close to the same spot. This manœuvre was repeated several times before it disappeared altogether ; and, as there were plenty of binoculars at hand, we all had an excellent view of the creature, whatever it may have been. It raised itself at least seven feet out of the water, and its body was as thick as that of a man. All the officers present who in the course of their travels had made the acquaintance of every known inhabitant of the ocean, unanimously declared that anything like this beast they had never seen ; and one and all were firmly convinced that we had most unexpectedly seen the great sea-serpent.”

My friend then mentioned the names of the rest of the party, many of whom are still alive ; and, in speaking of some of them, he said : “ You know their scrupulous veracity as well as their firmness of character which would render it a hopeless task even for the greatest of sea-serpents to set them agape though it had come out of the water in pursuit of them ; so you can apply, if you like, to those I have named for confirmation of my story.”

Fortunately, however, my friend himself possesses all the qualities above mentioned in such a pre-eminent degree that I do not consider any further evidence required as far as I am concerned.

Should, however, any other of the eye-witnesses send an account to the *Field* of what they saw on this occasion, I have no doubt their testimony will be highly acceptable to the public.

I suppose the great objection to the existence of the huge marine-reptile so much talked of, and so often described by the sea-going population, is the persistent absence of even the smallest relic of such a creature, such as one might reasonably suppose must, if it existed at all, be cast, from time to time, on some storm-beaten coast.

Still, I do not feel inclined, on merely negative evidence, to pooh-pooh all the testimony, given in many instances by highly-trustworthy witnesses, on this subject. I therefore beg leave to make these two propositions:—Firstly, that the great sea-serpent, especially when about to die, keeps to the very lowest depths of the ocean. Secondly, that perhaps it *has no bones*.

And now I think the time has come for me to imitate the sea-serpent—take a final dive, and disappear from Aden for ever!

“Well,” says the reader, “I am glad they are both gone at last!”

But we are *not* gone! The great snake will surely be seen again; and, as for myself, behold me, after a swim of but nine hours, stranded, as it were, upon the Isle of Perim!

When I say that I consider this the most important island in the world, I must be held as considering England, Australia, and Africa, which is also now surrounded by water, as continents.

Immensely important as this post has ever been, it is of

such daily-increasing value that it has already become of vital consequence to the British Empire. Many years ago the fact that it was entirely without fresh water was considered a fatal blot on its character ; but now so great have been the strides made in the art of "condensing," that we may safely drink the ocean.

When I reflect on the position occupied by this islet and the great part it will inevitably play in those vast and stirring dramas which must surely be enacted—though I may not live to see them—I cannot insult the intelligence of my readers by supposing they do not wish to hear anything about "that outlandish sort of place where there is no society."

Does anyone care to learn how Queen Victoria became possessed of this sort of little "Chubb's lock" to the Red Sea ?

The following account of the transaction is, I am certain, veracious in all particulars, because it is what "everybody" told me when I was stationed at Aden. Now, what "everybody says," we know, must be true, as well as simple and intelligible ; whereas State Documents, through being the inspired work of great geniuses, are often beyond the comprehension of plain folks like you and me, dear reader.

For two hundred years, then, let us say, France and England fixed their eyes ravenously on this tempting little morsel of rock. Neither wanted it for herself—oh, dear no ! Each so much wished the other to have it : only it would be so wrong, so dreadfully wicked, to take it from the original inhabitants—the two old seagulls who annually addled their eggs there !

Such was the heroic "idea" of one nation and the scrupulous sense of justice of the other. I dare say, during the long period above mentioned, it was occupied alternately, in an informal sort of way, by each of these great and benevolent gamekeepers in turn.

But, just at the time when the development of steam rendered Perim a place of incalculable importance, it had drifted back into the possession of the same two old sea-gulls, who seemed, to say the least of it, very long-lived.

Meanwhile the bowings and scrapings of the two dread competitors became so energetic that their politeness assumed an almost flurried tone.

At last came a fateful evening, within the memory of the present generation, when (as everybody says) Colonel Coghlan, the Resident of Aden, gave an evening party.

Amongst other honoured guests was the captain of a small French war-vessel, who (according to the story) was so incautious as to mention to a fascinating English lady that he was about to proceed in the morning to plant the French flag on Perim.

Delilah told Colonel Coghlan !

Ah !

Mercifully, the noble Colonel thought more of his country's good than of all the punishments that might be inflicted upon him by the various governments, local and otherwise, which so painfully remind one of "too many cooks." He therefore instantly wrote on a slip of paper: "Proceed *at once* and plant the British flag on Perim." And, without any sign of emotion, slipped the precious order into the hand of

another guest—the Lieutenant of his own yacht. He was in time, and Perim was saved. But I must leave the faces of our opponents to the imagination of the readers, when they arrived with *their* flag all ready.

This is the story always told at Aden regarding the acquisition of Perim. It may not be true in every particular; and the fact that neither the Colonel was disgraced nor the lady's beautiful hair cut off by superior authority as a punishment for too much zeal, certainly does sow some suspicion in my own mind. On the other hand, the narrative fits right well with all our solemn assertions, made at the time, that our only object in annexing such a waterless and expensive piece of rock was the maintenance of a lighthouse which should be secured against the two formidable old seagulls by means of a wall and a small garrison. As to fortifications or anything of that sort, could Madame La France suppose for an instant, etc., etc., etc.?

Thus were Gallic susceptibilities soothed, and England remained in possession. But, owing to her profuse declarations to the contrary, she was unable to place the island in such a state of defence as the exigencies of the position demand; and it has, consequently, ever remained in a forlorn and pitiable condition. Still it is ours!

On the 29th of July, 18—, I was borne by Her Majesty's war-steamer *Dalhousie* into the safe and snug little harbour of Perim.

The hour was noon; and it was snug indeed. The thermometer registered just seven degrees more than under the same amount of awning in the Port of Aden; though, of

course, even this was cool when compared with the bottom of the crater which I had lately left.

I had but just time to note this interesting fact and to observe that the harbour was sufficient in area (whatever it might be in depth) to accommodate a large fleet when it was time to land my forty of Sepoys, with whom I had come to relieve the similar and sole guard of the place, and proceed with them to the quarters—if such they could be called—appointed for our residence.

Our way led up a gentle ascent to the centre of the island, which was also within a few feet of being the highest point—only two hundred feet above the level of the sea, and from a mile to a mile and a half from it in most directions.

As we marched through the stifling heat to our destination, we could mark the black, rocky, and arid aspect of the undulating land, on which nothing grew hereabouts except the delicate portulacca-plant, which forms little circular pea-green patches in all directions, about the size of a dinner-plate and no higher than that article from the ground. It is a water-bearing weed, and must, of course, derive its nourishment from the air. This it contrives to do with so much skill that, on pressing its little tube-like leaves between the fingers, nothing is left save a liquid drop. It contrasts prettily with the frowning stones and boulders among which it grows.

Few, however, under the circumstances, would care to note the existence of this humble flower. All eyes would naturally be fixed upon the queer box-like structure, dignified with the name of Fort, which, with a lighthouse in the

centre, loomed before us. Here we were to live for some two or three months ; and, much as we would have given to have escaped such a dismal fate, yet, for the moment, we looked forward with pleasure to that shelter from the sun which its walls and the huts contained within them would afford us.

At the portal I was greeted by Lieutenant Banff, whose joy at quitting his awful prison was only the more apparent from his thoughtful efforts to disguise his feelings for my sake.

As the steamer was only to remain here about an hour, there was not much time to obtain any information from the liberated captive.

I absolutely refused to go into a pitch-dark storeroom with a lantern for the purpose of counting the old nails, broken marlin-spikes, and decayed rope-ends, which are, no doubt, still pompously inscribed in the "Monthly Returns," and even now clung to as treasures by the British Government. "But," I continued, "I have no objection to inspecting the artillery mounted in the open air upon the ramparts."

Upon this, we bowed to each other and proceeded with serious dignity to mount the flight of stairs which led to the battlements.

As I surmounted the last step, the resolution to be calm and to look around took sudden possession of me.

This is what I saw :—

A low yet extremely rugged island—which seemed at first sight composed entirely of blackened rocks—two miles in length by one in breadth. Such was the size of Perim as it lay smoking, under the sun, at my feet.

Looking towards the coast of Arabia, I saw the narrow channel that intervenes between the island and the mainland. It is only two miles in width ; and it is just here that Perim juts out into the sea in the form of immense and massive boulders of rocks that seem formed by Nature to invite the formation of an impregnable battery by which this narrow and favourite passage into the Red Sea could be made as securely the property of England as the Thames is at London Bridge.

This headland, is I believe, now known by the name of Obstruction Point, which was the title I bestowed upon it myself.

Turning one's back on this view, one would see the harbour, with its landing-place, and the modest road of a mile and a half by which we had journeyed up to our present position ; while straight away, in the far distance of some nine or ten miles, could be discerned the coast of the dark continent of Africa. No doubt an enemy's ships might slip past Perim by this wider channel ; but, by means of fortifications, the narrower and easier one for navigation could always be kept open exclusively for our own use.

Such were the distant views of the two opposite coasts offered to my contemplation as I almost overlooked the little flat island and the bulwark of Great Britain on which I was standing.

An extraordinary sound, as of someone beating the lid of a wooden box, recalled my mind from the battlefields of the future to what was to be the actual scene of my own solitary greatness for some months to come.

"It is Her Majesty's gong," explained Lieutenant Banfi,

“on which, guided by an hourglass, the sentry strikes the hours; but it has long been split through in various directions. However, they can never make *you* pay for it, as it has been brought before all the Committees of Survey that have assembled during the present century, and con demned as unserviceable by every one of them.”

“And is this the Fortress?” I exclaimed, as I glanced around the dirty little poultry-yard enclosed by the elevated footpath on which I stood.

It was about forty yards by thirty, and the chambers of my small body of Sepoys which were under my feet opened into it. In one corner stood such a well-built and efficient lighthouse as was required in the interests of commerce, and which was in strange contrast to all that surrounded it.

The armaments consisted of two large pieces of cannon. “But,” said the Lieutenant, “as they are without ammunition, the ‘big-gun’ drill which you had to learn in Poona for just such emergencies must lie dormant as far as this opportunity for its display is concerned.”

On this, we again bowed to each other with official rigour (to have smiled would have been dangerous, for surely the spirit of the Adjutant General must have been hovering over us at such a solemn moment?)

“And what may these be?” I asked, pointing to some wondrous fabrications, about six times the size of old matchlocks, which were mounted on long thin legs at intervals upon the walls—“they look like pre-Adamite spiders!”

“No, no! they are not spiders,” explained my young

friend ; they are 'jinjals,' and are all broken except one, but that one can be fired—I *have* fired it," he continued triumphantly, "and, if you like, I will do it again, to show you !"

"By no means !" I urged. "Think, if it were to burst !—if we were not blown up with it, we should have to spend the rest of our lives in writing official letters about it."

At this dismal foreboding, we both shuddered silently ; and then, after a few more steps, found ourselves in front of the officer's quarters, contrived so as to form an upper story of two rooms that opened on to the battlements.

Words could never describe the couple of tiny dog-holes in which I was now called upon to serve my country in the stewing, land-locked climate of the Red Sea. Besides, to depict them in any way would be superfluous, as they have at last been replaced by something better. I will, therefore, only say that there was a small square window to each, through which the heated ocean could be seen, with steamers ever hurrying through the narrow Pass towards Promised Lands, unmindful of poor Tantalus left behind and bound ever to the parching rocks of unlovely Perim !

Curious to say, there was an excellent library that nearly filled one of the squalid cells. This had been generously presented to the Island by the Fifth Regiment of Bombay Native Light Infantry. But there was barely time to make even the short inspection of the details I have indicated, as the vessel that was effecting the relief of the detachment had to hurry off as quickly as possible, and the officer whose place I had come to take was by no means anxious to be left behind.

“I must be off, my dear fellow—I really *must* be off!” he suddenly exclaimed, in a tone of voice indicative of general sorrow. “There is a boat, by-the-by, for your use; but it has no crew, so you have to borrow men from the light-house when you want to employ it. There was also, once, a book called “The Annals of Perim,” which was very useful; but someone has stolen it and taken it away. However, the half-caste Engineer and the native Commissariat Inspector will tell you all you can ever want to know. There is a good supply of flour and water on hand; so nothing can go wrong. Good-bye! good-bye!”

And with this he was gone; whilst I sank into a rough sort of armchair, and, streaming with perspiration, tried to go to sleep.

At my feet lay my two dogs that I had brought out with me from England—Pet, a lovely white greyhound; and Mama, who was a large smooth-coated St. Bernard. These also did what they could to invite repose, but their dozings were even more horrible than my own. With their poor tongues spread out on the dirty dusty ground, their panting was so violent as literally to shake the rickety flooring of our common den.

The thermometer stood at 94°, and the air was heavy and sodden.

Yet, notwithstanding all these impediments, I had got towards the regions of a ghastly nap, and might even have obtained a few hours of oblivion, when I heard a dry interrogative cough, uttered by a native concealed behind the doorpost.

This I recognised at once as the time-honoured signal

by which an Eastern menial intimates to his august employer that there is some business requiring immediate attention. This cringing appeal, I have observed, is, as a rule, more irritating to the English Conqueror than would be the loudest "view-halloo!" and I have often been amused at watching the sort of combat that frequently takes place on these occasions between the two races.

There reclines the haughty Briton in what ought to be the enjoyment of a delicious and much-needed siesta; but in reality, as the attentive observer can easily see, he is alive, throughout his entire frame, with rage and fury. He is saying to himself: "Beast! you may cough till you are white, if that were possible; but you shall *never* make me answer."

On the other hand, if you are favourably posted, you may see the child of Asia concealed behind a favouring projection, twirling a paper missive (called a "chit") between his fingers and giving utterance, at intervals, to his single maddening note.

Anon the misguided but patient creature will protrude his neck cautiously, so as to obtain a back-view of his master's flaxen head: "Dear me! no change whatever in the position; yet it is a full hour since I first began to cough. Some other noise might waken him, but I know not the dustoors (customs) of these queer people; and to cough is *our* custom—I cannot begin anything new."

With this fortifying reflection, he begins another series of subdued ejaculations, which are continued till the exasperated son of Mars, if he is over thirty, bursts into a volley of furious invective; or, if he is under that age, he dashes

violently at the offending throat of the luckless black-man.

In such a case, the terrified Hindoo casts the note upon the floor and flies for his life into the "compound," where the stony nature of the soil forbids pursuit to the unslipped feet of his foe.

The affair is then wound up by a short dialogue such as any reader can imagine, and, in the course of five minutes more a pencilled answer is returned to Mrs. Colonel Johnson informing her, in the mildest of language, where she can procure the best yellow chillies for manufacturing curry-powder!

But, when I was sent as a youthful subaltern to Perim, I was nearly forty, and the iron heel of military rule had reduced my spirit to a state of humility compared with which the proverbial meekness of the Asiatic is arrogance. Consequently, on catching the familiar sound as of someone clearing his throat, I at once knew what to do. Unclosing my eyes and extending one hand, I whispered: "Qui hai?" (Who's there?) On this a wild being such as the climate of the Red Sea alone could produce stepped up and handed me a twisted piece of paper on which this was written (I copied it into my notebook, and can therefore give the following extract from it verbatim as a specimen of the English employed by native clerks, when they are composing and not copying):

"The one of my camelman have taken one boy before your Honour the boy was near to my house to whom I told to go and call over to the camelman who called me no and some bad names I ask him why he abuse me—if don't intend to call them he should says only no.

"I told him go away and took his arm—He strike me with the Steak I just give him a shove to go away—He fall himself and got the blood out I got witness, etc., etc.

"Your obedient servant ATHAIDE."

I have often seen English letters composed by natives published in the newspapers, but the majority of them have, to my mind, borne evident marks of having been "touched up" with a view to making them more amusing, but with the actual result, in my humble opinion, of spoiling them. I have, therefore, thought that the very words used by Athaide might prove interesting to some people.

"But," I exclaimed to the grimy messenger, as soon as I had read the "chit," "who and what is Athaide, and whence comes this letter?"

"Sir," replied the man, "Athaide is the Commissariat Inspector he——"

At this point further explanations were cut short by some commotion at the door, which culminated in a wretched boy of fifteen years old being violently projected by his backers into my presence. There he stood, with his hands flat to his sides, that nothing might be lost of the horror of his appearance. His upper raiment was gone, but in place of it his face and chest were decked with thick cakes of dried blood, resembling those of another material in use for plastering the walls.

"Disrespectful wretches!" I shouted, "how dare you bring that disgusting object into my presence? Take him away and wash him at once, that I may ascertain the real amount of the damage done!" This order was speedily complied with, and not a scratch or bruise was to be seen anywhere on the sufferer's person, who must simply have made the most

of a bleeding nose. There was nothing to incriminate Athaide but his own written admission ; so I sent for him and solemnly informed him that, as long as I was on the island, no one was to be beaten except by myself, with a proper instrument with which I had provided myself for the terror of evildoers. Thus I summed up and dismissed a case in five minutes which would have occupied a number of highly-paid functionaries as many hours in a civilised police-court.

Towards evening I roused myself and sat up, in order to receive the appointed visit of the native interpreter and general manager of all foreign and most domestic affairs. His name was Gooled, and he was a Somali or African by birth. He was a fine, stout, active fellow, and so willing, intelligent, and honest that I am sure he must be well and kindly remembered by a long line of solitary subaltern chiefs. Gooled then stood before me, with a first-rate letter of recommendation, in his black but smiling countenance.

With the best of natural manners, he made me a genial salaam, and said : " I am here to receive your commands ; speak, and I shall obey."

" Well," I replied, assuming to the utmost that measured cheerfulness which is to be got by an act of the will, " we will take the dogs out for a little stroll, and you shall tell me what you can about the place and its resources."

As I have said before, the little courtyard called the Fort, which contained (and doubtless still contains) the lighthouse and the quarters of the detachment, occupied a central position on the islet, which rises gradually in all directions towards it from the sea. Thus Perim, though

seemingly quite flat, especially when viewed from a little distance, attains in reality a height of two hundred feet at a point close to where we were living, and which I christened Altamont, after one of its most gallant commanders. We were in the position of persons standing in the centre of a large inverted saucer just balanced on the waves. There was nothing in the shape of hills or vegetation to impede the view, or to obscure the explanations of Gooled as we slowly circled round the Fort, keeping at about one hundred yards from it.

"This road," said my guide, as we emerged from the gateway, "leads, as you know, down to the harbour, about a mile off. The Eurasian Engineer lives there, in very much better quarters than you have got. There he attends to the condensers and the tanks used for storing the water made by them. The Commissariat Department is also located at the same place. At the end of the harbour, opposite to its entrance, you will observe a deep indentation with a quantity of low bushes about it: that is called "French Bay," from the fact that those people once settled there. When you are walking in that direction, you will see the remains of their stone huts. The mouth of the harbour shows the way to Aden, though you have to turn a good deal to the left (south-east) immediately on leaving it."

Continuing our course to the other side of the Fort, Gooled pointed to the promontory on the Arabian coast, immediately opposite to Obstruction Point, and consequently only four miles from it. "That," said he, "is an interesting site; for, in years gone by, the French had a

settlement there also, but they did not like it, and so it is now deserted, and, as you see, quite barren and desolate; yet you will look that way every thirteenth or fourteenth night for your post from Aden. A solitary Arab brings the bag from that place, a hundred miles distant, once every fortnight by camel, to the spot you can see; and then, when it is dark, he announces his arrival, to the watchman on the lighthouse, by lighting a signal-fire. Then the open boat is despatched to fetch the letters, and the Sahib, if he feels disposed, can accompany the party. And now," said Gooled, "I am sorry it is the wrong time of year—otherwise, on a moonlight night, I would take you on to that long strip of white sand that stretches northward along the island from Obstruction Point, to capture the turtles which, at the proper season, emerge from the deep to lay their eggs in the sand. The little inland plain," he continued, "which you would traverse to get there was laid out and used as a racecourse at the time when the island was first taken possession of by the orders of Colonel Coghlan; for, at the start, the garrison was much larger, and consisted of engineers and a mixed force of fighting-men. After passing Turtle Reach, you will find the shore rough and rugged till you come round again to French Bay and the harbour."

After these explanations, we ascended the lighthouse and took a bird's-eye view of this little black pearl of the British Crown. As it lay in the water at our feet, I was at once struck with its resemblance in shape to a large crab, with its two great claws forming and embracing the Port. Just below us, and not fifty yards from the walls, I now observed

a sort of hillock of heavy rocks, mixed, as it seemed in the fast-gathering darkness, with human habitations of the same material. I was just being told that this was the wigwam where dwelt Gooled himself and the nine lighthouse-men, with all their wives and children, when suddenly the most piercing shrieks, combined with sounds of such blows as only a flail could equal, smote upon our astonished ears. Descending from the lighthouse with the utmost precipitation, we flew to the scene of action.

The row was, so to speak, focussed on the residence of Mrs. Gooled, and there might be seen that good lady lustily walloping her own door with a heavy Somali club, and screaming in emulation with her own terrified baby who was cradled just outside at her feet. On the housetop stood, in a state of suppressed excitement, the cause of all the "rumpus." It was "Mama" all ready to spring on the cat whenever it might yield to the beat and break cover. For there were many of these animals, besides quantities of rats, at this station; so the dogs had taken French leave, when we mounted the narrow stairs of the Tower, to set off, in the gloaming, in hopes of meeting with a little sport. But the poor woman never doubted for an instant that a lioness had been introduced by the newly-arrived Sahib, and that her precious infant was to be its first victim.

I may here mention that the Somalis and the Arabs also in these regions are very hostile to dogs, and I was often cautioned that they would murder them if they could get a sudden chance of doing so without being seen. In a country, however, where there are no native dogs except the skinny pariah, and no imported ones larger than a bull-terrier

a full-sized mastiff, weighing a hundred pounds, naturally always passed for a beast of some other, and consequently less unhallowed, species. At all events, no attempts were ever made against the life of this fine animal, either at Perim or during my many solitary wanderings over the deserts that surround Aden.

During our short walk I learnt a good many interesting little facts from my humble but intelligent and worthy friend. He told me that, what with the lighthouse-men, the little commissariat, and condensing establishments, together with a few "hangers-on" who had drifted somehow or other to Perim and had lost the energy necessary to moving elsewhere, the population of the island amounted to one hundred and fifty souls; or, if you included the detachment, then the numbers could be put down at the imposing grand-total of two hundred. Native craft, he told me, arrived not infrequently, as there was a constant demand for what was registered at the stores as "purchased water."

The natives, I found, had a strong prejudice against the exclusive use, for drinking and cooking purposes, of that which had been procured by boiling the sea. And I think they were right; for I cannot otherwise account for the dysentery that afflicted myself and my two predecessors, which we got here and had so much difficulty in shaking off afterwards.

One of the many mistaken notions regarding Perim is, or used to be, that the innocent felon who is sent there to work out a period of solitary imprisonment—sarcastically called "commanding"—gets drunk a few hours before

arriving, and is carried on shore, where he remains in a state of perfect intoxication till he is borne back and brought to again at Aden. He can then really believe that he has, like the hero in the "Lays of Ind," been spending "the season" in London or in a fine tiger-jungle, according to his fancy.

"No wonder he got ill!" say they who send others to such places.

And says the great man of all: "I shall have to report unfavourably upon him."

Wretched beings—to all but lay down our lives and then get slandered for our pains!

No one accused *me* of getting drunk; on the contrary, they said solemnly: "He did not drink enough: no wonder *he* got ill—it was all his own fault! He also deserves to be officially condemned."

Meanwhile the only report *I* wish to make is that I believe water, to be wholesome, should be made up of living animalculæ—transparent, it is true, and invisible to the naked eye—yet all alive and kicking!

But I could never recall and still less could I write down one-half of the conversation that passed between myself and Gooled on subjects to me so important, but to the reader so flat and uninteresting. I shall, therefore, now terminate the interview with his nice concluding speech:

"Sahib," he said, "I am not like many others that you have doubtless met with, who promise all things and perform nothing. I will do anything for you—only say what it is to be—now, at once, and I will risk my life in your service."

"But," I said, "what could you—what can any human

being do for me here? Look around," I continued, "look ! look !!"

He did look ; but for him the universal blackness, fitfully illumined by the crystal lenses of the beacon-light above us, had other revelations than those vouchsafed to me.

"Why," he responded quite cheerfully, "have I not told you I can get you anything you like to name? Surely there must be something you want?"

"Well," I said, "I *can* think of something : I should like some living hares to turn down upon the island. I am sure they would live here just as well as on the mainland, where they are often quite out of the reach of water."

"You shall have them," exclaimed my faithful friend, "consider them as already arrived : no later than to-morrow a bugalow (native craft) is to sail for the mainland ; so, if you give me leave, I will start in her and catch these animals for you at once. But it may be a fortnight before I can get back ; so you must not be angry if you don't see me for some time."

"But how will you catch them?" I asked, being full of doubt. "Have you any nets?"

"Nets? Oh dear, no! What I shall do is this : I shall collect all the Arabians and form them into an immense circle, which I shall gradually draw in upon the hares, who will be prevented from breaking outwards by showers of stones, earth, and sticks, thrown so as just to miss them. This, combined with a burra pookar (great shouting), will frighten them out of their wits, so that they will regularly burrow into the bushes and we shall have no difficulty in capturing them safely with our hands."

“Have you ever done this successfully before?”

“Well, no, I can't say I have; but, then, what other Sahib has ever commanded live hares to be brought? Have no fear—they must and shall be caught; only leave it to me!”

Shortly after this, Gooled took his departure, and my butler announced that dinner was ready. The *pièce de résistance* was a very nice-looking leg of mutton, purchased from the Commissariat Agent, who found there were sufficient customers to enable him to slaughter one of his fine imported sheep every other day; but the meat thus obtained was so tough that in England it would have been considered uneatable, for it had to be consumed the very day it was killed. In vain I tried butchering the animal the previous evening, and then hanging my share of the carcass as a ghastly ornament in my own sitting-room, close to the punkah, all the next day: it would not keep even that short time, and had to be thrown away. At last the slow hand of my little clock pointed to the hour of nine. Then, in spite of all warnings to the contrary, I had my cot placed out on the rampart; and, cooled at last by the showers of descending dew that saturated both myself and the bedding on which I lay, I fell into a deep and refreshing slumber; and the two dogs, who were chained to the legs of my fragile couch, speedily followed my example.

CHAPTER V.

NO incident whatever marked the progress of the first night of my captivity at Perim.

At dawn I rose and proceeded into my chamber, to inspect the thermometer which I had hung upon the wall near the window that looked towards Aden. At that coolest moment of the twenty-four hours, it stood at eighty-nine degrees. This would not be considered much in Sind, it is true; but, owing to the heaviness of the atmosphere in the Red Sea, I found even this degree of heat very oppressive.

From the thermometer, I naturally enough glanced out towards the sea. "Good gracious! what's this?" I exclaimed half-aloud. "Do I really see a splendid steamer impaling herself upon the rocks, or am I dreaming?"

I rubbed my eyes as though, by so doing, I might dispel the ill-omened vision. But it soon became impossible to doubt the evidence of my own senses. There stood the ill-fated vessel, with her sails all "aback," hard and fast upon some teacherous rock lurking below the surface in the narrow Pass of these Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb.

Having hastily put on some light raiment, I ran down the road to the harbour, accompanied by the lighthouse-men, jumped into the open boat, and set sail for the scene of the disaster.

We had some miles to go, and the sea was rough owing to the swell of the monsoon, which is felt here, although there is no rain. Luckily, though a wretched sailor, I did not suffer at all, on this occasion, by seasickness as, borne by a stiff breeze over the buoyant waves, we steered for the ship in distress.

We soon began to draw near, and then suddenly found ourselves overshadowed by the steep, black, and forbidding-looking side of a two-thousand-ton steamer.

It was strange that no one seemed to be on the lookout, or to be aware even of our arrival. All was still and lifeless. On my hailing, however, a solitary—and would that I could say amiable!—head appeared over the gunwale, and demanded our business in a gruff tone.

“Well,” I said with decision, “I wish to board you.”

“Ay! ay!” responded the tar, “but how are you going to do it—we can’t lower no ladders?”

“Very well, then,” I said, “you must throw me a rope—I can climb up that.”

On this, the mysterious old sea-dog vanished for a short time, leaving us to do our worst against the gigantic hull of the great ship as we were hurled repeatedly against it by the angry waves.

After, as I presume, a consultation with the captain, the aged mariner returned, and pitched a bale of something or other at our heads. As it unfurled in its flight it proved to be a rope ladder, such as we see lovers making use of in pictures, but hope never to have to climb ourselves. Nothing, however, would have daunted me at this stage, as I

had become quite certain, by this time, that I was not wanted on board.

Not wanted, indeed! Well, the reader can imagine now the sort of avidity with which I seized the slippery strands and entered upon a new phase of travelling.

In a few seconds I was on the deck, where a curious scene awaited me.

Near the wheel—some seated, some standing—were a group consisting of the captain and three or four first-class passengers—all men. Subordinate officers were hurrying to and fro, giving and receiving orders; whilst below all, including the steerage passengers, were working might and main shifting cargo and making tremendous efforts—destined, alas! to be futile—to alter the balance of the vessel, so that she might, as it were, launch herself with the rising tide once more into deep water.

I did not, of course, expect to see much joy depicted on the countenances of persons placed in such a painful position as were all these gentlemen; but I should have thought some forward step or some flicker of comparative satisfaction would have marked the arrival on board of some aid, however trifling, from outside.

All stood motionless and contemplated me with stony eyes.

The official bow again came into requisition, and was made so as to include everybody:

“The Captain?” I said.

“I am he,” replied that unfortunate commander, stepping to the front:

I then learnt that, on approaching Perim, the ship was

lying on a fair course to pass the island through the broad channel off the African coast ; but, as it had been decided to use the narrow straits, the skipper altered the steering accordingly, and then missed the passage, which he was just entering, by a few yards, only and was thus lodged on this dreadful sunken-reef. It would be entirely out of my province to express any opinion on the management or mismanagement of the navigation of this new and noble vessel. Such a course, besides being presumptuous, would also be quite unnecessary, as, eventually, a Marine Court of Inquiry was assembled in due form at Aden, under the presidency of the Resident or Governor himself, to enquire into the rights and wrongs of the case. The written proceedings of this high tribunal are, no doubt, open to the perusal of anxious shipowners and others directly interested in the question of communication with the Great Empire of India. I have only to record veraciously the things that may be seen, heard, and done by any one of the thousands of subalterns who are at any given moment living and dying in the East.

I stood, then, on the deck of the stricken ship, and gave what information I could concerning the tides, the labour to be obtained, and the supplies of fresh water and provisions that might be procured in the unexpected event of the situation being prolonged.

Whilst thus engaged, another steamer was descried making towards us. "Quick !" was the order, "quick! spread some bunting over the name and answer no signals ; we shall get off in an hour or two, and no one will be any the wiser." Accordingly, the name of *The Leek* was carefully

concealed from view, and the vessel which, might or might not have towed her off, proceeded on her way. This was, no doubt, very natural conduct under the circumstances; and it is even probable that all assistance from the first would have proved unavailing, seeing that, as was afterwards shown, a pointed rock had gone through the bottom of the ill-fated steamer. But this, of course, could not be known at the time. This proceeding, however, at once enlightened me as to why mine had not been received as an angel's visit. After a few minutes' consultation, I hastened back to the island, to obtain such assistance as could be procured, chiefly amongst my own Sepoys; and with them I returned again to the luckless *Leek*. No shifting of cargo, however, had any effect; and it was evident that other and more radical measures would have to be resorted to before the ship could be expected to float once more.

It was a few hours after this melancholy truth had been established that Her Majesty's ship *Dalhousie* hove in sight. She was at once recognised and her status established by her buff-coloured funnels; so *her* signals must, perforce, be answered. Her commander was soon on board of us, and receiving an official report of all such things as it concerned him to know.

The cargo of two thousand tons consisted, for the bottom part, of hides; whilst, above, the ship was laden with tea and costly silks from China, valued (as I heard) at one hundred thousand pounds.

As it proved impossible to tow the unfortunate vessel into deep water, the *Dalhousie* was berthed close to her in the open sea, and the work of salvage commenced.

This, I may as well here state, occupied a period of several weeks; but at last all the more delicate and valuable portion of the freight, which was fortunately at the top, was conveyed to Aden and safely stored on the open quay, for there were no sheds available. Of what use could shelter be in a rainless land?

Unhappy *Leek!* No sooner were the goods neatly stacked under the cloudless skies, than the storm-winds arose—the floodgates of heaven were opened, and all was lost at the eleventh hour.

And this is my experience of rainless countries—that it pours in torrents just at the very time when the evils and sadness of drought are for the moment palliated by some accidental advantages, which are thus lost to us.

In rainless lands, then, we should be prepared for storms, and not suffer them to come upon us unawares.

Whilst this work of saving valuable property was going on, every effort was being made to stop the leak; and the great pumps to be sent out by the English insurance company were anxiously looked for. Hope, which was destined to end in despair, was at first strong within us. During the first day so buoyant was this quality, that, if there were any truth in “animal electricity” or “spiritual manifestations of the will,” the *Leek* would surely have been floated by these semi-supernatural means. We all “willed,” and with such a *good* will, not a single “contrary influence” was at work. Yet, there lay the object of our utmost efforts—inert and unresponsive as any sphinx to all our best and unanimous endeavours.

We had no “spirit mediums” on board who could so

easily have cast a penetrating glance through the clear waters of the ocean, and have informed us of the exact situation and nature of the wound hidden by the as-yet-untouched cargo. Why, even an ordinary mortal in a diving-bell could have done this much for us. But we had no such vulgar appliance ; and the spirits were probably all collected where I have always found them—close to where their mediums can get a good dinner. Of such are the “Astral Bodies.”

As night fell then on the first day, our spirits were already to a certain extent damped ; yet all the resources of the ship and of the island were to be put into requisition on the morrow.

I retired at sunset from the vessel, and got back about dark to my quarters in the centre of the island.

I had now some time to reflect upon the position of affairs ; but being like all those by whom I was surrounded—a new-comer of only a few hours' standing—I sadly felt the want of some information concerning the place and the routine by which the comparatively-distant establishments near the harbour were worked.

Then I thought of the “Annals” and of the baseness of him who had stolen them. From their pages I should probably have learnt all I so much required to know. Ah ! but, now I think of it, probably some ignorant blackman had lighted the fire with this priceless volume ! Yes, yes ! that must have been the way of it—no thief would have been black enough to do a deed so dastardly. These records were gone, however ; so I had to make all my little plans and arrangements on the chance only that they could be successfully carried out.

As nothing went wrong with my preparations, I was able to start at dawn the next day, with a party, down to the harbour, with a view to embarking in our own and the ship's boats, in which we were to proceed to the scene of the wreck. Just before leaving Aden, a kind friend (Colonel Longfellow) presented me with a spoon-bait suitable for trawling in the ocean.

"Why not have a little shikar *en route*?" I said to myself as I slipped the little box containing it into my breast-pocket.

The lighthouse boat was, as usual, in charge of its only man, called, in the native tongue, a "tyndal" (captain), who was assisted, according to the rule, by three other men who ought to have been doing something else.

"No one can admire our economical government more than I do—only," I soliloquised, "how is it the overburdened taxpayer is mulcted in order to pay the extravagant salary of thirty shillings a month, together with rations and permission to live free on any part of the island, to such a miserable, idiotic, and altogether wretched specimen of a Somali as this tyndal is?"

But I only nodded, smiled kindly, and said: "Can you fish?"

"Oh, yes; it is my business."

"Then have the goodness to rig up this spoon-bait."

Unfortunately, I did not watch the operation; but by the time we had got outside the harbour the line was ready for use, and I was soon interested in the soothing process of trawling.

We had not gone far when I felt that I had hooked a

good-sized fish, but it was not large or powerful enough to try the line, and I soon hauled in a three-pounder of a good kind.

The tyndal called out: "Shahbash!" and showed more signs of life and excitement than I should have thought him capable of.

"I shall have luck!" he exclaimed, "I shall certainly have luck!"

"He will! he will!" shouted his grinning companions, "he is going to be married to-night."

"Indeed?" I said. "And what is she like—is she handsome, I mean?"

"Handsome?" they said, in a tone of doubtful musing. "Well she is like us."

"Indeed? Then she must be a beauty!" was my concluding remark, as I resumed the bait which the bridegroom-elect had got ready for a fresh cast.

Almost immediately, another and splendid fish was hooked: the tackle ran out with such extraordinary speed and force that I felt a thrill of conviction that I had as good as captured the sea-serpent at last. "Back!" I shouted, "back!" and began paying out the cord as fast as I could. It was only half expended, but still going as fast as ever, when I saw that, for the sake of his own convenience in winding the string, the tyndal had here so secured the rest of the ball that it would not run any further. Nothing could be done—I had only time to note the fact with a glance of agony when the line snapped like a gossamer-thread.

Fish and spoon-bait were gone for ever!

Though maddened with all the rage that Government is obliged to wink at in subalterns who are fond of fishing and other childish pursuits, I can nevertheless remember my words and deeds at this supreme moment.

I flung myself on the unfortunate captain, and shook him with a violence that was intended to hurt myself and frighten him.

“Worm! vile worm!” I shrieked. “How dare you? Do you know that was my only spoon-bait? I can’t get another, and so shall not be able to fish again all the time I am in Perim.”

At the thoughts of this dismal inactivity, I again shook the wretched man; and then, with a refinement of cruelty, I hissed into his ear these poisoned words: “Married! you think you are going to be married? Never! for I will throw you into the sea, and you will soon be united to a shark!”

But I soon found out that this good man was far too well accustomed to the irascible ways of the thoroughbred young ensigns who usually swayed the destinies of Perim to be in the least put out by the half-simulated rage of one who was only a subaltern by reason of having to perform the duties of that humble and delightful rank.

Nothing could shake the settled smile out of the offender’s countenance; so, grasping the fish (called a pyat) which I *had* caught, I nursed it and my wrath in silence till I got to the *Dalhousie*. Here it was cooked, eaten for breakfast, and pronounced delicious.

A few days after this, a circumstance took place that revived the longing I have so often felt to be able to see

below the surface of the ocean, which seems so transparent and yet completely baffles the eye.

We were all sitting on deck under the double awning when our attention was called to the stern of the vessel, where the water seemed alive with a shoal of terrified little fishes. Their silver sides sparkled in the sun as they frantically endeavoured to escape into some other than their natural element, where they were evidently being destroyed by some implacable foe. An ordinary ship's boat, attached by a rope, was floating astern ; and her bottom was soon covered with these unfortunate little creatures. At the end of the scrimmage, which only lasted about a minute, we collected this self-offered spoil. They numbered one hundred and twenty, and were all, or nearly all, of one kind called "par." They were rather larger than sardines, and we agreed with the higher powers below in thinking them well worth eating. Whether they were being pursued by a shoal of dolphins or gobbled up wholesale by sharks, who can tell ?

Quantities of these last-named dreadful monsters inhabited the tepid waters of the Straits ; and the unusual greatness of their size could be guessed at by the largeness of their dorsal fins, which, on calm days, would appear almost like little black sails upon the surface of the sea. A large one was caught from the deck of the *Leek*, on this wise :—

It had become necessary for the *Dalhousie* to make a trip to Aden, thus leaving the *Leek* to her own resources for some days. She seemed so firmly planted on her fatal rock that there was no fear of her sinking. The Arabs,

Somalis, and other wild tribes were for the moment the source of our anxieties.

At this very time there were two other vessels stranded off Cape Gardelui that were being pillaged by them.

The mode of procedure of these treacherous and thieving tribes is peculiar, and cannot too often be brought to notice for the benefit of those who may some day be dreadfully interested in their proceedings. They do not advance boldly to the attack; on the contrary, they approach with provisions, water, and other commodities for sale on reasonable terms. Who so accommodating as these harmless natives? Only a few, too—quite a few; then a few more; and soon too many.

Before anyone knows exactly how it has been done, they are, by mere force of numbers, complete masters of the wreck; and the crew are also at their mercy, which is not a very tender quality in them. Even when they mean to behave well according to their own notions, they fail for want of understanding the absolute requirements necessary to the life of Europeans in those burning regions—for, when carried captive into the interior pending a ransom, they must be almost burnt alive by the heat of the sun. It is dreadful to think of.

The plan, then, is from the first to suffer none to come on board; and the almost perpendicular and smooth side of a tall iron steamer offers splendid advantages for defence, as long as water and provisions hold out: when these fail, matters must, of course, become complicated, as the natives would probably refuse to send up supplies without accompanying the goods personally—and, as I have said,

once on board, they soon become as a swarm of locusts whom it is impossible to resist.

When, therefore, the *Leek* was left to her own resources, her commander received strict injunctions on this subject, and he was specially warned not on any account to leave a chain or even a rope-towing overboard. With these precautions, together with a bright lookout and our own lighthouse to signal to in case of an attack, there was not much, in this instance, to fear.

Nevertheless, shortly after the departure of the protecting war-steamer, a deputation from the abandoned vessel waited upon me with a request that I would furnish the crew with some firearms and ammunition to enable them to resist any possible assailants.

Under the circumstances, I felt it would be barbarous to quote "regulations" to them, as perhaps it was my duty to have done instead of giving them weapons; so I sent them away quite happy with two rifles and twenty rounds of ball-cartridge; and two days later I went on board myself to inspect and clean this valuable Government property. The rifles were there, and quite clean; but the ammunition was gone! In lieu of this, they showed me, triumphantly, the head of an immense shark which they had captured in the following manner. They had baited a strong hook, at the end of a thick chain, with a piece of pork, which the monster had at once gorged; but, so tremendous was his strength, that they could not haul him out of the water till he had been killed by firing most of the twenty bullets into his carcase.

The jaws were furnished with many rows of saw-like teeth—one set close behind the other. Some of the hinder tiers

were laid flat and smooth, but they looked as if they could bristle up into dreadful readiness at the will of the voracious creature, when making its swift and deadly onslaught. I only saw the head of this shark, so cannot say what its length was ; but it must have been of great size, for its extended jaws certainly struck me as capable of admitting the passage of a man's body.

"Oh!" said one of the ship's-officers with enthusiasm, "you should have seen the second we hooked—it was twice the size of this one. If we could but have landed it! In its struggles we, of course, had good views of it as it charged furiously in all directions. So great was its power that we could only belay the chain and hang on whilst others fired into it. At last it made such a stupendous rush that the very cable snapped, as you see ; and thus we lost this fine prize!"

"And why did you not fish for more?" I asked.

"Well, you see," he replied, "we soon saw that, without something to shoot them with, it would be no use hooking these giants ; and we had expended all the ammunition you gave us in these two adventures."

On receiving this piece of information, so airily given, a feeling of deep despondency stole o'er me. I wondered if "examiners," "heads of departments," and such-like persons, would ever pardon me for the irregular disbursement of so much public gunpowder. I was the more moved to this sad mood by having only just heard the following touching story from the Commander of the *Dalhousie* :—

"You know," he said, "I made the following entry in my 'Monthly Return of Stores,' some little time ago :

‘One towing-rope carried away’—meaning, of course, that the sea had ravished this treasure from the British Government. Well, the return was sent back to me, with this command written opposite to my entry: ‘Whoever carried this tow-rope away must be made to bring it back.’”

With such vigilance in every State department, then, how could I hope that my own delinquency would escape notice?

I hate exaggeration, and will, therefore, not pretend that I passed many sleepless nights thinking over the gravity of my position; but, at some time or other, I must have thought of some Machiavelian entry for my own “Store Return,” for no one, up to the present time at all events, has summoned me to account for this unseemly waste of lead designed only for the destruction of the Queen’s enemies *en titre*, whoever they may be.

On the return of the *Dalhousie* to her by-this-time-well-known anchorage, I at once resumed my visits to the hospitable captain and his wife in their ocean-home.

My journeys to and fro were not unfrequently of an adventurous nature.

Owing to there being but one man—the tyndal—to man the Government boat, I used frequently to perform these voyages in any tony that I could get hold of. A tony is a boat that looks like a tree hollowed out; yet, when well built and properly manned, I believe they are very seaworthy. The current, however, in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb runs with such extraordinary force that it is only right to warn intending excursionists of what they may have to encounter. I have myself been on board the

Dalhousie when one of her boats, with another in tow, though manned by European sailors, was not only unable to get back to the ship, but was soon rapidly swept away towards Aden.

The *Dalhousie* was obliged to slip from her moorings and steam in pursuit of her helpless offshoots.

A tony, then, with nothing but hand-paddles, though perhaps not likely to upset, was considered by all on board as a dangerous conveyance for these seas; and misfortunes were foretold, should I persist in using them.

One day these predictions seemed about to be verified. I had picked up a very fine tony, manned by three Arabs who happened to be visiting the island. The men knew the channel, and, at the proper time, made a shoot of about a mile for the steamer.

In such a distance, could one do less than admire them for only missing the mark by about two feet? For it was owing to this trifling miscalculation that our long tube-like craft was washed violently broadside on to the chain-cable which, stretching tightly out from the nose of the vessel, kept her tight to her anchor. The tide or stream was running so fiercely that we were all but capsized, and as I looked up I could see a number of anxious mariners peering over the bows ready to mark our fate and do their best to rescue us if we got pitched into the water. The tony, however, managed to wriggle off the chain without upsetting. One of the Arabs caught a rope thrown by a friendly hand, and soon we were all safe on board.

A few days after this, I again wished to visit my sea-friends in a similar manner; but my scout had much

difficulty in hearing of any wandering fisherman who would undertake the job. However, as I insisted, he eventually brought a feeble old Arabian who said he would be in the bay, just opposite to the vessels, with a tony, at four o'clock in the afternoon punctually.

"But," I said, "you can never manage the boat alone?"

"Oh," he said, "there will be two men; so it will be all right."

By the time appointed, I was on the beach of the little cove, with the aged Arab confronting me. We were alone.

"Well," I said, "and where is the other man?"

"Why," he replied, "you are the other man, of course."

The tony was the smallest I had ever seen—it was literally a portion of a tree hollowed out, with but just room for me to sit in the stern. As the ocean was calm and the old gentleman still more so, I did not see why I should be afraid. So I stepped in and balanced myself, in a sitting posture, on the rail which at this part spanned the narrow craft. The old man then began to work his paddle, whilst I became absorbed in those thoughts from which I was suddenly aroused by finding that I was sitting half up to my knees in a salt bath. I looked up, and even now cannot help smiling at the curious tableau we were presenting, though there was no one to see us. Nothing but a narrow stretch of water appeared between me and the "ancient mariner" whose arms were working the paddle wildly whilst his starting eyeballs were intently fixed on my countenance to see what effect the situation might have on me as soon as I realised it.

“What,” said his poor face, “can death signify, provided this madman is satisfied?”

But, I was not satisfied—far from it; and my manner showed so plainly the state of my mind, that fear took possession of poor Palinurus. He began to chatter something in an unknown tongue, tucked the paddle under his arm, and, from amongst his head-clothes, produced half a cocconut, which he flung me to bale out with. This ridiculous article, which might as well have been a teaspoon, I caught and sent whizzing back again into his own “midships,” whilst I pointed angrily to the shore. Luckily, we were not more than a hundred yards from it; so, before we became perfectly waterlogged, we were in our depths and able to wade to land. From this it will be seen that it is unsafe to trust to natives, even in matters connected with their own lifelong profession.

The reader, like myself, may have forgotten that the lower portion of the *Leek's* cargo consisted of raw hides. It was about this time that I was unpleasantly reminded of their existence by the smell which they began to emit in their decay. This mephitic odour gradually increased till it amounted to a perfect stench, and of such volume that I was always awakened by it at night if the breeze shifted so as to bear it from the ship to my bed on the island, which was reckoned a distance of two miles. Yet the people who lived on board, in the very centre of it all, endured none of the dangerous complaints (such as cholera) which are supposed to be the accompaniment of all organic decay. They certainly, in many instances, suffered dreadfully from a sort of ophthalmia which rendered them for a time almost blind.

But still, the ship could not be abandoned as long as there was any hope of raising her. Great hopes were entertained when the steam-pumps arrived from England. Then everyone set to work with renewed and desperate vigour, as it was felt that by the success or failure of these machines the fate of the vessel must be decided. I forget how many tons of water per minute these pumps could void ; but, though they were very powerful, it was thought much time would be required in the operation.

The steamer was built in compartments, and it was the hindmost one that was pierced. It was, therefore, resolved to pump the front ones dry, and then caulk them in hopes that, by their buoyancy, they might float the whole ship. Of course it was very hard for people to be obliged to live and work in a putrid air ; but nothing could be done to remedy this evil, as the hides had lost their consistency through the action of the water, and were now reduced to a soft gluey pulp. They could, therefore, not be got out and thrown overboard.

I was much struck, one day when the wind veered round towards the adjacent coast of Arabia, by seeing many thousands of carrion-kites put out to sea in quest of that prey which they smelt so strongly, but of course could see no signs of whatever, as it was fast shut up in the iron hold of the wreck. These birds spent the greater part of the day like some other courts of inquiry—without finding out anything. Towards evening they dispersed and did not reassemble.

It was a strange sight to see the ship gradually raising her head out of the water whilst her stern sank in proportion.

The rocks must have gone more and more through her as the weight became thrown on to the wounded part. At last she seemed to be in the position of a huge rearing horse. Her bows were so high that the commencement of the keel could be seen in the air, while the stern was sunk till I myself stepped direct from my rowing-boat, or tony, on to her quarter-deck. In short, the more the forepart was raised, the deeper and more firmly bedded in the rocks did the hinder portion become. The pumps, when the forward compartments had been thoroughly emptied and rendered water-tight, were both brought to bear on the one which had been perforated ; but it soon began to be apparent that nothing would empty the *Leek*, short of a second miracle by which the Red Sea itself could be dried.

The most sanguine began now to give up all hope, and to talk of abandoning the ship and leaving her to be gradually demolished by successive storms.

No doubt this decision would have been come to long before and thus have saved an immense deal of time, money, and physical suffering to all concerned, if only the fracture could have been got at and examined. This, however, it was impossible to do, as the hides forming the lower portion of the cargo could not be got out ; whilst the compartment lodged upon the reef was full of water. The hope that the remaining sections, when emptied, caulked, and rendered buoyant as bladders, would float the vessel, including the flooded portion, proved fallacious, and gradually the most persevering and sanguine began to realise the desperate nature of the case.

Towards the close of this sad drama, the stench from the

rotting skins had greatly increased ; whilst the number of souls on board had been reduced to the lowest possible total—partly from the paying-off and dismissal of as many hands as possible, and partly from the fact that no one lived on the wreck unless actually obliged, for the fumes of decomposition, though they did not produce any serious disease, caused the men to look very sickly, and their eyes got so bad as to render them almost blind and incapable of doing any work.

At last, after many hesitations and much hoping against hope, the very day and the hour arrived for bidding a final adieu to the ship. I went on board at the last moment, with the Captain of the *Dalhousie* and a small party from his ship, which was anchored close by, to take a final look-round.

As we stepped from our ship on to the quarter-deck of the upreared steamer, she appeared already quite deserted. Yes, all were gone except one old man keeping the "last watch" near the wheel and a solitary blind rat which, owing to the darkness induced by ophthalmia, believed that it was safe in some deep recess of the hold. Having put this wretched little quadruped out of its sufferings and invited the old sailor to follow us, we all took our seats again in the boat and silently bid adieu for ever to the *Leek*.

Somewhat curiously, and as though Nature herself wished to mark the falling of the curtain, I had scarcely got back to the island when such a heavy gale set in that the sea was no longer practicable for an open boat ; and, as I gazed from my little window towards the now-solitary vessel, a fine waterspout descended close to her.

If I have dwelt at length on the story of this wreck, it is because I consider it typical of scores of similar disasters that occur in the course of every ten years in the navigation of these seas. From their very frequency, the melancholy spectacle of the hulls protruding from the ocean fails to strike the minds of the eyes that behold such sad relics; and these once-proud coursers of the ocean are as though they had never been—yet each has probably suffered as much as, and many a great deal more than, the unhappy *Leek*, whose proximity to Perim kept her clear of pirates, famine, and many other aggravations of her woe. I could feel for her as for a companion in misfortune.

For could any fate be much worse than mine, while it lasted? I therefore think it desirable, now that we have really abandoned the wreck to her hopeless fate, to turn the page and describe my own life ashore, which was going on at the same time, and might easily represent the daily existence of anyone called to the profession of arms during certain portions of their career. I should wish my story to prove, as I think it will do, that no place on the earth is without capabilities of inspiring interest—no spot so bad but what it can be made better.

To be imprisoned on the Island of Perim during two or three months of the hot weather would be trying under any circumstances; but there were reasons why my own case was peculiarly hard.

I had been taken quite unawares for this duty, having been, as it were, trapped at Aden on my way from England to Bombay, for which place I had been allowed to book myself.

Taken thus without a word of warning, my very clothes were carried on to India ; and I actually had to dine with the Resident in what is known as a "Red Sea Sleeping Suit." Other raiment was, of course, manufactured for me before long, which, owing to the exigencies of Aden tailors, was bad, expensive, and uncomfortable ; besides which, I had to wait a long time for its completion. But, as I have said—or at any rate might have said—before, I am a person without a grievance.

From the day of my birth till the present moment, I dare say everyone may have treated me much better than I deserved. But I think it useful to bring before the mind of young or intending soldiers the general vicissitudes of a military career, as well as the conditions of life which any of them may be required to face on out-of-the-way and tropical islands.

After what I have said as regards my clothing, it would be superfluous to point out that I had neither servants, horses, saddlery, nor guns.

There are still a few things which are impossible—and one of them is to engage a respectable domestic at Aden. Excellent servitors often accompany their masters to that place ; but they leave it with them, to a man.

A drunken Goanese Christian, whom everybody had tried in turn and failed to put up with, was the only henchman I could procure to proceed with me to Perim. This personage was assisted in his duties by a Mahomedan private, belonging to my detachment, called Hyat ; and two shiny, half-naked Somali urchins, the sons of Gooled.

This ill-assorted little band lived together, I am sorry

to say, in misery and discord. The natural manners of the Somali youths were calculated to jar upon the sensibilities of a well-drilled Sepoy ; whilst the pork-eating man of Goa was a perpetual outrage to the other three.

One day the usual altercation rose to such a pitch, that I had to summon the combatants to my presence.

Said the heir of Gooled : "The butler has ordered me to prepare a hen, killed by himself, for your dinner ; but nothing shall induce me to pluck a fowl whose throat has been cut by a Kaffir—the Somali religion forbids such a course, so I cannot do it."

"Then pull the punkah instead," I replied, "and go on without intermission till sunset, when your father will meet us outside and explain to me the tenets of your creed."

The evening came, and with it Gooled, who rigidly confronted his offspring and eyed them sternly. I was about to enquire if there were really anything in the Somali Koran regarding the point at issue, when he suddenly administered to each such a resounding slap on the face that it seemed like signals from the lighthouse. The progeny reeled for a moment under their respective shocks, which were only intended as precursors of more, had I not interfered to prevent further punishment.

"The Somali religion," said the excellent Gooled, "is to do whatever you tell us."

After this spirited act of justice, who will be surprised to hear that the revolutionary spirit of these young radicals was effectually broken, and that rebellion was never more heard of in my little territory ?

Could I but have instituted cleanliness as well as

obedience, I should have been comparatively happy ; but this was a much more difficult matter.

Pedro, the man of Goa, was so very dirty that the only plan was to try not to think of him. I should certainly have washed him myself every day, only it would have been of no use, as he had to cook in a little den, down below, without a chimney or any ventilation to speak of. He lived, in fact, in the heart of an active volcano.

Hyat, on the other hand, being a Mussulman not trained to the ways of the Sahib-log, had his own ideas of the fitness of things.

One morning, after breakfast, quite contrary to my wont, I went into my bathroom, which was up on the ramparts. There, on the ground before me, crouched Hyat, with the look of a guilty and discovered rat upon his face. In his hand he held, as though transfixed, a stick with a sort of mop of greasy and dripping rags affixed to one end of it. Around him were disposed about half the articles of the breakfast-service ; whilst the remainder, including the curry-dish, were enjoying a quiet bath in the middle of my large tub !

This time, instead of rage, grief seemed to overcome me. "Hyat !" I said, "Hyat !"

"Well," responded the poor crestfallen man, "what could I do ? You know there is no accommodation at this place for anything—it is impossible to keep a Sahib here properly. And then water, as you well know, is given out to us by the pint : so how was I to wash your dishes if not in your bath, when you had done with it ? Here, certainly, the water must do as many duties as possible."

And truly it was not yet done with, as the chickens and goats must have finished it !

However, on reaching this crisis in the Cabinet, I at once sent for that able Minister, Athaide ; and, by means of his co-operation, we feloniously abstracted from the commissariat stores the remains of an ancient cask, in which the utensils were washed ever afterwards.

Such were the well-meaning but injudicious persons who formed my only companions upon this black and flattened rock ; for at first I was without the ministrations even of Gooled, who was certainly the best of them—for had I not despatched him to the mainland in pursuit of the Arabian hares ?

During his absence, I explored the island, alone and on foot, as well as the terrible and stewing heat of the climate at this time of the year would permit. I should certainly recommend every man to take a steady pony with him to Perim, especially if he should be sent there during the hot season. The sun, from the moment he appears till he sinks at last out of sight, is endowed with such a sickening power that few would feel equal to walking the mile and a half necessary to reach the boat and be taken for an afternoon sail under the shelter of its awning ; or, again, to walk back after taking an early morning dip in the sea. But I had no pony to carry me along the numerous little goat-tracks which rendered most parts of the isle accessible to a sure-footed beast ; so my solitary rambles were all done on foot.

As soon as I had brought my mind down to the level necessary for taking notice of what may be described as next

to nothing, I observed that there really was a great deal of vegetation on Perim : it was all, with the sole exception of the creeping portulacca, baked either black or white, and did not seem ever to have grown or to have experienced the heartfelt joys of spring ; but it was there—no one could deny that.

Slowly I began to speculate on these sad and parched representatives of vegetable-life.

Could any sweet-blooded animal be nourished by them, any insects reared thereon which would not themselves be poisonous to the partridges and game-birds of other regions, should they be made to inhabit this sea-girt prison ?

Certainly there was a large flock of goats belonging to the inhabitants of the island which were daily sent forth to graze ; but this might mean much or nothing, for these animals were all fed and watered at home during the night, whilst the natives invariably send all their beasts out to forage though there may not be a vestige of anything for them to eat.

When remonstrated with on this head, they will say severely : " It is the custom—so they must go ; and, if they work hard, God will surely show them something."

Under these circumstances, I thought it best to take an early opportunity of consulting Athaide, the commissariat inspector, on the subject, as he would take a business view of the matter.

" Oh, yes," he said, " the long coarse grass, of which a great quantity will grow up if it is only started by one heavy thunderstorm, can be eaten by camels ; and I have fed the two Government ones, which I have charge of as water-

carriers, upon it when the stores ran short, but it is not very good for them. As to the goats, they really live and do well principally upon the various bushes which you see around us."

This was cheering intelligence, and encouraged my hopes that, when Gooled should arrive with his dozen hares, they would find themselves in quite a "Promised Land."

Meanwhile, I "prospected" with increased attention, and at last started off, with the object of collecting as many specimens of different plants as I might discover growing without any aid from man, and in spite of the strenuous opposition of Nature. I forget now the exact number that rewarded by exertions, but there were certainly not less than nine distinct species of plants, three of which proved agreeable to my own dainty and home-fed milkers.

It was during this ramble of enquiry that I observed, in a distant and out-of-the-way nook, three gazelles browsing with every appearance of enjoyment. They were all females, and I at once suspected them of belonging to some of the dwellers in the Fort. On my return thither, I asked about them, and was informed that such was the case. "And how do these wild little beasts manage about water?" I demanded.

"Oh, they come up here every now and then, when they are very thirsty, and make known that they want a good drink—which, of course, is always supplied to them."

Thus was the question of water for wild stock still kept in abeyance.

Did they require it, or would the two varieties of the

portulacca-plant, of which there was always an inexhaustible supply, enable certain kinds of beasts to flourish without actually drinking ?

Rabbits, at any rate, I thought, might be successfully introduced into such a situation ; for, in addition to this possibly suitable food, the whole island abounds in tracts of rocky banks and fissures where they could have their homes. And then they would have no enemies except cats (which could be easily kept under) and snakes (which, I must confess, are a very large and unknown quantity at Perim). Experience alone could prove whether these last-named reptiles might prove fatal to a colony of bunnies.

At all events, I wrote to Aden for some hutch-rabbits which I knew could be obtained there, and then looked about for what I thought might prove the most favourable place for eventually turning them out.

I was starting, one evening, for one of these interesting tours of inspection, when Gooled stood unannounced before me. He had just landed from the bugalow that had brought him back, at last, from the mainland.

"The hares !" I exclaimed in breathless excitement, "the hares !"

"I have got one, all safe in a basket."

"But the dozen ?—you promised me a dozen, and I have been hoping for more !"

"Well, we did catch ever so many, but, from one cause or another, they have all died except this one, which I shall give to you directly ; and, by-and-by, I will surely get you some more."

There seemed nothing for it but to try and be satisfied

with this comparative failure of the undertaking ; so I only sighed and said : " Very well ! "

The hare proved to be a nice little doe, about the same size and exactly resembling the one my dogs had coursed for me on the desert outside Aden ; but whether they were leverets or full-grown specimens of a pigmy race, I have no means of saying, as these were the only two I ever saw belonging to those reigns. The one that I had now got had become accustomed to its captivity, and would lap milk ; so I kept it until the succeeding evening, that I might make sure of its condition.

I then went forth quite alone, and arrived about sunset at a quiet and pretty little dell which I had previously decided upon as a fitting arena for the *début* of my little *protégé* in her island-home. I placed her cage upon the ground and opened the door so softly that she was unaware, at first, of the new world offered to her adventurous spirit.

I myself retired noiselessly to an adjacent bush, in which I concealed myself, and watched.

Ere long, a quivering pair of ears emerged beyond the precincts of the box, and for some time remained quite stationary as the hare, with her bright eyes, surveyed the new horizon. All appeared safe ; so the timid creature, with a few hesitating and gliding steps, abandoned her prison-home and then stood up on her long hindlegs and sniffed the air in all directions.

The wind was favourable to my concealment, and nothing revealed the presence of any living thing but herself.

She thought herself alone, and was happy. Close to her grew a tuft of the long grass I have mentioned, and at this

she nibbled as though confidently recognising a favourite dish. A little further on, she stopped at a tall shrub with water-bearing leaves, and of this diet she also approved.

As I thus watched her pretty movements she vanished under the sheltering mantle of the gathering night, and I saw her no more.

I have every reason, however, to suppose that solitude was all that this little animal had to complain of in her new settlement ; for, about three weeks after her liberation, one of my Sepoys started her from under a bush as he was out walking on the racecourse about half a mile from the Fort. He said she started off at a great pace, and seemed full of health and strength.

As some atonement for bringing but one hare, Gooled had procured for me a basket of melons grown in the interior, and which he had procured in the intervals of the chase. I thanked him more out of politeness than from gratitude, as I have never had any liking for this vegetable fruit.

The next morning, however, I thought I would while away some time by partaking of one in a condescending sort of way.

Great and agreeable was my surprise, then, to find these melons quite delicious, and so superior to any others I had ever eaten in my life as in no way to resemble them.

Gooled had also brought me a little male-gazelle, which I was very glad to receive. "But," said he, "I do not think the inhabitants will suffer it to live when you are gone, for there was once a full-grown buck accompanying the females which you have seen ; but familiarity with man caused him

to grow proud and vengeful. He used to attack the humble goats, and gored many of them to death. In consequence of this conduct, he was shot, some time ago ; and the little herd have been masterless ever since."

I was sorry to hear this, for I can see no reason why a good deal of game should not be kept upon an island two miles long by one broad, and whose surface, as in this case, is much broken by hillocks, ravines, and rocks, all of which would afford excellent cover. Only such animals would be selected as either require no water, or so little that it could be supplied to them by the solitary Commandant at a much less cost than he is content to meet in making himself very ill on a course of champagne-dinners in Poona, to say nothing of the excess of creature-comforts which—poor fellow!—he sometimes, and not unnaturally, indulges in whilst at Perim itself.

My advice to anyone going at this moment to such an island would be as follows :—

Turn to and start something. Become, to commence with, a gamekeeper instead of a universal destroyer. There will always be the rats, cats, scorpions, snakes, and other vermin and reptiles to hunt with dogs and guns, whilst the more-favoured classes are being cherished and protected.

Perim, being from want of water practically without any human population, is in many respects delightfully adapted to the preservation of wild animals. Its two hundred inhabitants are all collected either in the lighthouse-yard (which, out of deference to our rulers, I will now christen Gibraltar) or down at the landing-place by the harbour. Anyone sneaking off to poach from either of these points

or from any boat on the shore could immediately be reported by the "lookout" from the summit of his lofty watch-tower, and their career of wickedness would be nipped in the very bud.

No doubt the actual work of turning out any animals for stocking a country in hot latitudes should be done at the beginning of the cold season, as it is then that they would have all the advantages and none of the trials of life in the East. But, pending the arrival of the month of November, the time could be fully employed in the preliminary preparations.

Acting on this principle as soon as I returned to Aden, I procured four or five hutch-rabbits for a trifling sum, and accommodated them with a spacious empty outhouse to live in. Here they lived in a state of luxury and happiness rarely conceived of by Aden rabbits.

In the centre of the room stood a tin of the water that I drank of myself, flanked by dishes containing various kinds of grain; whilst of fresh carrots and other vegetables there was a never-failing supply.

In the course of about ten days, all appearance of anxiety had disappeared from the manners of these pretty little pets. They enjoyed their harem-life to the full, and became fat, sleek, and thoughtless. Their beatitude, in short, was that of a well-watered cabbage growing in a rich soil.

How little did these innocent creatures suspect that they were the subjects of an experiment all the time, and that they were being narrowly and ceaselessly watched by a crafty being possessing over them the power of life and death! Why, for instance, at the end of the time mentioned, were

they one day tempted with delicacies such as caused them to eat to satiety? They knew not; but the reader shall be allowed to peep behind the scenes.

I had just been up on to the mountains behind the house and collected several kinds of plants that I knew grew in profusion at Perim; and these I now threw down almost with trepidation in front of the future colonists. If they would partake of this fare in their present gorged state and with every kind of civilised food lying around them, could there be any doubt that it was in every respect suitable to their health and requirements?

No sooner was the miscellaneous bunch of herbage cast upon the floor, than the four noses and as many pairs of ears at once came to attention. "Something new!" they seemed to say, "and smells delicious; we must make one effort more." And with this they attacked the new provisions, to all of which they did ample justice.

I was so very glad to see they preferred the two kinds of portulacca to everything else, for the success of the experiment must eventually turn on whether they could assimilate these two water-bearing plants—for the notion that rabbits, because they do not necessarily drink, can subsist without moisture is based upon ignorance, and sometimes leads to the most appalling, though unintentional, cruelty.

I was once a passenger on board an ocean-steamer, belonging to one of the first companies in the world, the purveyor of which had laid in a large stock of rabbits for the voyage.

I used to visit all the poor beasts on board every day, to see how they were getting on.

We started from Suez, and almost immediately the rabbits began to die in great numbers and as it were before my very eyes. It was sad to see how dry and withered their little corpses looked, even through their fur, as they were trampled by the survivors.

I inspected the hen-coops in which they were confined, and saw that the troughs were dry and bleached—no water could have been put into them for a long time ; and I was equally sure they could have had no green food, as there was none for the first-class passengers except what came out of tins. I hurried for some water, which I procured and poured into their bins ; and I shall never forget the eagerness with which the poor little creatures rushed into it and struggled with one another for the precious fluid.

I now enquired of the butcher what they were fed on, and he informed me that they got nothing whatever but bran, perfectly dry out of the sack, and that this was all they wanted. Water, he asserted, would kill them. (Imagine this in the burning heat of the Red Sea !)

Of course I continued to give them plenty to drink—perhaps too much, for the mortality, though it decreased, did not cease.

The consequence was that a deputation of the higher officials, such as the purser, waited upon me and forbade my interference, adding that the rabbits were to have no more water.

“Indeed,” I said, “then you will have to put me in irons, for as long as I am free I shall give them plentifully to drink.”

Strange to say, this defiant attitude, instead of bringing

the captain and all the crew down upon me, caused the entire collapse of the opposition, who at once retired, and, ever after, themselves gave the unfortunate little beasts as much water as they wanted.

But, quite apart from the foregoing experience, I was always well aware that every animal must consume a good deal of liquid in some form or other. I should, therefore, have thought it the height of cruelty to turn any beasts out on Perim without first feeling sure that their needs in this respect would be satisfied.

However, as I was fortunately not destined to return to that island myself, I could not carry out the experiment personally, but was obliged to be satisfied with sending these rabbits to my successor, with many instructions as to what was to be done under the circumstances.

There being, as usual, no other officer available, the indefatigable Lieutenant Banff was once more at this trying post on my leaving it. This, however dreadful for himself, was fortunate for me and the rabbits, as he was the only man I knew of, in those parts, who, I thought, would not turn them into curry—one every day—and thus frustrate for ever the projects of science and of sport. Lieutenant Banff possessed one of those really superior minds which are capable, when called upon, of organising an army; or, if not allowed a field for such talents, then he would not consider it derogatory to employ the intervals of enforced obscurity by studying the structure of the humblest insect, which, is, after all, beyond the comprehension of even the ablest Prime Minister.

To the care, then, of this more-than-competent gentleman

I consigned the little emigrants, with all sorts of directions, which, if they were unnecessary to the receiver by reason of his superior natural intelligence, were at any rate a great comfort to me. I recommended him not to turn out the actual animals sent to the island, but to wait till they had multiplied in captivity, and then locate the young, half-grown ones on a spot which I had carefully chosen and duly marked on the chart as the most fitting position that could be found. It was just north of the racecourse, near the centre of the island, and yet sufficiently removed from our habitations to be beyond the maraudings of the numerous cats that are always to be found near the dwellings of man. The range of these poachers can always be ascertained at Perim, for their midnight wanderings are sure to be clearly recorded against them, in the morning, by their own footprints clearly defined on the sandy tracts that intersect the rocks in all directions.

“The Warren,” as I think I called the spot fixed upon, was a hillock of large rocks full of deep and ramifying cracks such as conies might surely delight in. It was surrounded by a little plain of sandy ground, and was connected with other similar fortresses by a profusion of the portulacca and other plants whose edibility I had so thoroughly tested. It was also well within view of the watchman on the lighthouse-top, and, in fact, seemed to combine all the advantages obtainable for rabbits in a wild state on this island.

Is Perim now stocked with such a superabundance of ground-game that the successors of myself and the gallant Banff are unable to keep it down either by means of the

gun or by the employment of falcons trained to the chase ?

This question I must leave to be answered by future annalists—for, as the reader has already gathered, I was not destined to remain on this desolate island long enough to do much towards transforming it into a happy little hunting-ground.

I could only do my utmost, during the time allotted to me, to give such a turn to events as might perhaps prove profitable to future generations.

For instance, the Captain of the *Dalhousie* presented me with one or two things which I hope I turned to the best account for the general weal.

One of these gifts was a large and correct chart of the island, giving a perfect representation of its outline, but without any names by which to distinguish the various points of interest. I therefore mounted this valuable map in the best way I could ; and, having christened a number of localities with names mostly of my own invention, I hung it upon the wall of my cell, for the benefit of future-comers. I was afterwards told that, amongst the earliest visitants, were the Queen's own surveyors, who had so far approved of my nomenclature as to adopt all the names which I had chosen. I hope I marked, at the foot of this chart, the information which I received with it—namely, that the difference of time between Bombay and Perim was fifty-seven minutes and four seconds.

The other treasure-trove which I received was, I confess, much more in accordance with my own tastes : it was nothing less than a remarkably-fine specimen of the luggur-

falcon, exactly resembling the late lamented Selina, mentioned on a former page. This bird had been taken captive among the rigging in the Red Sea, and had lost a foot during this crisis of her fate, and her wing-feathers were nearly all broken off short, so that flight was impossible. Still, I thought that, with care and attention, I should get her ready for action by the time I left ; and then it would only remain for my successors to raise ground-game and such birds as would not take her out to sea, to fly her at—for one sound foot would be quite sufficient to enable such a powerful bird to capture a partridge or a rabbit, though a hare would have required all the talons originally supplied by nature.

Such was my little dream of the future—destined, as far as I was concerned, never to assume shape ; for I found the work of restoring the unfortunate hawk much more difficult than I had at first expected it would be. As soon as one of the large feathers began to grow and to get beyond the edge of the broken stumps, it was immediately smashed by the force with which the bird would beat the earth with her powerful pinions in despairing efforts to rise again into her native heavens. Now I remembered and saw the reason why this species change the great quills of their mighty wings one at a time only—for the new-comer is thus effectually protected by the old ones till it has itself acquired a strength and durability equal to their own. I had no hood the wearing of which would have prevented her from fluttering ; but at last the difficulty of getting the right leather for this purpose was overcome, and this necessary article was manufactured, and placed upon the falcon's

head. But, as it must have taken at least six months for a complete restoration of the plumage, I have again fallen back upon the historian of a later period to inform us as to the ultimate fate of Selina the Second.

I can only chronicle the events, deeds, and mode of life that characterised my own brief reign at Perim.

Next to fishing, bathing struck me as the most agreeable recreation actually and immediately available at this place; but, when I spoke of it to Gooled, he assured me it was not safe—on account of the sharks and, worse still, the currents—to venture into the open sea. “But,” he added, “I will show you a bath that has been constructed in the harbour, and is so made that no large fish could enter it.”

Accordingly, we proceeded to this spot, where I found a most uninviting washing-place, consisting of a square of about twenty feet by ten in depth, and formed entirely of huge, rough, jagged boulders, which could only have been got into position by an expenditure of much time and labour. I determined, therefore, to turn back, recross the island, and bathe, with my two dogs, on the sands of Turtle Reach. This I found most agreeable and, I should think, quite safe, as the slope of the shore is here very gradual, and there is no necessity to go out of one's depth.

I once, however, had an adventure with a black snake which, as I believe they are venomous, might have proved serious.

The affair occurred in this way:—There being no seaweed obtainable at Aden, I had been asked by a friend to

collect any I might be able to find at Perim, and send it, on the first opportunity, in a pail, to that place, for the use of his drawingroom-aquarium. Accordingly, one evening when I was bathing as usual, I saw, or thought I saw, a nice tuft of this marine vegetable growing conveniently from the very top of a beautiful smooth, round, black stone, about the size of a large saucer. "Just the very thing!" I said to myself, "the stone will act like a natural flowerpot and will look very pretty in a glass tank." I now stooped cautiously, so as not to trouble the clear water, which was not more than waist-deep, and cautiously extended my hand to grasp the object of my choice. But, just as my fingers were about to close on it, the supposed stone uncoiled from the root of seaweed with the suddenness of a steel spring, and became a serpent black as ink, darting with lightning-speed along the yellow sand under the waters of the ocean; and I need scarcely say I saw it no more. I do not for a moment imagine that I was in any real danger from this beast, for snakes have one great claim on our forbearance, which is this—they will rarely, if ever, bite man except in self-defence, and are also extremely clever in getting out of the way and avoiding agitating collisions with creatures of higher rank than themselves. Still, it would be certain death to get into bed with an erring cobra, or to tread upon the tail of one on hurriedly entering your bathroom. They are not nice.

I only met with one more sight on Turtle Reach worth recording, and that was a fine three-masted vessel hard and fast aground. Like the unhappy *Leek*, she also refused to make any signals whatever; and I am glad to say her efforts

to conceal her shame proved successful—for, having merely run on to a soft sandbank, she was able, after a six hours' struggle, to get under weigh again and proceed on her journey rejoicing.

As I have already said, there are a great many land-snakes at Perim ; but whether they are harmless, as we Englishmen declare, or deadly to the last degree, as is asserted by the natives concerning this and every other kind of serpent, I am not in a position to decide. Being a strong opponent of vivisection, I should not like to have rats experimentally bitten by them. My advice, therefore, is to consider all reptiles as enemies, and to slay them whenever you get the chance. This is especially my opinion with regard to scorpions. Whether they can be correctly called reptiles or not, they are odious creatures ; and, as they literally swarm on the surface of this island, especially after a fall of rain, I think a page or so may here be well devoted to a description of them. Their general appearance must be so well known to everyone, from pictures, that it would be superfluous to draw a portrait of one of them in words. It will be sufficient to say that they vary in colour from almost black to a very light drab, and that in length they may extend from five inches—which I think I have seen—to a foot, as reported to me by my friend Baron Munchhausen.

The scorpion is a beast of brutish and sinister aspect. Judging by his manners, I should think he must be eyeless ; for, having for his own reasons emerged from his concealment into the light of day, he will remain motionless, in some exposed situation, with his long tail arched over his back and displaying at the end of it the powerful and horn-

like sting with which he is prepared to strike venomously—what? Anything that may touch him. Vibrations, whether of the air or earth, seem to affect him; for a heavy footfall or the near sniffing of a dog will cause him to turn uneasily, and his bearing then is quite that of a blind man listening. Unlike the snakes, this animal seems neither able nor willing to retreat, and is always ready to sting. Fortunately, although their poison often causes great agony for twenty-four hours, its effects are seldom, if ever, fatal; so that they are more hated than feared. Ammonia, applied externally, is, I believe, the best known remedy for a person stung by one of these creatures; but, if prevention be better than cure, I would recommend the keeping of plenty of chickens on ground which is troubled with these stealthy enemies. Fowls will eat them greedily, though they rather fear the large ones.

Whenever I found a big scorpion I used to pick it up with a pair of pincers, and throw it to the cocks and hens: these would gather round the tempting bait with a great deal of interest and circumspection. There would be subdued notes of alarm and much craning of necks as the circle of timid gluttons glared at the intended mouthful and gradually closed in upon it. First one and then another would make darts with their beaks, which were evidently only feints and intended to miss; whilst the scorpion would remain immovable, yet strung to attention, in their midst. It was evident he was aware of his danger, but, could he see his enemies? appeared to be the question which the fowls were never quite able to solve. For minutes at a time they would stand spellbound around this fascinating enigma, till

at last one more determined than the rest would deliver the fatal lunge and secure the tail of the enemy, with the sting in it, as her portion, whilst the best portion was torn from her by the sneaks who had played a waiting game. Whenever the scorpion was of unusual dimensions, it was always a certain black hen that gave the *coup de grâce*, till one day she got stung on the cheek. After this the whole party declined even to look at any more large ones till I had first killed them with a stone. It may interest some people to learn that the fowl, when stung, did not seem to be affected in anything like the same degree as a human being would have been. She shook her head a good deal and scratched at it periodically for about half an hour, but she continued to look for food and to be able to enjoy life much the same as usual.

I have never been stung by one of these beasts myself, but I have had some very narrow escapes. On two occasions, whilst at Perim, my servant found a large scorpion in my bed, between the sheets. How it got there I could not tell, but I suspected it of having a nest inside the mattress, which had a good many holes in it. This was very disagreeable, as there were no means on the island of getting another, or of doing much to the old one; so I was obliged to be content with having every rent carefully patched, so that, if there should be any more of these animals inside, they might be starved to death.

Owing to the proximity of the mainland, it was quite possible to have dust-storms here; and one day we had a visitation of the sort, which I thought a good deal of, as, up to that date, I had not experienced those of Beloochistan,

which I shall describe at some future time. The air was certainly thick with fine white sand for an hour or so, when a storm of rain descended and created such a delightful change that I went out for my afternoon walk a full hour earlier than usual. I found all Nature rejoicing, including the snakes and scorpions. Of the latter I counted nearly a dozen on a little foot-track not a hundred yards in length. One of these excursionists I at first did not recognise for a scorpion : it seemed of portentous size, and covered all over with a sort of light-red fur which depended as fringe from its legs and its elevated tail. I approached softly and looked at it with care, when I saw that it was massed all over with its own young. I had no means of preserving this interesting family, so I suppose I must have destroyed them all. There can be nothing new to naturalists, however, in what I observed ; for I have since been assured that I merely witnessed a single example of the manner in which every young scorpion is reared.

To this odious reptile belongs all the glory of supreme maternal love, falsely ascribed to the pelican, of nourishing her young with her blood. "For," said my authority, "the progeny, in this case, remain attached to the mother in the way you saw, and suck the juices of her body till she becomes a mere dried-up shell and dies of inanition at last."

On receiving this information, a feeling of melancholy stole o'er me, as the wan ghosts of certain mothers of a nobler species rose to memory's eye.

The idea that a scorpion will, if surrounded by a ring of fire, sting itself to death could, I should think, have no

foundation in fact, as the sting seems to be so placed as to render the self-infliction of a wound quite impossible.

The only remaining fact concerning scorpions which I can call to mind rests on better foundations, as I have it from an eye-witness that, if one of them be placed under a large glass together with the great tarantula or poisonous spider, a fight will sooner or later ensue, which ends invariably in the death of the scorpion and the total demolition of his body by his much less powerful-looking antagonist.

I really think that snakes and scorpions are the only aboriginal inhabitants of Perim. All the other living things there to be found are either birds or beasts that have strayed, like the English, the French, and the sea-gulls, from other and happier lands.

Still, amongst this limited and fugitive population, there is the usual sprinkling of domestic events, in which I took more interest than in the most pompous announcements ever made by the *Morning Post*.

The tyndal, in spite of my furious denunciations, was duly united to the object of his choice. Then, again, a stoker belonging to the *Dalhousie* died of the heat and was buried on the island. While, last but not least, my beautiful St. Bernard, Mama, introduced eight lovely puppies to an admiring world. I most unwisely destroyed four of these valuable little animals, as I feared the mother could not bring up more than half the litter; but I have since learnt from experience that an animal of this sort can manage eight quite well, if they are not all left too long with her. The greyhound, Pet, was the father of these dogs, and I

derived much pleasure in anticipating, by means of the imagination, those great wolf-hunting scenes in which they were destined to figure in reality at a later period.

And now the hot and weary time of my captivity was drawing to an end, and even the very day—the 4th of October—was named as the date of my emancipation.

When daylight broke on that eventful morning, I became as it were rooted, like “Sister Anne,” to the little square window in my room, from which I should obtain the first welcome glimpse of the smoke from the steamer coming from Aden with the “relief,” as it was technically and aptly called. I knew it must be noon before the vapour from the vessel could be seen above the horizon, but that was no reason against straining one’s eyeballs, for hours beforehand, towards the point illumined by hope.

At last, however, the wished-for cloud appeared as a thin streak against the blue sky ; and, from the course it held, we all felt sure it was the right ship making for our own harbour. Our judgment proved correct, and at three o’clock in the afternoon our old friend was once more anchored in the port. The exchange of troops was soon effected, and by five p.m. I and all my little party were once more on our way back to Aden.

The weather was quite calm and the October air was cool ; so that when night came, and I lay on my bed spread out under the awning, I was able to indulge in some not unprofitable reflections upon the island I had left for ever, as well as upon the life I had led whilst inhabiting it.

Perim, though its ocean-girt limits scarcely exceed the dimensions of a large garden, ought to be a place of extra-

ordinary interest to every Englishman, by reason of its incalculable strategic value.

It would be simply impossible for us to navigate the Red Sea were this island strongly fortified and held by any great maritime rival who might happen to be at war with us. Till, therefore, we decide upon handing over India to the tender mercies of France or Russia, it would be madness to part with Perim. Long, then, may it remain a precious little jewel in the British Crown, and consequently the possible abode of any young and patriotic Briton who goes abroad to serve his country! It is for the benefit of such future residents that I have so fully entered into the details of my daily life on this island. For their sakes I have pointed out the distractions which exist naturally to enable them to struggle against the attacks of our greatest enemy in the East—the spirit of *ennui*.

One should never—especially when banished to such places as Aden and Perim—cede one inch of ground to this redoubtable foe. Fishing, boating, bathing, athletic sports for the Sepoys, and many other healthy pursuits, are ever at hand; so that, during the cool season, I really see no reason why life should be intolerable to anyone who may have to live for a few months at this place. No doubt, during the hot period from the 1st March to the 30th September, it requires prodigies of firmness to keep up anything approaching to cheerfulness. Indeed, the greatest determination would, if left to nothing but its own strength, fail before the end of a week unless adequate measures had been taken beforehand for its support. I would therefore strongly recommend—nay, implore—of anyone going at the above-mentioned season

to this outpost to take with him a good sure-footed pony and plenty of books, including some by the most renowned philosophers of ancient and modern times. My other suggestions for the cultivation of all sorts of small game are, I feel sure, capable of being carried out to a sufficient extent to impart a great deal of interest to the rambles of the solitary exile. But this would require an *entente cordiale* between those coming to and going from the island, as one butcher would effectually destroy the work of three game-preservers.

All must, of course, pull together ; and, if they did so, Aden, Perim, and even other places too dreadful to mention would gradually wear a more inviting aspect.

With some such meditations as these, I fell asleep, to awake next morning at Aden, where it was still to be my fate to reside for a short time longer.

For the sake, however, of perspicacity, I have related all my experiences on this mountain of rock as though they had been entirely gathered during one unbroken visit.

It was all very well for me, the victim of military rule, to be sent backwards and forwards ; but I would not for worlds inflict such an aggravation of torture upon my gentle and indulgent readers. Did I not promise them, on a former page, that I had said good-bye to Aden for ever ? And I will be as good as my word. Never again shall the name of this vast Castle of Despair darken our thoughts and sadden our memories. Indeed, I should not have taxed so heavily as I have done the attention and patience of the Public by describing our possessions in the Red Sea at so great length, had I not been much struck, of late, by

observing how little notice seems to have been bestowed by anyone on these important places.

In conclusion, I can only hope that the descriptions of our Indian Stations which yet remain to be portrayed may light up another volume with more of life and animation than can be expected whilst we are confined to the Red Sea.

END OF VOL. I.

