

LETTER FROM INDIA.

The account below is of a trip in one of the native States of India, taken by Mr. and Mrs. Moffat, engaged in Y. M. C. A. work and three other Missionaries. Mrs. Moffat is a sister of Dr. Bell and is well known to Dwight people.

A Trip in Kashmir.

Kashmir is one of the largest native States of India. It is made up of the three old kingdoms of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh, and is ruled by a Maharajah under the advice of an English Resident. The history of this country has been a sad one—due partly to its position on the Tibet Frontier, and partly to its natural wealth. It is a "Garden of Eden" with its fruits, its flowers, its trees, mountains, valleys and great waterways. No other country of its size has such contrasts of scenery and climate as Kashmir. The times of peace and independence have been very few. From the earliest records (about 2000 B. C.) nation after nation conquered Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have always been weak and unaggressive, for they had only to scratch the soil to produce rich harvests, while other nations became hardy fighting for their daily bread against barren soil, burning sun, floods, drought and famine. Most of the conquerors were cruel and uncompromising in their victories and persecuted the people relentlessly. Temples and Mosques were so devastated that today the Kashmiri takes no interest in the ruins of the most magnificent temples in India. Most of the people are today Mohammedans in name; the Maharajah, is however, a Hindu.

If one cannot stay several months in Kashmir it is rather difficult to choose a time to visit it. In May and June the flowers are in bloom, the mountains are covered with snow and the valleys are comfortably cool. In July and August the fruits are ripe, but one must leave the house-boat in the valley and go to the mountains. We decided on the earlier months, and left Allahabad in May for Rawal Pindi. Four of us travelled together in a compartment with three six-foot seats with leather cushions, and two drop berths swung from chains. Although we travelled over 1,000 miles, the fare was only about six dollars each, (including sleeping accommodation). In spite of the great heat (115 degrees) the electric fan, and sheets cooled with water kept us quite com-

fortable. We had our own servant in a small compartment on the same car, who cooked our food and secured iced water for us. His fare was only two dollars.

At Rawal Pindi we were joined by the fifth member of our party and continued to Peshawar, the terminus of the railway on the Northwest Frontier. There are two passes into India from the north—the most important of which is the Khyber Pass. It connects India with Afghanistan. It was this Pass through which each succeeding Aryan invasion came, that Alexander used in his conquest of India, and through which the Mohammedan invaders secured entrance. There is nothing beautiful about the Pass, but it has rugged grandeur. We drove by tonga (a two-wheeled vehicle with two seats, back to back) to the entrance of the Pass, where stands a great English Fort. For several miles on the plain, before one reaches the Pass, no building is permitted and the Pass itself contains only a few shepherd villages. We were allowed to drive eleven miles up the Pass to the Fort, Ali Masjid. Every favorable elevation is fortified or has a sentry post. There is constant travel through the Pass—caravans of camels, donkeys and mountain ponies, and numbers of heavy carts drawn by bullocks, all laden with products for Afghanistan or Turkestan. Now and then one sees an English officer, alone, or with a small escort, on a trip to one of the garrisons. Once a year a considerable force of English soldiers is sent through the Pass as a sign of readiness. The Khyber Pass is one of the most strategic points in the world. England has shown great sagacity in her selection and fortification of Gibraltar, Suez, Aden, Khyber Pass and several other important points which enable her to maintain her position among the great powers of the world.

Peshawar is an interesting city—its population made up largely of a people more Afghan than Indian. It has many interesting shops where one may buy genuine Persian or Bokhara rugs, or perhaps they are made in Germany. The most valuable rugs those which have been in use for two or three hundred years and have never been duplicated. One is surer of the genuine article in Peshawar than elsewhere, but even there a large per cent of the rugs sold are machine made imitations. Peshawar is beautiful—a city of parks, boulevards and driveways.

Returning to Rawal Pindi we set out for our two hundred mile drive to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. We had a landau, a very roomy carriage, with an adjustable cover and glass doors for rain or sunshine. Strapped at the rear was about two hundred pounds of baggage. In addition to this we had an ekka (a two-wheeled cart) for our servant and the rest of our baggage. The first day we travelled twenty-seven miles, stopping over night at Tret dak bungalow. These bungalows are to be found throughout India. One can secure a room and bed for twenty-four hours for thirty-two cents, and good meals very reasonably if he does not have his own cook. He can stay only one night at the same dak bungalow.

The road from Tret to Murree, a distance of thirteen miles, is very steep but the twenty-seven miles from Murree to Kohala is a gradual descent that requires no brakes and no pulling. At Kohala we crossed the Jhelum river into Kashmir and paid toll. We continued twelve miles to Dulai, where, on the banks of the river is a beautiful bungalow known as "Honey-moon Cottage." The next day our horses were rather tired from the long trip of the preceding day, and at dusk we had still three miles to go over a dangerous road, so narrow that teams could only pass with great difficulty. Towering hundreds of feet above the road were perpendicular cliffs of huge boulders; the Jhelum, a thundering torrent, rushed along three hundred feet below us. I shall not attempt to describe the Jhelum river, but the road follows it for over one hundred miles into Baramulla, and most of the way it is as swift, as noisy and as grand as the Niagara rapids below the falls. And then such a contrast at Baramulla, for here it is as quiet and as peaceful as a lake—the home of many house-boats.

As we approached the bungalow at Chakoti at 9:00 p. m. we heard the shouts of angry bullock drivers and found that a bridge had been washed away. It was as dark as pitch and the road resembled that article. After an hour's delay, a large number of coolies took our carriage across a temporary bridge of logs. A landslide ahead had blocked the road for days, and the bungalow was crowded—twenty-eight people with accommodation for eight. Near the bungalow is a two-story building, with stores below, a school, and three rooms for Hindus above. Nine American mis-

sionaries occupied the three rooms; we secured the two schoolrooms, less than ten feet square. With hay for beds, a leaky roof above us, and fleas for our constant companions, we lived there for two days and enjoyed life (?). One can hardly fancy an Englishman in such surroundings without his bath tub and dress suit, but we fourteen Americans had a regular picnic. Our pass word was "I've been working on the railroad." Of course, everyone who travels in India carries his own bedding and a certain amount of food.

The next day the engineer told us that it would be a week before the road became passable. It was the worst landslide in the history of Kashmir. A three hour cloud-burst had wrecked miles of the road. After two days we started and passed the first landslide. Three miles further a bridge had been carried away. A new one was soon built, but tons of earth and rock had to be moved on each side before carriages could get down the steep bank to the new bridge. A gang of Irishmen with an American boss would have finished the job in a day—it took these Indians four days. Even then three of us Americans took off our coats and went to work, to the contempt of the Englishmen who thought it improper for a man to be in his shirtsleeves before ladies, and to the amazement and acceleration of the coolies. The approach to each side of the bridge was filled in with large boulders, and it took plenty of men and hard work to get the carriages over the rough roadway.

We were able to travel about eighteen miles further, to within a mile of Rampur. Here we dismissed our carriages and hired coolies for our luggage. Three or four English people had possession of the dak bungalow and refused to share it, even though there were six ladies in the party, one nearly seventy years of age. Our servant had a high fever, we had been doing our own cooking for two days, and it was raining. Under the circumstances we were content to sleep on the floor at the Hindu bungalow.

The next day we started with seventeen coolies, and a pony for Mrs. Allen—one of the three ladies who had joined our party. I shall not attempt to describe the road for the next seven miles. In places the pony sank to his knees in mud. When we reached the other end of the break we expected to find carriages. After a wait of two hours we were able to

get pack ponies for our baggage, and to send Mrs. Allen in the mail tonga, but we walked ten miles to Baramulla in a rain storm. Here we found our house-boat, with straw matting roof and sides, waiting for us, and we started for Srinagar. Our troubles were by no means at an end, for our boatman, in his haste to get to Baramulla (so he said) did not bring any furniture. We believed him then, for we did not know the Kashmiri's fondness for anything but truth. After our two day's trip to Srinagar we secured a real house-boat, well furnished, and with a doonga cook boat where the cook and crew live. We stayed there long enough to get tents and supplies, and then went a day's journey up the Sind river, in our boat, to Ganderba. Here we hired ponies for a ten day trip up the Sind valley.

As it must come some time, I may as well speak now of the Kashmiri. Everyone who goes to Kashmir says, "The scenery is grand,—but the people!" In their personal habits and dress they have no regard for cleanliness, and the old city of Srinagar is disgustingly filthy and unsanitary. The men, women and children, as a rule, all dress alike in a one-piece garment, which hangs below the knees, has long sleeves and large cuffs. The garment is made very loose to permit the wearer to carry a basket of hot coals underneath. At night the basket, or congerie, makes a warm bed-fellow. The garment is never clean and never washed, in spite of the abundance of water. Men and children wear a skull cap, which breeds germs, and usually conceals a dirty head, covered with sores. Careless alike of food and drink, they use the dirty river water for cooking, drinking and bathing. The Kashmiri is unpleasant to look upon; he is even more hopeless as a man. The ages of servitude as a nation have combined to make him a cringing servile coward, without backbone, or either physical or moral courage. He has but little sense of truth, honesty or honor. He takes advantage of anyone willing to give fairplay, but he admires the man who becomes master. I had so many occasions to put this into effect that I began to feel like a slave driver. My first experience came at Ganderba, when I had to compel the head-man of the village to keep to his agreement to furnish ponies for our Sind Valley trip. He saw a better bargain with another party, and it required strenuous methods to teach

him respect for his word. He bore no ill-will, however, but was quick ready for his share of the "backsheesh"—that magic Eastern word for "tip," known from Suez to Japan—the one word upon which to found a universal language.

I wish I might take you day by day up the beautiful Sind Valley, where we spent nine days, but I must only mention the Zoji la Pass, connecting Ladakh and Kashmir. We crossed half a mile of snow entering the gorge, and then climbed a steep trail over the snow, in the narrow gorge. Above us towered rocks hundreds of feet high. For three miles we climbed so steep that the ponies could not carry us; then we reached the upper trail near the top of the Pass, and returned to the Valley. In its ruggedness, its views, its contrast of snow, green grass, flowers and rocks, it would be difficult to find a more interesting spot in any country. Through this Pass the Ladakhis came with coolies, ponies or yak buffalo, bringing their products to Srinagar, and returning with cloth and other manufactured goods. They are a happy, smiling people—so different from the Kashmiri. Each traveller carries his flint and tinder box in place of matches, and a brass spoon for his food.

The scenery for many miles up the Sind Valley is very ordinary mountain scenery. Sonnamarg Valley, where we camped for two days, in Zoji la Pass, and up on Mount Haramauk, where we climbed to a glacier after eight hours hard work, the views were some of the finest the Himalayas offer. We found it cold in tents at night, but the days were warm. The persuasion necessary to make our pony men do two marches in one day helped to keep us warm. Later three of our party took a trip up the Lidar Valley, but it was disappointing after the Sind Valley.

I must mention a few interesting things about Srinagar. It is a city of canals and lakes. The Indian city is intersected by canals with old houses towering four or five stories above the water, and threatening to fall at any moment. The roofs of these houses are covered with mud, from which grows grain, poppies and other flowers. The city extends for five miles along the Jhelum river. Overlooking the city is a steep hill rising one thousand feet crowned by an old temple dating back to about 200 A. D. Near the city lies Dal Lake, with floating

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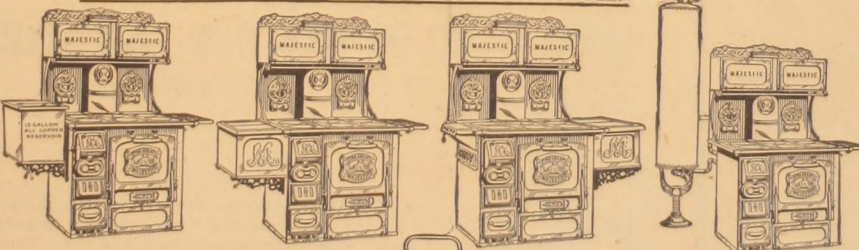
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