CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

CONDUCTED BY R. CHAMBERS (SECUNDUS)

No. 192.—Vol. IV. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1887. Price 1½d.

IN THE HIMALAYAN COUNTRY.

The country of the outer Himalaya—the tracts which form the base of the vast triangle which has the isle of Ceylon at its apex—is the most charming for climate and the most surpassing for grandeur and beauty of scenery of all the districts, countries, and places of India. The writer is familiar with but one part of this long line of territory, and of that part he takes up his pen to give some account; but he believes that he may say with correctness that there is vast similarity everywhere along the great wooded base which looks down on the plains of Hindustan, in front of the eternal snows, from the Punjab territories, far to the left, to Darjeeling and parts adjacent and beyond, away to the right. You have the same sanatoria for British soldiers; hill-stations for the European community generally, which vary only as one English town differs from its neighbour; and nestling in nooks all over the hillsides, you have the same sort of native inhabitants, semi-Hindustani or Indian and semi-Mongolian in national type.

Of late years, the most notable movement in these mountain districts has been the establishment of the Forest Department by the government of India, which has, by the hands of this department, assumed formal possession of all the great forests; has set about taking care of them; and, further, of multiplying and increasing both the area and the best natural products of these enormous and majestic wildernesses. Noble are the mighty hillsides, indeed; and in the verdure with which they are clad may be counted many varieties of pine and classes of kindred genus. The deodar, which we believe is a cedar, is esteemed the most valuable. In the hill-tracts which face the upper provinces of India, the mountains generally are wooded only on the sides looking backward to the higher ranges, the snowy chain behind; and the slopes which look south, to the sun, are yellow and bare. At points along the line of railway which runs for many a hundred mile from Calcutta in the south-east to far-distant Peshawur, right on the distant verge of empire, one can alight to go to the hill-station of his choice or to which duty draws him. Darjeeling, which is now a great place, can be reached from Calcutta direct; and by going up the line, one can alight for Naini Tal or Mussourie, for Dalhousie or Simla; but to get to these places, after leaving the main line, one must undertake a second journey, which varies in length and in difficulty with the station selected. But refreshing it is, when you *do* get there, and you can appreciate then what 'climate' means; and you are apt to go about enjoying each mouthful of the fresh air, with hands extended, as if to grasp and weigh and feel the delightful commodity.

The climate would be considered good and bracing for any country in the world; and the Forest officers are quite appreciative of the great advantage that in this respect they enjoy; and they cling to the hills, although, as compared with some other departments, the Forest is not well paid; while the life is often one of complete isolation. The Forest officials have rather a difficult course to steer in their dealings in the way of duty with the native communities of the hillside and the glen. The villages are legion; they are scattered about everywhere, and they have, the writer infers, many claims, coming down probably from unknown antiquity, which are apt to clash with the great claim of imperial lordship. But the department appears to be very wisely guided; and the officials are trained men, not rarely of high scientific attainment; learned in all native languages, and in social position equal of course to any. Jolly little cribs some of the Forest huts are, and in much, very un-Indian like; but covered with trellis-work and creepers, half hut, half bungalow, they carry one away from things Indian, especially when the sun is sinking low behind the great mountain walls, and the air is getting chilly, chilly. Very pleasant then to turn inside, where the little room is ruddy with the light of the roaring fire. On the sward near the house you may

see, too, English daisies; but *they* do not come naturally; for if they exist, they are due to the horticultural tastes of the officer of the circle. The villages are low in the interlying valleys, but sometimes on the slopes of the hill. Some look like a collection of Swiss cottages, two-storied and roofed with slate; and Swiss or not, certainly unlike anything in the lower regions, 'the plains,' from which we have just ascended.

In one large village which the writer visited, he was struck with the fine appearance of the female community. They looked far finer beings than the men, and were full in form, with remarkably large and expressive black eyes; and, generally, buxom of figure and expressive of face; while the men appeared very ordinary, thin, and shabby creatures.

Another charm of 'the interior'—as the regions lying away from the hill-stations are called—is the pheasants. Here you get the noble birds amid the noble forests. There are several varieties, but the most prized is the *moonal*, which is got at the highest elevation, and whose coat is of a beautiful azure. You may be 'worse off,' indeed, than to be wending your way home to the hut carrying a heavy pheasant, which you have just bagged on the soft grassy brow of some great declivity; turning, now and again, to look at the sunset light still welling up from the sable deeps of the opposite ranges; and then feeling the frozen ground of the forest path crunching beneath your feet; while your retriever comes pattering after you.

There is other game than pheasants on these alps, however, very different; and the pursuit more arduous. Bears abound, and tigers are at times very troublesome. The bear, although not fond of showing fight, can maul most frightfully with his claws, which resemble those of a garden rake, and his favourite *coup* is to scalp. Mr P——, a Forest officer, lost his life by a fall from a precipice in an affair with a bear; and as to tigers, our host at Deoban, Mr S——, was the lucky man who, a few years ago, killed a man-eater, for whose destruction the whole station of Chakrata turned out, soldiers, civilians, and all, a comprehensive line; and the animal fell to the rifle of Mr S——. In a jar of spirits in the bungalow some human remains are shown that were found in the stomach. Close to Deoban, Mr G——, of the Forests also, a noted sportsman and shot, while walking along, heard some noise behind him, and discovered that he was being followed by a tiger. He signalled to his servant to hand him his rifle; and returning towards the striped animal, he 'let him have' a bullet in the head, and 'bagged' him; the shot being as accurately placed between the eyes as if done by a pair of compasses!

In the winter-time, the writer has seen the icicles hanging plentifully, long and solid, from the eaves of the Deoban bungalow; the snow lying deep everywhere, and the vast woods shrouded, silent, in the soft ghostly garniture. This spot is some nine thousand feet above the sea; and after a stormy night, the writer has seen the clouds lying like a great calm sea *below* one, with here and there the tops of hills for islands. The *coup d'œil* was superb and enchanting: the millions of surrounding trees mantled in saintly snow; below one's feet, the floor of cloud, 'vast—motionless;' far away, the white bulwark of the eternal snows; and over all, in exquisite contrast, the pale blue of the sky, with the sun as yet unrisen. Such a scene is not often beheld, and forms a diamond locket for Memory to keep with her.

In the summer, which is always pleasant in these altitudes, wild strawberries patch the sides of the hills with red. Eaten 'one by one,' these have not much flavour; but munched by the handful, they do give out some characteristic relish, albeit a faint one; and they make very nice jam. Apricots are grown in the native villages, and these, too, are better as jam than eaten from the tree. Rasps and blackberries can also be gathered; and the writer remembers gratefully the confections made by a lady-friend resident at the neighbouring military hill-station; and all made from native fruit, supplemented by perhaps English strawberries. In the military station, in cantonments, you might well forget India, for everything looks so English. Neat brick buildings of all sizes, with slated roofs; brisk, stalwart redcoats; neat young English women passing by; and in the gardens below the railing-lined walk, little fair-haired English boys and girls laughing and playing. And the fresh, glorious air, how it comes in billows up the wide steep ravines, with the diminished trees and villages far away down! And looking level, you feel the sensation of being up in a balloon! Here the newly arrived regiments are sent when just out from England, to be 'set up' by a year's residence, ere going to their long spell of duty in the hot plains beneath. And the English look, mostly, as if the place did them good; and you may see as healthy visages and as rosy cheeks here as you could wish.

To revert to the strawberries. The writer recalls a time when he went strawberrying with the help of all his baggage coolies, to gather for jam-making; and how a favourite dog, Sancho, a water-spaniel, was as keen after the berries as any, and would hunt for them in company of his master, and with roguish delight would seek to be first at a good one, pouncing upon it with his paw; and with waving tail, and the white of his knowing eye showing, refusing to let go! A hill pony that had been for years in the plains enjoyed himself, too, on another occasion; and when he came to a stretch of snow lying by the roadside, would delight to go among it and to toss at it with his nose as he trotted through it. It is requisite in these parts to have horses that are accustomed to the hills, for animals coming up freshly are apt to get terribly puffed and blown with but little exertion. Ponies are preferable to horses, but the latter are extensively used. Not far from the cantonments of which we are writing is the spot where, in the year 1871, Captain Lillingston of the Forest department lost his life by his horse's foot slipping. He fell, not over a sheer precipice, but down a long grassy bank; and was found dead at or near the foot of it; and the horse too. A simple stone with an inscription and I.H.S. marks the place on the path by the lone hillside.

One branch of the work of the Forest department is the cutting of sleepers for railway pur-

poses, and the floating of them down the streams that wind towards the plains at the bottom of the ravines in the mountains. The deodar cedar is the best, we believe, for sleepers. This is a most important part of the department's operations. Another is to supply the cantonments with firewood; and lastly, it devolves upon them to offer a great deal of general hospitality, which they obligingly do, and at no small sacrifice, for many are the calls upon them, both upon their time and their cellar and larder, by friends well known and by the passing stranger.

It is a grand mountain country. The scenery is of great beauty and grandeur; often more bare and bold than beautiful; yet in the aspects facing the north, where the trees abound everywhere, one finds scenes of singular nobility; and on most days you can get a view of the higher monarchs, the eternal snows. These, however, are distant, and not, therefore, so imposing as imagination will figure them, and the snow appears at times as of a metallic tinge. But it is grand, nevertheless; and the air cold, bracing, glorious. Lovely are the pinewoods when the late afternoon sun is lingering among them; and the high bank where the wild thyme grows, on the misty morning when the sun is slowly climbing up from the east, there is health and pleasure and poetry there too; as there is when the aromatic scents from the forest side steal over one like soft and subtle music.

RICHARD CABLE,

THE LIGHTSHIPMAN.

By the Author of 'Mehalah,' 'John Herring,' 'Court Royal,' etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—ST KERIAN.

The village of St Kerian, in Cornwall, lies about ten miles inland from the north-west coast. It lies in a hollow, a valley down which flows a little stream, that has its source in the granite moors that form the backbone of the long peninsula that constitutes the county of the Cornu-British. Up the valley, clothing its sides, where steep, are oakwoods, copse for the most part; and above the copse rise the bald moors, sprinkled with gorse, and in July, pink with heather, and purple shot with heath. The granite tower of the church peeps above some old lime-trees that form an avenue to the porch, and some Scotch firs that rise with flaky boughs from the churchyard boundary. There the rooks build and burden the velvety green foliage with their rough nests. The tower of the church is square, with the pinnacles cut to lean outwards, as the foliation of a crown—a Cornish peculiarity. Near the churchyard, communicating with it by a side-door, is the rectory garden, apparently one great pillow of evergreens, laurel and rhododendron, and myrtle and laurestinus; and out of this green pillow appears the slate roof of the parsonage, sunk so deep in the evergreens that only roof and chimneys appear.

The cottages of St Kerian are for the most part of kneaded clay—locally called cob—the warmest, snuggest, driest material of which a house can be built; a material which, when used as a garden wall, ripens peaches, grapes, apricots on its warm surface. It sucks in the sun's rays as a sponge, and gives out the heat all night. Stand by a cob-wall after a bright day, when white-frost is forming on the grass, and you feel a warm exhalation streaming from the dry clay. Fruit-trees must blossom when nailed against it: and the blossom cannot do other than set, and having set, must glow and swell and mellow and flush with sweetness. The flower-bed under the cob-wall is one that is rampant, luxuriant, always beautiful. In the winter months it is not bare; it has Christmas roses and aconites; it is throwing up and opening flowers at extraordinary times, and ripening strawberries at periods when no one dreams of strawberries.

A few houses are of stone, and the stone, like the cob, is whitewashed. These houses have slate roofs, and on the slate are orange and white patches of lichen; and on very old slate even masses of golden stonecrop. But the most subdued slate never reaches the softness and sweetness of tone of thatch—the thatch that covers the cob cottages. That is brown and furry and cosy. Verily, the cottars must be princes and princesses to cover their houses with sealskin!

One of the stone houses is the village inn, with the sign of the *Silver Bowl*. Why this sign? Because the legend told how St Kerian had gone to sea in a basin of pure silver, and in it had rowed over vast and trackless waters till he reached the land of Paradise. And all the time he was away, a wolf kept watch over his wallet and psalter, that lay on the beach of India.

St Kerian was, truly, none other than the man in the moon, and the moon was his coracle of silver in which he traversed the dark-blue heavenly seas. But of this the villagers knew nothing. They dimly recollected the old Catholic legend of the miraculous cruise of the patron saint of the parish, and knew that the great silver bowl on the signboard over the inn referred to the story.

Another stone house belonged to the blacksmith, George Penrose, a plain worthy man, hard-working in his forge and out of it: in it, hammering and moulding iron; out of it, digging and growing vegetables in his garden; and especially fond of carnations.

Outside the village, a rifle-shot from the last house that could claim to be in what was locally called the Church-town, stood a poor cottage, built of cob, with a thatched roof. This cottage was but one story high. You could have touched the eaves when standing by it. The door of the cottage opened on the road; but beside it, at one end, was a garden in the shape of an extremely acute triangle; one side was hedged against the road, and the back was hedged against the field. It was obvious at the first glance that this was the cottage of a squatter, who, in times past, when land was of little value, had squatted on a bit of waste ground beside the road, turned it into a garden, and erected the cottage for himself. No one had objected. If the lord of the manor had been told of it, he had laughed and shrugged his shoulders and asked no head-rent. No attempt had been made to dispossess the squatter; and as years passed and he had made no acknowledgment to any man for his house and bit of land, in time he became absolute proprietor of cottage and triangular garden, with