THE PERSIAN GULF

AND

SOUTH SEA ISLES.

BY

SIR EDGAR BOEHM.

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SIR EDGAR COLLINS BOEHM, BART., F.R.G.S.

Author of "Over the World."

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK WITH AFFECTION

TO

"S. M."

PREFACE.

A TRIP I took up the Persian Gulf in 1901 with Sir E——d O'M——y, who came from the Embassy at Constantinople to try a case of a British subject in Bagdad, gave me the chance of seeing many out-of-the-way scenes and places of interest.

So few tourists who go out to revel in the delights of the East ever seem to visit these parts, that I was persuaded to put these notes, made on the spot, into book form.

Suffice it to say, that it is necessary for anyone desirous of making the trip to be careful to go fully equipped with useful letters of introduction. No hotels exist, and, as soon as the steamers have left, one depends entirely on the kind hospitality and advice of the different residents.

On journeys inland, far out of the beaten tracks, without consular assistance, you carry your life in your hands, and are at the mercy of thieves and brigands. It may not be amiss

to add here that on my return journey to Bushire, in Persia, a young man, Mr. W——e, in the Customs, came into the little telegraph station at Dalaki, where I was passing the night, with the top of his finger just shot off by a party of so-called brigands, through being on the road after dark.

Later on, in the spring, to escape the heat of an Indian summer, I journeyed from Colombo *viâ* Australia and New Zealand to visit the South Sea Isles.

Occasionally, pleasure trips were undertaken by the boats of the Union Line from New Zealand round the isles, visiting all the interesting points; but that, unfortunately, had been given up, and the ordinary steamers that make the round do not, as a rule, visit many points out of the beaten track, nor leave the passengers much time to land.

I take this opportunity of thanking the Hon. Mr. G——e McL——m, chairman of the Union SS. Company, for so kindly exercising his influence, thereby giving us ample time (which you may be sure we made every use of); also for the information and kindness we received from the ever-ready little skipper, Captain C——w.

My one great regret on leaving these lovely isles was, through lack of time, being unable to go for a cruise to an outlying island in his Excellency the Governor's (the Earl of Ranfurleigh) boat, where the islanders could be seen in their unchanged native simplicity.

Our way home lay through the States *vid* Tutuila and San Francisco, and should these notes occasionally help to wile away an idle hour, then the writer will happily feel that he has not taken up his pen in vain.

EDGAR C. BOEHM.

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CHAPTER I.

KARACHI—VISIT THE ALLIGATORS—MUSCAT—BAHIRIN—PEARL INDUSTRY — BUSHIRE — PERSIAN WOMEN — QUARANTINE — THE DIARY.

ON Thursday, January 17th, 190–, we left Bombay, and started for our journey up the Persian Gulf. When leaving everyone had to be examined by a doctor on the wharf, and passed sound, before going on board the steamer, on account of the Indian plague.

Saturday brought us to Karachi. The town lies at the end of a long flat road about five miles away from the landing-place. On either side are low marsh lands, with not the pleasantest of smells; in fact, it is one of the ugliest and most uninteresting drives to be found anywhere. The town itself has a few good shops, but for the most part it is a

straggling, rambling, dusty place, although it seems to be popular with service men.

There is a fairly interesting excursion to be made, taking one to a place about ten miles inland called "Mugger Pir"—one sees a small enclosure, surrounded by a low wall of stones, in which were sixteen sacred alligators, which the natives worshipped. One in particular was remarkable for its tameness. On its head was daubed a dab of paint, denoting its caste or high rank, and a man went up and tickled it with a stick. The brute opened its mouth, expecting to be fed, but it looked so gorged with food as to be almost lifeless. I rubbed my stick along its back, keeping one eye on its jaws and the other on its tail, for, in spite of native assurances, I preferred to be on the safe side. The rest of the animals were in a small pond, but came up to the surface, opening their jaws, and shutting them with a snap resembling the closing of the lid of a heavy box, expecting, doubtless, to be thrown some more food. They live to a great age, which is curious, considering how confined they are.

You can reach Mugger Pir from Karachi either on camels or by driving; the latter is the better and more comfortable, as a ten-mile camel ride is both slow and tedious. One passes over sand—a desert waste—and on either side are high ranges of rocky, barren hills. The heat must be intense in the summer, as even at this time of year the sun was sufficiently powerful to make itself unpleasantly felt as the heat of its rays rose up from the dry, parched ground.

There is very good fishing in Karachi harbour, decently-sized fish being frequently caught with ordinary sea tackle over a ship's side. Fishermen with their boats are always ready to take an angler, supplying bait and tackle, and some distance out fish are caught up to 30lb., and give good fun.

On the Monday morning we left again with the mails, and early on Wednesday sighted the Arabian coast, and at 11 a.m. anchored off the small fortified village of Muscat. Huge jagged, rocky hills surround the bay, and the small town stands on the shore at the edge of a large ravine, or gully, which runs back inland between the hills.

On either side, overlooking the town and bay, the town being built on the top of the rocks, are forts, picturesque in the extreme, with several round watch towers and turrets, casements and small windows.

On the occasion that we saw it, the whole place presented a most striking and theatrical effect of mediæval times, huge flags waved lazily in the breeze from the tops of the towers, and Arab soldiers were scurrying about with their funny old-fashioned rifles and curved silver-hilted daggers, some of the latter of truly magnificent workmanship and proportions, stuck in their silk girdles. Outside in the little bay floated the English gun-boat *Pigeon*, most gorgeously bedecked with flags and firing her salutes in honour of the termination of the Mahomedan forty days' fast (called "Ramzan") — this last day, which is a great holiday amongst them, being called "Bairan."

Muscat, on the coast of Arabia, is an independent state belonging to the Sultan of Muscat. He speaks nothing but Arabic, and an interview is a somewhat arduous undertaking.

We took as long a walk about the narrow lanes in the bazaar as time allowed, but we scarcely met a solitary individual—all the shops were closed, and their wooden doors were bolted with curious-looking old-fashioned iron locks; indeed it put one in mind of some plague-stricken place, or the city of the dead. There seemed to be two outlets in the walls that surround the town, high archways, with heavy wooden doors, studded with huge iron nails on either side. Inside was a guard of soldiers, their old-fashioned rifles hanging on the wall. For the most part they were squatting down on the floor, playing games of draughts on Persian carpets, worked in draught-board fashion, while others were idly looking on, smoking their long Turkish pipes. They seemed a good-natured lazy lot, and not the least surprised or annoyed at the sight of strangers, although they do not see many. Outside the town walls is a moat, on crossing which one entered the village (or suburbs as they might be called)—simply a collection of mud huts, surrounded by palisades of high bamboo and leaf walls. After we

had threaded our way through this maze of huts we found ourselves in a wide gully or dry river bed, with jagged rocks towering up on either side. There was an attempt at a path along one side of the slope, and little boys, bedecked in their holiday garb, were careering along on donkeys, which they hired outside the village. Men squatted on the ground with little trays, on which were placed sweetmeats and aërated drinks of different tempting colours, and around these insidious salesmen were assembled groups of little children and women, some extremely pretty.

The natives of Muscat are rather a mixed lot; many are negroes, and half-castes between them and the Arabs, also Hindoos. The women, and even the little girls over nine or ten, have small masks or black bands of some material, very often decorated with silver ornaments, drawn across the nose and cheeks, leaving the eyes and mouth free; thus the face is not hidden entirely from view like the Arab women in Egypt. One has to go at least fifteen or twenty miles

MUSCAT.

inland before the barren, hilly rock country or coast land changes, and then I was told it is a lovely country, with fertile palm and date groves, and plenty of water, but by no means safe for strangers without a special escort.

We left Muscat in the evening, and our next stopping place was "Jask," on the Persian coast. Here there is a telegraph station, situated on a spit of land which runs far out to sea, forming one side of a bay, which is inclosed on the other side by high hills of rock, rising up range above range in the distance till lost to sight in a faded grey outline against the clear blue sky.

We stopped for cargo at Bunder Abbas, and again at Lingah, but at neither place were we allowed to land, as the quarantine law existing there requires ten clear days to have passed since one has left an infected port before one can be allowed to go free. In our case we had not done the prescribed period, having been away from Bombay only about a week.

Our next place of call was Bahirin, an island

off the coast of Arabia. Here we were allowed to land, but as the ship anchored two miles off, and the only means of reaching shore were the Arab sailing boats, and then crossing the sands on donkeys, not much time was left to see anything. It was very amusing to watch the Arabs in their sailing boats, waiting for our ship to stop. The very moment she had anchored, &c., all the occupants of the sailing boats around lifted up their voices in a curious sing-song, rhythmic way, and sailed their boats towards the ship. Then began a free fight as to who should get alongside first, as those who are first loaded can take their cargo to shore, and perhaps be back in time for another boat load before the work is done. As the British-India steamers only come up the gulf once a week, there is naturally a good deal of excitement, and a break in the monotony of things when they put in an appearance. The cargo they land is mostly dry goods, cloth, piece goods, rice, and coffee, and they take away with them dates chiefly, also opium, spices, almonds, rosebuds for distilling rosewater, and, during the summer months, pearls.

The centre of the pearl industry in these waters is at Bahirin, the season beginning in July and continuing till October. The rich Arabs employ a number of coolies as pearl divers, and sell the pearls to Hindu merchants from Bombay; but for all that pearls are no cheaper at Bahirin or Bombay than in Paris or London. The Arabs who first sell the pearls must make a good deal of money, as they simply own a few small wooden boats, about 18 to 20 feet long, and pay the divers two or three rupees a month (and they are lucky if they get anything); however, the divers are fed. These Arabs, who are all good swimmers, only have a small basket tied round the waist, they place cotton wool in the nose and ears, and tie a stone on to the feet, and gently glide into the water from the boat. They stay under water about two minutes, and put as many oysters as they can in the basket, and then take a good long rest after coming up; in fact, a man does not usually make more than half a dozen dives in a day.

The oysters are all taken to a large room and opened under the owner's eyes, and the

pearls are cleaned and peeled, and put away till the Hindu merchants come to haggle for them.

Leaving Bahirin Island we steered north-west towards the Persian coast, the Arabian shore gradually receding, and about 10.30 the next morning we were anchoring off Bushire, the most important port on the coast of Persia. Owing to the shallowness of the water at low tide, it was impossible to get near the shore, and as it was cold, cloudy, and windy, a three-mile sail was not a pleasant prospect.

Bushire is an island, and has about 15,000 inhabitants, mixed Persians and Arabs and a few Armenians, and it takes about twenty days *viâ* Shiraz to get to the capital Teheran; but more of that anon.

Bushire presented the same mass of yellow low square buildings which are general in these parts, built as they are of mud and clay, with small slits of windows crossed with wooden bars, the better buildings having shutters, painted a gaudy blue. The whole place has rather a bright, well-to-do

appearance. Our consulary buildings and the roads around are quite spacious and well kept; there is an open space like a parade ground, and the bazaars and native quarters lie on the other side, narrow and dirty in the extreme, and of no particular interest. The better-class Persian men dress like Europeans, with the exception of a high black hat, shaped something like the Turk's red fez, but without the little black tassel.

The ordinary labouring natives you see all along the Persian coast are chiefly Arabs, negroes, or half-castes, and very few are real Persians. It is strange that the Persians tolerate these strangers; but I was told that they are not allowed inland, or the Persians make it unpleasant for them at once, and the Arabs are also well taxed. The pure-bred well-to-do Arab merchants about the gulf are exceedingly intelligent and superior persons. People who trade with them say they are as a whole a very honest lot, and easy to get on with. They are good talkers and fond of a discussion. Some missionaries I met said that they were always

ready to listen to whatever was told them about our belief, and they loved arguing and threshing the matter out, but that was about all, the usual answer being—"La ilaha illa, illah wa Muhammad Rasulu elah" ("There is only one God and Mahomet is his prophet").

The Persians are more easily converted, and they are a "go-as-you-please, happy-go-lucky" sort of people, quite unbusiness-like, and with little or no idea of the value of money. The women are said to be amusing and witty; they are comparatively fair, with pretty good features. Further north they are, I am told, pretty, with finely chiselled features, but their figures are not good. Their heads are covered entirely with a thin black shawl, and until you get accustomed to the sight they look very curious, and it is certainly the most complete way of hiding the women's faces. Generally, Mahomedan women have thin veils or face-covers, so fixed that they can slip them on one side very easily, but these Persians have to lift theirs right off over their heads—an awkward

job, as they reach down to the knees; they must be hot to wear in summer.

On January 30th, about 5 p.m., we weighed anchor, and steamed for the mouth of the river Shatt-el-Arab, stopping at a place called Mohammera, a small village on the Persian frontier, and here I will explain the absurd system of quarantine which exists a little higher up the river, and is imposed by the Turkish Government on any steamers coming from India or elsewhere. Some distance up the river stands the town of Basra (which is spelt in as many different ways as it has letters), and a quarter of a mile thence is a mud island about ten miles long and three broad, covered with a forest of date palms, and on this spot stands the "Lazaretto." There are three buildings, one for Turks, &c., the other for their women, and the third, which is far the smallest, for Europeans; and this is the one in which we were placed and which I purpose describing.

About a stone's throw from the banks of the river is a small, square building of

ordinary mud-clay bricks, with four fair-sized square rooms, two on each side of a broad passage which runs through the house, with massive wooden doors at either end, locked at night. The rooms have bare, white, cemented walls, wooden ceilings, and floors of square stone bricks, or tiles, with earth between them, so that, however well the rooms may be swept out, it is not very long before the floors have again a coating of dust and dirt, which spreads over everything. Another conspicuous feature is the number of fleas about; they are most affectionate little animals, and never leave one alone for a minute; but one can always say with some consolation, "Thank goodness, there's one more day gone."

"As I now sit and write, the air seems full of the yells of 'pie dogs,' and when they cease for a minute or two, the croaking of myriads of frogs in the marshes just outside is heard. The weather, however, is delightful at this season—quite hot in the sun, and the glass never registers below sixty-one or sixty-two degrees; the nights are

cool, but by no means cold, and every day it is getting warmer. March, last year, I was told it registered in Basra nearly one hundred degrees in the shade, so what this Lazaretto must be like for ten long days —one period of quarantine—with the heat and the awful mosquitoes, in mid-summer, I can only leave to the imagination of my readers. Such things as mosquito curtains would be unattainable, unless one brought some of one's own. The bedroom furniture consists of a English servant's small iron bedstead, with a very thin mattress, so that you can feel the iron staves without any difficulty, and a tin jug and basin. Then one has to find someone to do one's cooking, and has to bring in one's own stores, as the boatmen only bring round in the morning eggs, chickens, milk, and so on. It is best, if possible, to have some letters to people in Basra, as they understand the quarantine requirements, having, in all probability, been through it themselves." My friend and myself were lucky enough to be provided with extra furniture by the British Consul, Mr. W——w,

and we made a point of purchasing a number of tinned and bottled goods from the chief steward on the steamer on which we had come up. Our friends occupying the other two rooms were American missionaries, who kindly allowed their cook to do our cooking, so that, together with the help of our own servants, we got on like fighting cocks. Ten days is the period laid down by the Turkish law for all persons travelling by a ship coming from an infected port to undergo quarantine before entering Turkish possessions. However, the time commences from the moment the steamer casts anchor, and it is not compulsory to go direct to the Lazaretto, one being allowed to stay on the steamer till she is ready to start again, so that, supposing she stays in port five days, one has only five more days to go through on the island in order to complete one's period of quarantine. When settled in one's room, the first thing that has to be gone through is the fumigation of soiled linen, which is carried away to a shed with some weird-looking machinery in it. If a few things are

sent, it is all that is really necessary; some people only send about half-a-dozen shirts and collars, which must appear rather a meagre allowance to a thoughtful European official, after about two weeks on board, but is quite an abundance for the Turk. The doctor, who was a Turk, called every morning, and there were apologies for soldiers—things with a fez on, torn and unbuttoned old tunics, cartridge belts hanging loose round their waists, their dirty rifles on the ground or against trees. These men were dotted about, and if one wandered too far he was sent back, or stopped going further. Personally, I am thankful to say I was never interfered with. I was careful, however, not to go near any of the villages; the Arabs are perfectly good-natured, but they resent any intrusion or display of undue curiosity on the part of strangers. We skirted close by some of the villages in our wanderings about the island, but one is immediately called to attention by the barking of the village pie dogs—similar in size and shape to those smooth-coated, half-bred collies one

sees at home, usually black. In most Eastern countries they kill a good many puppies, and you only see enough dogs to act as scavengers, but here I came across several litters, pretty enough as pups, and the consequence is that there were dogs innumerable on the island. They, however, are quite harmless, and only succeed in bringing out a lot of children and women, who peep out at you from behind the trees and sheds—if the men are out (which is usually the case in the afternoons) standing in rows looking at you, some with their faces covered up. (It is always the case when you see a woman keeping her face covered with great care and persistency that she is either an old hag or as ugly as sin.) Their huts and inclosures around are all built with reeds cut from the marshes, cleverly twisted together, and the whole island is studded with date palms, which are their only means of livelihood. Thousands of tons of dates are exported every year, not only from Quarantine Island, but everywhere around. The Arabs also make a sort of wine from the date, called

arack, which is very potent ; it is in colour like water, and the taste reminds one a little of the Russian vodki. It is an exceedingly strong, pure spirit, and is a very good appetiser.

CHAPTER II.

Basra — Bazaars—Money — Boils — River Steamers — Cabin Discussions — Garden of Eden — Marsh Arabs—Tesiphon's Arch—The Barber's Tomb.

On Sunday, February 10th, we were free, and the Consul sent to fetch us about eleven o'clock. It was a great relief to leave the place and to be once more at liberty to go about as one liked. Basra, El Basreh, Busrah, El Bussoreh, is an Arab town of importance on the Shatt-el-Arab river, and is the furthest point the British India or any of the large steamers can reach. All passengers and cargo for Bagdad have to shift into the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company's steamers, and very comfortable they are. At Basra, then (we will keep to that way of spelling, being shortest and simplest), we have a British Consul, a little club with a good billiard-room, and a sprinkling of about a dozen people or so, and it being in the Ottoman Empire, the Turks keep a garrison and a Governor-General.

The creek, which runs through the town, with a walk or bund on one side, is exceedingly picturesque. The curious yellow brick-built houses, with their large over-hanging windows and carved wooden shutters, remind one of a mixture of Moorish Arabesque and Venetian styles. Wherever there is an open space date palms wave loftily in the air, women are seen washing their clothes or bringing down their pitchers to the river to fill; and even these poor people pull their black veils across their faces as they see us pass, or a kodak is presented at them. Truly, pictures of a unique and most lovely kind could be taken every minute. As we rowed further up, the stream narrowed, and we left the boat and took a walk through the bazaars, but the shops had nothing in them of an interesting nature; the street was narrow and roofed in, as so many of the principal bazaar streets are in this part of the world. I suppose they form a sort of Burlington Arcade, where people can do their shopping just the same during the rainy season, and keep out the sun. I have, however, never seen the streets covered in India or in the far East.

The best example of a roofed-in street is "Straight Street," in the middle of the bazaar in Damascus. There, indeed, you see mangificent bazaars.

They have a curious sort of money at Basra, and, although the Indian rupee circulates freely, and the Medjidie and ordinary Turkish and Persian money, the real coins they use are very old-fashioned looking round pieces of silver, with Arabic figures stamped on them. They are too thick and heavy for links, but suitable for buttons, about the size of a sixpence, and worth that. I must not forget to mention what is known as the "Basra Button," a mild form of the "Bagdad Button." These buttons or boils are common in Basra, Aleppo, Bagdad, &c., but at the latter place they are the worst. One theory is that they are the result of mosquito or sandfly bites. They chiefly come on the face and hands, and do not, as a rule, appear more than one or two at a time. They are about the size of a sixpence, of a copper colour, and are of two sorts, the one which is dry and scaly, and the other which discharges. The

worst last about a year. Children and delicate people are troubled most, and they invariably leave an ugly scar for life; indeed, nearly all the people one sees have these scars or the boils themselves, and Europeans are attacked in exactly the same way. I was told of one person who had twenty-three all at once on the body, and of another European who had been out seven years, and had never been ill, and then had gone home and developed one of the boils. People are not usually attacked until they have been about three months or so in the country. The only reasons or theories about these peculiar boils were, firstly, that they were due to some insect; secondly, to drinking water; and, thirdly, to eating dates. I first heard about these boils from the men on board the *Khandalla* coming up the Persian Gulf, but I scarcely believed it then, and on arriving at Basra I was quite staggered by seeing the natives with round scars on their faces, arms, and legs; also some Europeans who had suffered from them, and in one or two instances with the button in full bloom. They are sometimes called "date marks."

About four o'clock on Tuesday, February 12th, we went on board the river steamer *Khalifah.* These river steamers are very broad boats, and necessarily built to draw as little water as possible.

Considering how very few saloon passengers there are, comparatively speaking, one would suppose the accommodation on the boats would be very indifferent, but instead of that, to our great surprise, we found the accommodation first-rate — large single-berth cabins, and the food most excellent. Alas! what a pity it is we do not see more single-berth cabins. Every day huge ocean liners are being built and launched, each one surpassing the other in magnificence, and in all are cabins with four, three, and two narrow berths, but scarcely any single cabins. I am convinced the time will soon come when we shall see only single and double berth cabins on ships, or all single cabins with doors opening between. Even if they were small, I am very sure that ninety-nine people out of a hundred would much sooner have a small place to

themselves than the largest four-berth cabin built, if crowded up. If we went into an hotel, and were coolly given a bedroom with strangers in it, our indignation would only be equalled by that of the inmates already established there, and yet people humbly submit to being packed together in a small stuffy cabin, with no room for clothes or baggage, with three other people, who are all strangers to each other, all selfishly (but naturally) looking out for the best places. Usually only two washstands, and miserable little useless brackets for your brushes. Lastly, your clothes, towels, and boots get mixed up, and, added to this enjoyment, in nine cases out of ten the four people are as ill an assorted lot as it is possible to meet with; and yet this is a true description of what takes place every day. There may be certain people who do not mind it, nay, even like it, but I defy even these thick-skinned, coarse sort of people to like it in tropical climates with the thermometer over a hundred degrees; and if it is bad for men, what must it be for women! I can quite

understand people at home, who have never travelled, being shocked at the utter unrefinement, unnaturalness, and indecency of the whole system, but not one whit more so than will be the travellers of the future. You can usually obtain a cabin to yourself by paying one and a half first class fares; but if all the cabins in the ship you happen to be going by have three and four berths in them you have to pay a double fare. Of course this comes expensive, but if people can afford it it is worth while. You have to be careful not to do this and find out too late that there are heaps of empty cabins in the ship you are going by. This once happened to me on my way to South Africa; the paper at the office was crowded with names, I paid a one and a half fare, and the majority of the people got off at Las Palmas!

Each side of the Shatt-el-Arab river is studded with forests of date palms, of which one begins to get at last utterly tired. About eleven o'clock at night we came to the junction of the two rivers, the Tigris

and Euphrates, and on the left bank of the Tigris as you go up—*i.e.*, the land between the two rivers—is where people say the Garden of Eden was supposed to have been. The place is called Gorna, and the reason for assigning this spot as such is because it is near the junction of two big rivers, "and where four rivers meet" (the land between the two rivers here is intersected by numerous waterways). But in Biblical times it is improbable that the Tigris and Euphrates ever met, as since then alluvial deposit has been washed up the Gulf for years and years, and the two rivers probably poured forth their waters separately into the Persian Gulf.

Other people have chosen another spot for the Garden, higher up, near Babylon, where, in addition to the Tigris and Euphrates, two more small rivers, or tributaries, run.

As you get further up all date palms disappear, and nothing is seen except the steep mud banks on either side and the desert stretching away as far as the eye can reach. A little further on and one comes to the marshes, where there is a certain amount of

green growth. This part is inhabited by Arabs of a very low order, without any laws whatever. Many of them run along the banks by the steamer, with scarcely any clothing on, men, women, and children, all shouting out for things to be thrown to them, such as oranges, dates, or anything that the passengers like; it is a very curious sight, and the natives seem to enjoy the fun as much as the travellers.

Some of the Arabs are fine looking men, but very rough, wild, and dirty; they all wear the same headgear — *i.e.*, a handkerchief thrown over the head, and kept on by means of a coil of wool, about an inch thick, twisted two or three times round the head—and a long, single garment of dark, tawny-coloured sacking, hanging loosely on them, is worn at this season. Some of them carried a stick about two feet long, with a formidable-looking nob at the end, made of a sort of resin, which gets harder and harder, and is quite imperishable. These things are used for hitting their enemies over the head. Further on, one

leaves the marshes behind, and the steamer winds its way through low, uninteresting desert land, without a sign of vegetation, and later on we came to a town of some importance, called Amara. Seeing it from the bank of the river, it presented quite a grand appearance, with its high walls and two-storied houses, all built of mud, but some of the window shutters of the larger buildings were painted in pretty colours, giving the whole a bright and cheery effect.

We got out, as the steamer remained about two hours coaling, and strolled through the bazaars, but as Mahomedans shut up their shops rather early, generally by four o'clock, there was nothing to be seen. There are some very rich Arabs there; one great swell came on to the steamer to see some "graphophones" that a French commercial traveller who was on board was selling. I believe he eventually gave an order for one with accessories up to £80. The next place we came to up the river was Koot-el-Amara, but, unfortunately, we arrived there at 2 a.m. and left again at 4 a.m., so, naturally, did not see anything.

The country on either side of us presented a very barren and wild appearance, and the few mud-built villages we passed, scattered along the banks, were very picturesque, but the inhabitants were a pretty dangerous lot, we learnt. Numbers of dogs, of a much larger and finer sort than the usual pariah you see elsewhere, pranced along the banks, barking furiously, and men and boys ran along, gesticulating, and asking for food and backsheesh, and most of them carrying their curious clubs, for these Arabs think it effeminate to go unarmed. A little way up, where the Tigris makes a very wide curve, one is able to get out and walk overland and meet the steamer later on; this we did, as the opportunity afforded us a view of the "Arch of Tesiphon." We landed on the right bank in the steamer's boat, and one or two people who had guns took them, but shot nothing whatever. There are, however, duck, snipe, black partridges, and quail, and of larger animals there are wild cat, hyena, wolves, bears, jackals, foxes, and wild boar.

As we trudged along over the hard, clayey

mud, with strips of cultivated ground here and there sown with wheat and barley, we saw in the distance the walls of the Great City, or, rather, what was once the principal city and capital of these parts about three thousand years ago.

The walls are now nothing but thick, shapeless banks of mud, but one gets an idea of the size they must have been, and it is almost incredible to think that on this ground, now like the ordinary desert, once stood a town teeming with life and activity, and now having absolutely nothing whatever to show for its past existence, except the tumbled down walls, until you see before you, standing out boldly on the horizon, clear and firm against the glorious blue sky, the grand archway which at one time was the entrance to the Royal Palace. Yes, this grand old relic is all that remains. Built of the usual sun-dried bricks, made from the mud soil around, it seems to rear itself out of the earth, and stands there, in its solitary grandeur, as the remaining guardian of all that has gone before. The arch is about

100 feet broad, and must be quite 200 feet high; the marvellous and striking part is that it is built without any locking stones or any pillars to support it. They must, however, have had an elaborate system of scaffolding, and standing, as it has, 2300 years speaks well for the cement used in those days. On either side were two huge square buildings, with enormously thick walls and buttresses; one of them crumbled away three years ago, and what remained of it was demolished by the Arabs, and the bricks sent up the river in boats to Bagdad, and there sold for building purposes. Leaving this intensely interesting memorial of bygone times, we watched the sun gradually sinking into a sea of clouds of indescribable oriental richness, weakly reflecting its salmon tints on the worn desert land around. Sauntering on towards the river to pick up the steamer again, or, rather, for the steamer to pick us up, we passed by an Arab village, and were immediately surrounded by a number of women, with their funny golden rings through their noses and coloured glass bangles on their arms; they had

curios to sell in the shape of old coins, and so on, but of little or no value.

On reaching the banks of the Tigris, about a quarter of a mile further down, stood the tomb supposed to belong to the barber of Mahomet. So, sending to the village for the head man, with a promise of a tip if he sent someone to open the tomb and allowed us to go inside, he came along, and off we went. The tombs themselves are enclosed in a square court, surrounded by high mud walls, strong and well built, of the usual sun-dried bricks, and in perfect repair. We entered through a wooden door, into a square courtyard, and on the other side was another door, leading into a room about twelve feet square. The floor was covered with straw matting, and kept scrupulously clean, and in the middle stood a tomb of white marble, with a top of bricks, and on one side was carved, in cuneiform, the man's history. On the other side was another room exactly the same, with the exception that the tomb is of bricks and not of marble, and without any writing. People say it is the barber's

wife, and it is best not to dispute it. The tombs were protected with wooden bars, and on many of them were tied little pieces of rag by women who came there to pray, and wanted to have children; this is a very common custom. A crude little glass hung on the wall, supported by a bit of wire, full of oil, and a wick dangling over the end threw a shadowy light over these ghostly old rooms, and bats whirled round and round above our heads as if resenting the presence of strangers. When we got outside it was pitch dark. The sailors, who had been sent as guides, had lighted a fire, and were warming themselves. These sailors are fine fellows, all Chaldeans and Christians, from a place called Mosul, a large town on the banks of the Tigris, 300 or 400 miles north of Bagdad; not one of them I saw was under 5ft. 10in., with herculean chests and limbs. Their spirit, however, has been crushed by the Turks systematically.

At last the steamer's lights loomed in the distance, and soon one heard her paddles churning the water. Interminable seemed the

time she took to come up as we stood round a weak little fire shivering with cold, on the banks of the Tigris. Interesting as it is in day time, with a warm sun to keep you company, this land of Chaldea, whence all the earliest of Biblical history springs—the home of Adam and Eve—it nevertheless gets chilly at this time of year as soon as the sun goes down, and modern creatures like ourselves were very glad to get aboard once more, sitting down to a good dinner in a bright saloon.

CHAPTER III.

BAGDAD—GOOFAHS—HORSES—COFFEE—EUPHRATES RIVER—KERBELA—CAMELS.

THE next day, Sunday, February 17th, at 6 a.m., we arrived at Bagdad. The town is said to be extremely picturesque as you approach it up the river at sunrise, but, unfortunately (and as a traveller I ought to be ashamed), I may say my bed has more attraction at sunrise than at any other time. One of the first things that strike you on nearing Bagdad are the curious boats about here, called goofahs. They are perfectly round, and look just like huge, black basins, or bowls, floating on the water. As can be imagined, they are the most unwieldy things, and it is only with the greatest exertion that two men standing side by side and paddling can keep them from turning round and round, and the pace they go, particularly up stream, is absurd. They can, how-

THE TIGRIS AT BAGDAD.

ever, hold an enormous quantity, and the lower they are in the water, the easier they are to manage.

Turkish officials, with their red fez and brass buttons, were strolling about in their semi-listless, semi-watchful way—ever with an eye for a tip. Here passports are required, and luggage examined, or supposed to be, but the consular officials generally prevent that; so, jumping into their boat, a short row brought us to our destination.

The British residency is a large building, consisting of three houses knocked into one, overlooking the river. Bagdad is a town of about 852,000 inhabitants, consisting of Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Persians, Turks, Europeans, &c., and Christian natives of Bagdad, called there "Bagdadies." The streets are narrow, and the houses all built of sun-dried bricks. It is curiously picturesque in places, and far more old-time looking and world-worn than the ever thriving Damascus, the oldest town in the world. Sunday at Bagdad is usually chosen as the day when the European fraternity drive

out and play golf, on a ground about a couple of miles outside the town; so off we drove, and on the way passed a lot of Turkish officers, mounted on showy little Arabs, galloping past a target and shooting; tin balls were also thrown up in the air and were fired at in the same way. It was very interesting to watch them, but they did not seem very successful in their number of hits. With the exception of a few horses which belonged to the Sultan and a few rich and influential people, I am told that the true, pure-bred Arab is rarely seen in this part. They appear to be a mixture of Persian, Syrian, and Hungarian, and further west there is an introduction of Australian blood, I presume to give size, as the Arab is never over 14.2 — very rarely that. Seemingly, the Arabs are so jealous of their horses that they keep them in the interior, at Nejd, &c., for fear of the Turks seizing them, should any of them be seen near the coast. At the same time, considering how very mercenary the Arabians are, and what very marketable

produce they possess in horses, it would be difficult to believe that there are not a good many pure Arabs about. Many good Arabian horses come from a place near Mecca, others from Nejd and round the Bahirin district, where they are shipped and sent to Bombay. We landed an Arab horse dealer at that place, who was coming up from Bombay, as the horse dealing season was over. He appeared to be a great personage, with several servants, one of whom made some exquisite coffee, the coffee being mixed with cardamom and drunk without any sugar. It is quite different to the ordinary Mocha coffee in Turkey, which is usually drunk in tiny cups, with a little sugar. It is always freshly roasted, and ground, or rather smashed up, in a stone or metal jar, then boiling water is poured on ; they boil it three or four times at least, let it stand till the sediment sinks to the bottom, and then pour it carefully into the pot. The Russians in certain parts who pride themselves on their coffee, however, say that the whole secret is

in the roasting, and, to be perfect, the beans must be placed all separately on a roasting tray, each bean in a little bed of its own, like balls on a solitaire board. However, it appears that we are going rather off the line, as the connection between Arab horses and coffee must be very vague. To return, then, to our subject, the Arabs always like a horse to have a long, flowing tail, and to get this the animal has its tail closely shaved as a colt, and if, besides this, the tail itself is carried to one side, it also counts in its favour. These little idiosyncrasies are like some of ours at home—one man liking a horse with a Roman nose, as they say it is a mark of good temper; another man saying he likes a kink in a horse's mane, as never a bad one has it; or that a good walker is sure to be good in all its paces; and so on, and so forth. There are certain points in Arabs which the natives feign to lay great stress on; they certainly do not seem to go lame easily, and, considering that they are fed for the most part on grass, are wonderfully hardy;

and, in respect to the way they are shod, their hoofs are harder than the hoofs of the ordinary European horse. An Arab's tail ought to be easily bent back so as to touch on his quarters, and the more flexible it is the better he is supposed to be bred. The shoes cover the whole foot, with the exception of a small hole about the size of a sixpence in the middle. They are all entires, very sure footed, if left alone, over rough places, but on good roads are careless, and often stumble. The amble, or slow canter, is their usual pace, and most comfortable it is; their trot is unpleasant, and, as far as I could judge from those I saw tried in different parts, scarcely five out of six knew how to gallop. I have seen magnificent Arabs for sale in Bombay, also in Damascus and Beyrout, Smyrna, and Constantinople, but whether they were born in central Arabia or Syria, &c., can make surely little difference, when we know that all horses, from the racehorse to the prize shire, have a common ancestor in the Arab.

There is a nice English club where people

congregate in the evenings, and although the papers are necessarily many weeks old, and items of news few and far between, it is a homely resort in the midst of what is still an uncivilised town. We wanted to go to Babylon, &c., whilst the weather still remained fine, as there is sometimes rain about this time of year. So in a short time we got hold of a guide, and began to make our arrangements accordingly. On Wednesday morning, the 20th, we left in a carriage about 1.30, which was really too late, as we did not arrive at Mousseib until after dark, and the driver wanted to stop for the night at a place called Mahmoodia, as he was frightened of brigands. It is certainly dangerous travelling after dark. In the daytime, if bad characters are about and they see a European, they very rarely molest him, as such a row is always made by the Turkish Government, soldiers being sent to the district and so on, that it is not worth their while; in fact, these desperadoes have orders from their chiefs not to molest the "Feringays." However, to make sure, we

hired two Dhuptias at Mahmoodia instead of the usual one, and proceeded. These guards, or policemen, have Martini rifles and are badly mounted, and, I should say, would be quite useless if there was an attack, probably fire one shot and gallop off; but they are considered necessary, as when you are seen to be under the protection of a Turkish soldier, or rather an apology for a soldier in the pay of the Turks, the Arabs in the outlying districts think twice before they do anything.

We reached Mousseib at last, and slept in a khan, or hotel, which was very clean; being situated on the other side of the Euphrates, it was comparatively free from the attendant noises which go on through the night in this part of the world.

Wherever you go in Turkey, or in Turkish possessions, as far east as Chaldea and Mesopotamia, and all over the north and north-west, and in the countries as far west as Greece, Bulgaria, and so on, they seem to abound with vermin of all sorts; the only thing is to travel with as much Keating's

as you have room for, see your rooms thoroughly brushed and (if you have time for it to dry) washed out, and then sprinkle Keating's freely; but the best way to travel is with tents (if you do not mind the risk of being robbed and murdered). A couple of mules carry a great deal, and you can choose your own spot, and are independent of all the world. I took a tent on this trip to Babylon, but did not use it much, as there was no occasion to do so, but still it was a comfort to have one by me.

Mousseib is an extremely picturesque place on the river Euphrates. On our left was an old bridge built of boats, or rather layers of trunks of date palm-trees plastered together with mud, and resting on a succession of boats reaching across the river, and thus forming a bridge. The other side was the old mud-built town, with a background of date palms. On the banks were many women washing or bringing their pitchers down to the river to fill them in the usual Eastern way, and a little further up stood a herd of camels 200 or 300 strong, resting,

On the Banks of the Euphrates.

feeding, and drinking, with their packages and drivers scattered about, preparatory to continuing their journey on to Bagdad; little children were driving water-buffalo down to drink at the river's edge, and at every twist and turn one scene more picturesque than the other presented itself to be snapped off by our kodaks.

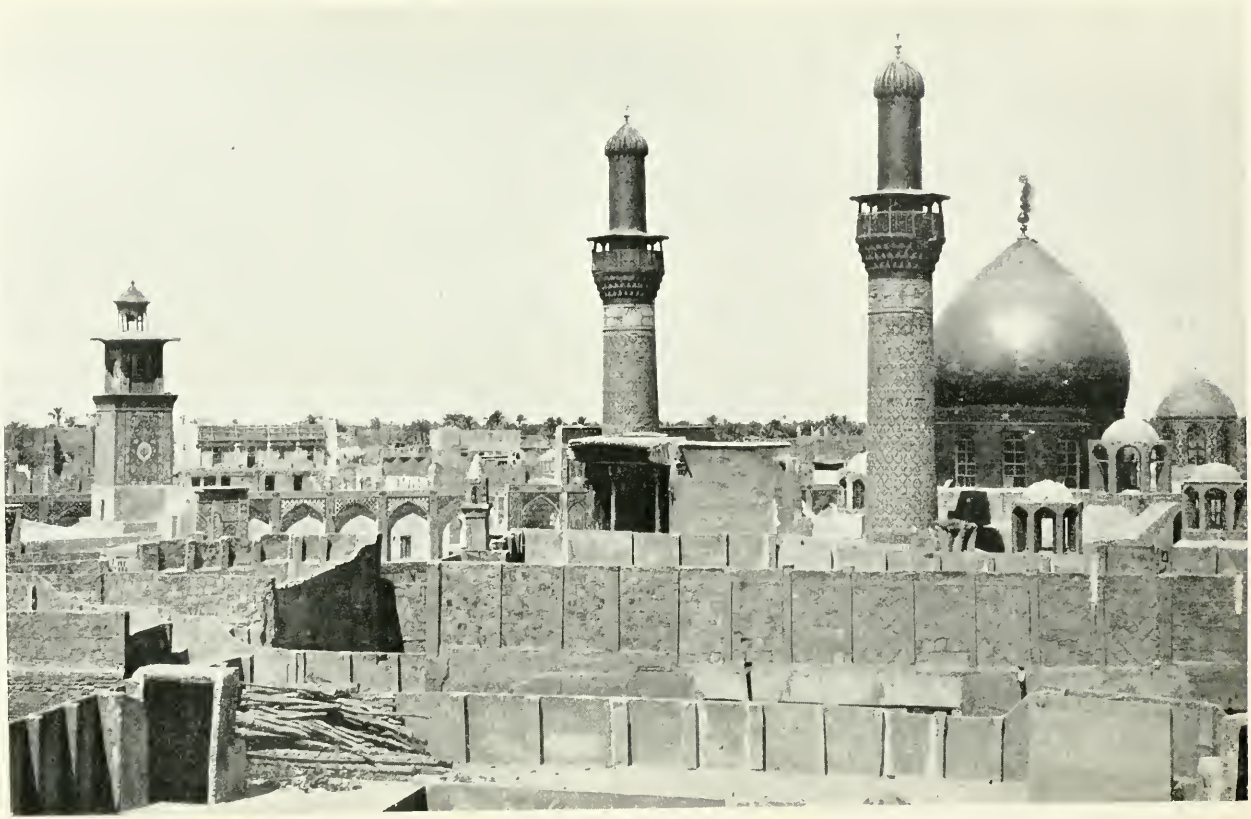
However, time was getting on, and we had to be making a start for Kerbela, an inland typical Arab town, being some miles across the desert. After a long, dreary drive over the same monotonous desert land, with here and there cultivated spots of wheat and barley, at last, in the distance, you could see the outline of date palms on the horizon, which our guide said was Kerbela. A little further on, and we came to a small mosque, with the dome of a beautiful blue colour, which glistened in the sun like a turquoise. Inside was a tomb of some great man, and it was known by the name of Hone.

Pilgrims worship there, and invalids apparently abounded, as the peep I took of the inside of the mosque showed that it was full

of them — one poor man, lying on an old mattress, being fanned by an old woman.

We continued our journey after giving the horses a rest, and a little later we saw a number of date palms dotted along the horizon, and then went through a number of lanes. On either side were high walls of mud, with a binding on the top which looked like dried birch branches; this is the way that all the walls are built here, wider at the bottom, and about six to eight feet high.

In Kerbela is the Great Imam Hussein Mosque, which is exactly the same as the Kash-i-min, near Bagdad. It has a very fine large dome, and is surrounded by tall minarets, which appear to be built over with tiles of a beautiful blue and white enamel, which glitter and glisten in the sun. There are two entrances, with huge doors under arches wide open, but massive chains drooped across the entrance. No one but Mahomedans are allowed in, but you can stand and see the huge yards and cloisters, or whatever the inner surrounding yards and buildings of mosques are called, and observe



Imam Hussein Mosque, Kerbela.

pilgrims, with thin little mats spread out on the ground, kneeling down facing Mecca, and praying in that absorbed and energetic way like all true Moslems! Our English Consul, or representative there, who is an Indian, with an Indian secretary who speaks fluent English, always arranges to put up the English who may be passing through. It is a good house, sufficiently removed from the centre of the town to prevent one being too much disturbed by the barking of the dogs, and the shouting and cries, &c., and general hubbub which goes on at frequent intervals throughout the night in most Arabian towns.

Kerbela is only second to Mecca as a place of pilgrimage for the Shias, Ali Hussein being buried there, so every good Mahomedan in the district visits it, and there is always a flow of Mahomedan Shias passing through its gates. It is a great pity that they will not let any "Feringay" see the mosque, and the only thing to be done is to enter a house near by, and from the roof you can get some idea of the size of the

place. The bazaars are poor, the streets narrow and dirty, except on the outskirts, where the roads are new and broad; the whole is surrounded by a screen of date palms, and forms a lonely oasis in the desert. The next day we returned by the same route to Mousseib at a very early hour. As the sun rose we saw thousands of duck flying at enormous heights in their peculiar, triangular way, and in other directions rooks were journeying slowly along in clumsy, laborious fashion, and the mirages, which are so common all over this country, were to be seen all around, presenting the most realistic views of water, islands, and swamps springing out of the low, flat desert surrounding you as far as the eye could reach.

Every now and then we overtook herds of camels walking slowly and evenly along, with their long necks bent forward, and huge packages tied on their backs. These animals, unlike the Indian camel, wear no sort of bridle or lead whatever. Some of them are very fine-looking animals, and a few you see are pure white, and they can go without

water for four or five days. Usually a man rides at the head of a herd on a donkey, and the drivers walk behind, but no driving or shouting is ever necessary as with most other animals, and they go on and on, never changing their pace, with that supercilious look on their faces which no one can interpret but themselves. Sometimes in crossing rivers, &c., there is some trouble in getting the camels into the water, when a sharp piece of wood, attached to a cord, is thrust through the cartilage of the nose, and the poor things are towed across, it would seem as useful a persuasive as a ring in the nose of a bull! Further on were patches of wheat and barley, while shepherds, in their long brown robes and curious headgear, coloured silk puggarees wrapped round their head and faces, and crowned with woollen cords, squatted about looking after their flocks of many-coloured huge-tailed sheep, or thin, sprightly little goats. At last in the distance long, low mud walls broke the horizon, and a line of green-topped date palms swayed in the morning breeze. Half-an-hour more and we were

inside Mousseib again, and being driven down to the banks of the Euphrates river, where a boat waited to take us down to far-famed Babylon, the home of King Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAPTER IV.

IRRIGATION—TORTOISES—ZOUPTIAS—DOGS—SANDBANKS—BABYLON—NEBUCHADNEZZAR—HAREMS—AMARA—GORNA; OR THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

MY mules, with most of the outfit, had left Kerbela in the middle of the night, as they had to go by road to Babylon, to be there on our arrival in the evening, so, immediately embarking, in a very short time we were sailing merrily down the river. The Euphrates seemed exactly like the Tigris—low, perpendicular mud banks on either side, with the flat desert stretching away till lost in a misty blue horizon. Every quarter of a mile, or less, you passed the curious irrigating machines, which have not changed from time immemorial. Large holes are cut in the banks, a system of scaffolding built on top, and a large skin made of cowhide, forming a huge elastic bucket, is let down by a rope, which runs over the scaffolding, and is attached to a couple of horses, whose

business it is to walk backwards and forwards pulling this skinful of water up, till it upsets itself into a channel, and flows along a number of these, irrigating the land all round. These things are to be seen all over India, but bullocks are used instead of horses there. The creaking sounds, the yelling and howling the poor old scaffoldings made, as they emptied the waters from the river into the fields behind them, quite prevented us from taking a sadly needed nap, after our early departure from Kerbela at four in the morning. In the afternoon the wind dropped, and we had to depend entirely on the swift tide to help us along, as the Arab boatman and his son were far too lazy to paddle. Lying on the mud banks, as we glided along, were hundreds of immense tortoises, looking as inanimate as rocks or stones, but directly we tried to catch any, they wriggled and disappeared under the water. A little further on and you pass a rather fine piece of engineering, in the shape of a species of breakwater. You can stop on the island, which is somewhat picturesque, but, beyond

accepting the hospitality of your host, a French engineer in the employ of the Turkish Government, there is little to interest anyone unless they are engineers. On, on we floated down, occasionally passing large boats being towed up the river against the strong stream by half-a-dozen Arabs or more, perfectly naked. About tea time we came to a place where the Euphrates makes a big bend, so we took advantage of it to take a walk across the land, and meet our boat further down. This we accordingly did, passing on our way several villages. The people seemed greatly surprised to see strangers suddenly in their midst, walking over their ground, and, doubtless, had it not been for our guide with his red Turkish fez on, they might have given trouble. As a rule, however, the Arabs never touch Europeans; in fact, even certain lawless tribes who live to a great extent by free-booting, and so on, fear to touch foreigners (or "the feringays" as they call us), unless they are going to make a rare good haul. They know the game is not worth the

trouble, as it simply ends in the Turks sending a lot of soldiers to the place. By the time they arrive the guilty party has fled; but as the Turks won't go back without doing something, generally they decide upon a few men, probably perfectly harmless, and either deal with them or extort "backsheesh," in addition to the money the village or tribe has to pay up as damages. As can be imagined, the soldiers generally have a pretty free hand and a lively time, and the natives are exceedingly glad to see the last of them. However, if you do not take a "Zouptia," or mounted policeman with you (whom you hire afresh at each stage, and generally have to pay about a rupee), the Turks will not take any responsibility; but if you wisely have one of these men with you, when you are attacked you can claim from the Turks. It is a difficult question as to their utility, whether it is best to have them and pay them for nothing, or do without them and trust to being left alone. If you were attacked in earnest by determined men they would be perfectly useless,

of that I am sure, and the best way to look at them is as a "living passport," which the inhabitants of the country you are passing through are able to recognise.

By this time it was getting dark, and the dogs innumerable, which you find in all Arab towns and villages, were very much in evidence here. They seemed a rather larger type of dog than those on the Tigris and further east, but, beyond the usual barking, they do not ever attempt to do anything. In Greece and Albania the dogs are very savage, and very often rush out and spring on you, and the inhabitants, when they see a dog coming at them, quietly squat down on the ground, the dog then walks round them a few times, and after that goes away. I have certainly never tried this, but have heard it often enough from different people. All over the East, where you meet dogs out in the country, it is best to have a stick, and never strike a dog over the head or back should he charge, as a blow of that sort will scarcely stop him. A better way is to bend down, with your stick

a couple of inches or so from the ground, and parallel to it, and swing it round as the dog charges, when its legs get mixed up in a way which ends in it whirling over and over on the ground, and the hit can then be accompanied by a disabling blow. (Try this, readers, for yourselves, but not on a favourite.)

At last we heard the splash of the paddles, and could see a black speck on the muddy water, and once more we were drifting down the stream.

About 8.30 we saw a light in the distance which, our guide told us, was from the house belonging to the Germans, who were there superintending the excavations, and where we intended putting up, and as it was getting exceedingly chilly and pitch dark, we were very glad to be near Babylon at last. So we paddled on with renewed energy, but, unfortunately, it turned out to be a case of "more haste less speed."

Now it was a very dark night, and our boatmen were not able to detect the different channels in the river, at this point divided

by islands, or mud-flats, thrown up here, and, unfortunately, we landed in the middle of the river on one of these detestable little islands, exactly opposite the German's hospitable house. It was impossible for us to walk or wade, as we might have gone up to our necks in a moment, so we wisely left ourselves in the hands of the boatmen, who got out, having stripped themselves, and with a lot of quarrelling, gesticulating, and cursing, walked along, pushing the boat through the different channels, and, at the end of quite two hours, we got near enough the left bank to trust ourselves on the backs of the boatmen, and get carried ashore. No time was wasted in getting coolies to carry the things on shore, our tents were put up in the courtyard of the house, and right glad we were that the vexatious journey had come to a close.

A person who expects to see great excavations like Pompeii, &c., and a museum with a host of curiosities and antiques that have been dug up, would be greatly disappointed in Babylon, but in rambling over

the place with the aid of a sketch map, noting the different points shown to you, like Nebuchadnezzar's Palace, the great temple, and the principal streets, and then climbing up some hill and looking around, you get some idea of what a marvellous place this Biblical city of Babylon must have been.

According to Herodotus, Babylon was as large as Paris, London, and Berlin combined. As a matter of fact, its real dimensions were equal to about one-fifth of the superficial area of London.

The walls of Babylon, Herodotus says, were of enormous size and thickness. This is not so, as the German archæologists have proved.

The principal town was on the left bank of the Euphrates. It was built in the form of a triangle, the sides of which measured $4\frac{1}{2}$, $3\frac{1}{2}$, $5\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres. It was surrounded by still traceable walls. The diameter of the city was about 15 kilometres.

Much excavation has been accomplished with the happiest results. Several buildings have been unearthed which are easily located

in the Bible. One of these is the Kasr or palace of Nebuchadnezzar. This is identical with the Schuana of ancient Scriptures. The New Year's Day procession for the Temple of Marduk started from this point, and the King was obliged to accompany it on pain of the forfeiture of his throne.

The principal Babylonian temple Amran, identical with the Egasila of the Scriptures, has also been discovered, also the road between Egasila and the citadel or palace of Schuana, called Ai-Bur-Shabou.

Imgur Bel and Nimiti Bel, the great Durani of Babylon, are not walls, as had been thought, but bastions.

The Babylon of the Bible is distinctly not the city, but the fortified palace or citadel of Nebuchadnezzar.

The hill Babel is probably the ruin of the celebrated hanging gardens of Semiramis. The Tower of Babylon probably stood near the Temple of Marduk, on the spot now known as the hill Sikkurat.

The celebrated Babylonian lion bestriding the figure of a man, in an unfinished state,

stands up in bold relief against the surrounding clay-coloured soil. The rooms in some buildings that are excavated seem small, and some of the walls are quite twenty feet thick, no doubt to keep them cool. Bricks made out of the clay soil are used, properly moulded and baked, and many thousands of them are stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's name. Many people take one of these bricks away as a souvenir, we were told by our German friends, but as one is too large to use as a paper-weight, and too small to build a house with, we refused the kindly offer. They have brought to light, in three different places, the principal street, which must have been about sixty or seventy feet broad, and running straight; but unless a person understands these things architecturally and historically, I cannot conscientiously say that there is very much in Babylon to appeal to the ordinary observer, like we were ourselves. Then the question comes in, "Is the trip up the river, &c., worth it?" and, in my humble opinion, most emphatically, No. But should a man in his

The Bridge of Boats, Bagdad.

imagination be able to adorn the walls of the palaces and temples as they were 3000 years ago, to picture in his brain the costumes of the multitudes who once peopled this gigantic place, now under a thick cloak of sand, then, I say, go to Babylon, and revel in the mighty ages of the past, with your Bible and your sketch-book.

About a three hours' drive off are the celebrated ruins of Birs Nimrud, and on the Bagdad road can be seen what are supposed to be the ruins of the Tower of Babel. Then higher up the celebrated Tigris river, which associates itself so nearly with earliest Biblical scenes, and about five or six days' ride on mules north-west of Bagdad, there stands a large town called Moussul, where the French have a monastery, and near by are our own celebrated excavations at Nineveh, undertaken by Layard. Then, again, up the Karun river by a local steamer as far as Shuster, and thence over land to Suza, you come across excavations in the hands of the French, who have discovered some remarkable things, amongst them a whole library, consisting of

several thousand stone tablets in cuneiform, and also a large bronze column. Suza is also an ancient capital, and the trip to this place we were particularly anxious to take, but unfortunately the ten days which we had to spend in quarantine had so upset all our arrangements and altered our plans that we had to cut short our sight-seeing if we wished to see anything at all of Persia on our way back to Bombay.

We left Babylon at five o'clock in the morning, and got once more to Bagdad, the celebrated town of the Arabian Nights' Tales, the centre of voluptuous Oriental splendour, the home of Ali Baba and the forty thieves—in fact, the chief centre of those parts that have been so curiously advertised and brought into fame by being mentioned so much in Oriental folklore. Unfortunately, however, like many other places, times have changed, and have not dealt over well with poor Bagdad, as there is now absolutely nothing to distinguish it from any other town in Turkish possessions. Scarcely a single European thing is sold in the bazaars, which are

very poor, and being closed in at the top to keep out the sun, they become so dark it is difficult to see well. This is a very great drawback, as wherever you go men are driving donkeys with goods piled up on top on either side, and which are capable of giving an awful blow as they pass you in their stupid, sleepy way; the drivers walk behind shouting out "Barlak!" "Barlak!" (or "By your leave!"). The only things worth buying in Bagdad are belts made of silk and silver or gold wire, which are excessively pretty. I have never seen any like them anywhere else, but am certain if they were sent home in quantities they would be very soon bought up. They are of all different colours and shades, and can be also had with knots and tassels hanging down one side. Yes, in my idea, these and the oranges (which are certainly the best I have ever tasted) are the only things that are worth buying in Bagdad. There is an apology for an hotel, kept by a Turk, but I doubt if any European uses it unless it is an occasional commercial traveller. I was told, however, that it was

decently furnished, and the food was not at all bad, and that it was quite possible for a few days in case of an emergency. There is no architectural beauty in Bagdad; the streets are narrow and most irregular, and when you get amongst them you can't help wondering how people can possibly thread their way through such a maze. The houses have big, heavy wooden doors, which open into a square courtyard, and a small flight of stone steps leads you up to the verandah which runs round the house in a European way. The front rooms have large over-hanging windows which jut out into the street, so that you have to bob your head continually if you happen to be on a horse. Sometimes one sees a picturesque bit as one looks down one of these narrow streets with the funny old doors and over-hanging windows, the curious archways, &c., with the yellow mud bricks, used so extensively in all the buildings.

The Turks and Arabs being Moslems, the houses are all fitted out with harems, and in some of the better houses, let to

Europeans, which have at one time belonged to wealthy natives, you see the harem rooms. The walls are mostly covered with bits of looking glass, in different designs, and mirrors wherever you look. The windows are often of stained glass, and the smaller ones, which afford the inmates a view of outside life, are hidden with wooden screens; plenty of brackets and dodgy corners are let into the walls, and broad, low couches generally fill up the window spaces. You have only to add a few Persian carpets, a negro eunuch or two prowling about, an Arab or a Turk squatting cross-legged on the floor smoking eternal cigarettes or puffing away at a narghile or hubble-bubble pipe, sipping his coffee or tea, or their favourite wine called arack. Yes, these harems look very well at night with plenty of lamps in the rooms, and all the spangles glittering and sparkling, and your imagination conjures up vividly the fairy tales of the Arabian Nights, &c. But oh! how different it all looks in the morning!—the shabby, stained, cracked, trumpery glass, the cheerless whitewashed walls,

the dirty windows that won't close properly, the Persian carpets with holes. Yes, many people go to bed millionaires and wake up paupers!

Many of the best houses are built along the Tigris, and it is always an endless source of amusement to sit on a verandah and watch the many curious sights going on around—mule drivers sending their animals down to drink; the "bestes," or water-carriers, filling their skins; the women doing their washing, or coming to fill their pitchers or clay pots; the curious round goofahs being paddled about; the old wooden bridge standing on a row of boats, with a never-ending mass of pedestrians; Turks in their uniforms and red fezes, Arabs, Armenians, native Christians, negro slaves—all forming a picturesque crowd.

The climate of Bagdad is considered better than lower down in the Persian Gulf; the heat in summer is dry, and the place is not relaxing. There are a quantity of curios to be bought, but the majority of them for sale are shams, I am told, such as the "cylinders," or ancient stone seals, and little statuettes,

lamps, and coins, which they say have been dug up in Babylon. You get some pretty silver-mounted weapons, particularly at Kerbela, which are very ornamental.

Of our return journey down the river nothing more can be said. We passed the only two towns of any importance, Koot-el-Amara and Amara, the latter place having a wool press owned by some Europeans, who live in Bagdad. Further down in the marshes we again came across the Arabs running along the banks, yelling out for things to be thrown to them. These people, I suppose, are the most ignorant and lawless in the world, with the exception, perhaps, of the natives in central Africa, but these fellows are certainly fifty times more savage. They only see these river steamers passing occasionally, and I don't suppose any of them have ever seen a European closer than those on the boat (certainly no European would care to get very near to them!). Their huts of clay are of the rudest kind, and they wander about a good deal. Further down, near the spot where the Euphrates joins the Tigris, all the

villages have their little forts, buildings about 20 feet high and 30 feet square, where the inhabitants fly to, and shoot from, in case of an attack from "friendly" neighbours. These little forts are generally built at one end of the village, and close to the river. These people are always fighting—in fact, take the Arabs all round, the lower classes seem to be an offensive, dirty, ignorant, and excessively vain lot of people, and, like their desert country, most uninteresting to the foreigner; but the first class Arab who has mixed with Europeans is usually a good fellow, and very dignified, with great presence and graceful manners. They are particularly courteous to English, &c., but cordially hate the Turks and their oppressive habits and extortionate ways.

A little further and the steamer again passes the place where the Garden of Eden was supposed to have been, but now there lies a village along the bank, a few acacia trees, a few groves of date palms, otherwise the usual barren wilderness, and certainly nothing impressive whatever. A

General View of Bagdad.

few minutes more and you pass the spot where the Euphrates joins the Tigris. This river is wide and swift, but, unfortunately, so shallow in places that no steamer could go up it. And now once more we were in the Shatt-el-Arab river, looking forward to our arrival in Basra, which we reached soon after dark. Three days were spent here, till we got a steamer to Bushire, the chief port of Persia, where we arrived on Saturday morning, March 9th, after leaving Basra on Thursday afternoon, having had to stop one night at Mohammera (because of the bar), a small place at the mouth of the Karoon river. There is a small steamer running up to Shuster, owned by the same company as the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Co., which, however, only goes as far as Basra, when you change into British India steamers.

CHAPTER V.

PERSIA.

Bushire to Borasjoon, 12 farsakhs; Borasjoon to Dalaki, 4 farsakhs; Dalaki to Kona-Takteh, 4 farsakhs; Kona-Takteh to Kamarij, 3 farsakhs; Kamarij to Kazaroon, 5 farsakhs. 1 farsakh (Persian) = $3\frac{1}{2}$ English miles. Mules go about three miles an hour. From Bushire to Kazaroon, about 93 English miles.

On Sunday morning, about 9 a.m., we left the island Bushire in a steam launch from the British Resident's for a little bare spot on the mainland called Sheif, where there is a small khan, and mules are loaded and unloaded with goods they bring backwards and forwards for Bushire over the mountains and to the inland towns. The sea, which can be exceedingly rough, behaved itself very well on our passage across, and as we shot along, leaving tracts of white foam on the still blue waters, the huge Kutal range of mountains frowned down on us in their rocky, lonesome way. A long mule ride over an absolute dead level

desert, with here and there a khan erected, is not exactly amusing, with a powerful sun and myriads of flies. The only interesting things were the mirages, which one beheld on every side, and apparently quite close; and so true to nature were these clumps of trees dotted about, standing apparently on little islands with their images reflected in shining waters, that at first it was impossible not to believe that they did not exist, but on looking behind, and seeing the empty desert-land which we had been passing over trying to humbug us in the same way, then we thought we had had enough of it.

On and on we went over the plain towards this huge range of Persian mountains, apparently never getting any nearer to them; herds of camels we passed, and vast numbers of donkeys and mules. Now and then some poor dog galloped along the track, with its tongue lolling out of its mouth for want of water, as over this thirty-mile track of desert scarcely any water is to be found, the Persians always carrying it with them in a goatskin. At last we got near the

mountains, and our path lay over rough stones up and down hill; passing an occasional village, with patches of cultivated land; creeping along on our mules, hither and thither, as darkness closed around, until we got to our resting-place for the night at Borasjoon. There is the telegraph wire running from Bushire to Shiraz, &c., called the Indo-European Telegraph Department. There are houses at the different stages, and the people very kindly give a spare room to any travellers passing through if they are not needed by any of the officials. The rooms are furnished with a bedstead, table, and chair (your bedding, washing, and cooking utensils you carry with you on your mules), they are clean, and a perfect godsend after the rough riding over the mountains. With plenty of servants, mules, and good horses to ride (and they must be sure-footed and used to the country), with comfortable English saddles, one can get along in Persia, in the beaten tracks, with comparative ease if plenty of time is taken, and not more than one stage a day is attempted. Many people

have the impression that Persia is a flat, uninteresting desert country, with a few towns scattered about like Arabia, and that the people are just like the Arabs, or the ordinary natives of Turkistan and Arabia, &c. But once get over the Kutal range, and you are in a country as mountainous as Switzerland, and for wild, rugged grandeur of a certain type, I should say it has scarcely an equal in the world. Between every range are towns, or large villages of greater or less importance, and the one typical town to see near Bushire, in the south, is Shiraz, from where you can visit the celebrated ruins of Persepolis, the old capital of the Persian kings 2000 years B.C. From photographs and what one hears, they must be magnificent, but the trip was too long a one for us to undertake from Bushire to Shiraz and back, taking nearly a month; and this being the rainy season, we had to be content to see what we could of inland scenery as far as Kazaroon, a place rather more than half-way to Shiraz, and from where we visited the ruins of Sherpore.

From Shiraz, again, Ispahan is a town of importance and interest, with many Europeans, a bank, consuls, &c., and further on you come to Teheran, the capital, which is every day becoming more and more Europeanised. This was the trip that we had planned in the first instance on starting from India, had we the time, but on reaching Bushire we heard that the snow had not melted on the mountains, and the cold up-country was intense, making travelling practically impossible. This was the end of January. About the beginning of March the weather warms up, but you get rain; snow and ice practically disappear, although in the north the winters are terribly severe. It is now proposed to build a railway in Persia from Teheran to Bunder Abbas, a small Persian port having the reputation of being the hottest place on the face of the globe; a railway also is being talked about from Teheran to Bagdad, and so are many other matters.

Early on the next day we left Borasjoon for our next resting place, Kona-Takteh, a village with a telegraph rest house, situated in a valley

over the Kutal range, surrounded by date palms. Until you get to Dalaki, with the exception of passing a clear, swift-running stream of sulphur water, which can be smelt a long way off, springing from somewhere in the mountains and losing itself in a huge forest of date palms in the plains, there is nothing of interest to be seen. The track is flat until you reach Dalaki, after which it begins to ascend. Up and up for hours you gradually go amongst the wildest scenery possible, every turn bringing a fresh panorama before you. In places there may be a sameness, a slight monotony, but that is always the case in mountainous countries. It is wonderful to see how clever the mules are in picking their way, never making a false step; indeed, they seem far cleverer than a human being, and in places, so long as it is fairly level going, it is wiser to sit on your mule than walk, as, between the huge loose stones, boulders, and rocks and slippery places, you are lucky if you do not sprain your ankle or, at least, get along without some small mishap. The way is all rocky, and in many places where the

path is over solid rock the footprints of the mules are regularly dug out six and eight inches deep, and getting deeper as they are used by them every day, and if one thinks of the hundreds of years—nay, perhaps, thousands—that these Persians have driven their heavy laden mules over this self-same track as they do to-day, it is not surprising.

When one looks up the mountain path or down the valley it is indeed a picturesque sight to see these Persian mule-drivers with their peasant dress, generally a blue cotton blouse down to the thighs, a white sash wound round the waist, long sleeves, blue trousers to the knees, their feet incased in white sandals, and the curious headpiece which you see all over Persia, generally black, like an old-fashioned round top hat of felt without a brim. Their hair is trimmed rather short, and generally sticks out curling round the edge of their hats. The majority of these men are of fine physique, like most hill men are, and some have very good features, and in a swarthy, savage way are remarkably handsome. The tribesmen, &c., in southern Persia are

a wild lot, very hot blooded, and more daring than in the north, and there appear to be more local disturbances amongst the southerners than amongst the same class in central and northern Persia. Although anywhere in Persia a traveller is liable to be robbed, and it is risky to travel after sunset unless you have a good many armed police with you. These fellows are like the "Zouptias" you hire in Arabia; they are dotted all over the mountain passes, armed with Martini rifles and a cartridge belt round their waists, and they accompany you from one end of their beat to the other, when another man comes to take his place. But in day time it is quite unnecessary to have one if you keep in the usual mule track, and the rogues know it, too, as they have a trick which some of them play on foreigners, and which I was two or three days before finding out. In some cases the lazy beggars never accompany you at all, and when you get to the end of a stage a man loafs up who has never moved from the place or set eyes on you before, and asks for his tip, pretending that he was the man who went ahead from

the last stage to clear the way of all the robbers. You tip him and he pretends to send on someone else, whom you see disappearing ahead of you in an active, alert way, but he soon doubles back, and the person at the next stage impersonates him; they thus make their money without any exertion. But I will say this for them, that when you make arrangements to get them to go into a strange place (as when we visited Sherpore) or marching at night, they are quite up to the scratch, and ready for anything, and no doubt would enjoy a brush with a few robbers (unless, of course, they happened to be their friends or relations, which is often the case).

There is something very nice about the ordinary every-day Persian you meet. He seems to enjoy life, always ready to see the humorous side of anything, very easy-going, careless and extravagant, somewhat simple, but with a spice of roguish cunning, far from being bad hearted, and having a certain individual dignity. In fact, you feel much more at home among Persians than you ever could among the same class of Arabs.

However, to return to our journey across the Kutal mountains. We at last got to what is called the Dalaki river, being the same name as the village at the foot of the mountains, where there is a rest house. This river is very swift and shallow, except in certain pools, and I saw numbers of trout and other fish, and, indeed, it is an ideal place for them, the water being a beautiful clear blue, with sundry pools and hollows; but on our return journey the sharp rain had made all the water thick and muddy. A little further on and you come across a picturesque stone bridge built across the river, and on the other side are a few mountain police quartered, and some shepherds' sheds; the whole formed a very pretty and typical picture, with their black goats grazing about. The grass on the mountains is by no means luxuriant, in fact, the mountains in places even at this season are much more browny-looking than green, which you see only in patches, giving the hills the appearance of wanting a little hair restorer. At last, further on, one gets into the very midst of the mountains, which close

you in all round, range after range, the scenery really becoming very grand, and I cannot attempt to do justice to it.

As one painfully struggles over the huge loose boulders and up the rocks, with only the veriest outline of a track at the steepest part, to one's utter astonishment, a paved zig-zagging road, about twelve feet wide, with walls three feet high, carries one straight up the mountain side for about a quarter of a mile. This piece of work, with the exception of one or two bridges, is the only sort of attempt at a road all the way over the mountains, from Borasjoon to Shiraz, a distance of several hundred miles. After making use of this little bit of road, another half-hour's climb brings you to the top, and there you see the mountains around, range after range, their rugged, brown, rocky sides standing out clear against the blue sky. There is very little vegetable growth, and a botanist would find the Kutals a very dull place; in certain parts you come across bushes of stuff like heather, with very pretty pink and white waxy-looking flowers, also

small trees here and there with a sour fruit like our crab-apple. In certain chasms you pass through, you can almost touch both sides with your hands. A few eagles were occasionally hovering about high in the sky, and I saw several small birds of rather pretty colours which I have never seen before; near the water were a good many wagtails with yellow-tinted breasts.

At last the descent was *un fait accompli*, and we saw the green valley of Kona-Taktch lying at our feet, and soon we were having our dinner of tinned soup, and fish, and chickens (which latter cost about 3*d*. each) in the welcome rest house. The next morning we had to make an early start, as the stage to Kazaroon, *viâ* Kamarij, was a long one. A broad track, covered with loose, round boulders, gradually ascends, taking you again between another range of mountains on the opposite side of the valley. The track curls about up and down, till you at last no longer know whether you are supposed to be going up or coming down a mountain; then suddenly a turn brings you into a deep,

narrow gorge, with the rocks towering up on either side. Then an ascent begins in earnest, the worst of the lot, which necessitates your getting off the mules. The path itself is almost perpendicular in places, and every step has to be taken with caution — a case of occasionally hanging on with your teeth and eyelids. Luckily, this awful bit does not last long, and within an hour you are apparently standing on an equality with the surrounding high peaks, admiring the view. Mountain tops all around you in every direction as far as the eye can see—may be, like a man on a roof in a big city. A winding defile leads you again gradually down, and you soon catch a glimpse of a valley beneath, and the little village of Kamarij lying snugly at the bottom of a hill. Some of the villages we passed on the mountains have their cemeteries, generally on as level a piece of ground as can be found, and pieces of sharp-pointed, white rock are used as tombstones, and are scattered about all over the ground like almonds on the top of a currant cake. Now and then some men who were pretending to

be mending the paths would pester us for money, but they were perfectly harmless till after dark. A short stop in the village to rest the mules, and some lemonade and biscuits for ourselves, and off we marched again *en route* for Kazaroon. For some distance the way lies straight across the valley, and here for the first time we heard the cuckoo, most unexpectedly, and naturally reminding us of home.

Not much climbing was to be done, as our way lay rather more through than over the mountains. The road, however, in places was unusually infamous, and it was pitch dark when we saw a few lights in the distance, which our guide pointed out as Kazaroon. The next day it was pouring with rain, and a long ride to the ruins at Sherpore was out of the question. Thick white clouds covered the tops of the mountains, and veils of mist hung about until 3 p.m., when the sun made sundry efforts to struggle out, and the rain ceased. Kazaroon is a town of about 10,000 inhabitants, rather tumble-down and dirty, but decidedly picturesque. Most of the houses have flat

roofs, many overgrown with grass, and you can walk about them and get good views, and in the summer the people sleep there. Some pretty gardens are to be seen on the outskirts with long avenues of orange trees, &c. There were also some trees bearing a peculiar fruit as large as a pineapple, a lovely golden colour, with a very thick, coarse skin, like a Jaffa orange. Nobody, however, eats them. The telegraphic establishment here is kept by an Armenian, and an old Armenian priest on his way to Shiraz was also putting up there, so the evening passed very pleasantly, and we were not slow in gathering as much information as possible. The next morning we made an early start; it was misty and threatening, and we had many misgivings as we sat on our jolting mules. The ground was very sloshy and slippery after all the rain, and our advance was correspondingly slow. We went on under the lee of the mountains until we got to a village pronounced "Greece," but how spelt it is impossible to say, for here it is quite out of the beaten track, very few people ever visiting this district, and in the mountains there

are many tribes who have probably never seen a white man. From here we were told that Sherpore was about half a farsakh, or about two miles, and we passed over a lot of cultivated ground, barley, wheat, and patches sown with onions, and all the little streams and ditches were overflowing, and everywhere were signs of there having been rain enough to last for some time. Evidently the natives about here are a thrifty, industrious lot, in spite of their bad reputation all over Persia. Cultivated bits of ground are fenced round with hedges of dried branches stuck into the ground, affording protection from wandering donkeys, mules, goats, and sheep, whereas in Arabia there is no pretence at any sort of fencing, and in consequence you are constantly seeing stray animals casually feeding in the midst of a beautiful green garden of wheat, and being chivied out by a lot of Arab children and women; and yet these Arabs must have the wherewithal for enclosing their land, as all the mud walls surrounding their villages, &c., have a topping or binding of small branches. The Persians do not seem to make

use of the soil for making walls, &c., as in the villages the little huts, with their yards, are all enclosed and divided by these hedges, which, although not so private, let the breeze through in summer and suit the Persians, who are rather more neighbourly than the Arabs. In some of their inclosures you see miniature gardens, where a few vegetables are grown, and everywhere cocks and hens march about, giving it all a very homely appearance. The village women are not particular about covering their faces up; in fact, as in most other parts of the world, when they are good looking they like to show their faces; they are by no means shy, and seem rather forward people. Many of them are tall, good specimens, but their faces are of a peculiar type, their eyes being rather small and planted close together; and it is curious to see here, as in Arabia, the number of men, women, and children who have something the matter with their eyes, either having lost one, or a fearful squint, or bad inflammation, and so on; but it is worse among Arabs.

CHAPTER VI.

Village Troubles — Money — Sherpore — The Rock Carvings—Slavery—The Heat—Persian Carpets—Persian Bon-bons—Hawking—Fish Boats—Return to Muscat.

We at length arrived at the village of Sherpore, at the foot of the mountains, and had to make arrangements with the head man of the village to supply us with Zouptias, or police, to accompany us to the ruins. Now, of course, this man guessed we should not care to go into the mountains without them or he might have sent men specially to rob us, and being a scoundrel he tried to charge an exorbitant fee; but after a lot of haggling, and telling him through our guide that we should report the matter (to whom or where we did not know) and get him kicked out of his place, he became amenable, and sent four men with us for four tomans—a toman equalling ten krons, and one kron equals about fourpence—about 14*s*. The tomans and half tomans are supposed to be gold pieces with

the Shah's head on one side, but you very rarely see them now. Business is done with paper money, and with the krons. These hill police are remarkably fine specimens, and seem to think no more of a twenty-mile jaunt than we do of a couple. They all had Martini-Henry rifles, with a supply of ammunition in a leather cartridge-belt around their waists, and I was told a good many knew how to use their weapons and were very good shots. They are dressed in the usual way, with the black hat, their black hair cut level at the neck and curling up. They were without shoes on account of the wet, but, as a rule, the Persians do not go about bare-footed to the degree that other Eastern nations do. Neither do they smoke as much as the Arabs, who are perpetually smoking cigarettes made with a detestable loose tobacco in small pieces like tea-leaves. The Persians use a pipe, the stem of which, about a foot long, is fixed into a bowl made of a cocoa-nut, and filled with water, and used in the same way as the hubble-bubble. At last the outer range of mountains that we had been

skirting abruptly finished, and, on getting to the other side, a valley was exposed to view, with a swift-flowing river, or broad mountain torrent, rushing down its centre, with trees and thick bushes dotted about the valley, which was carpeted with luxuriant grass. On either side thick, massive, perpendicular walls of rock towered above you, the mountains there ranging from 4000 to 10,000 feet in height. About a quarter of a mile down, on one of these rocks, almost on a level with the ground, you come across the first wall carving, or relievo. There appear to be altogether five, two of which are on one side of the valley and three on the other. They are supposed to be about 3000 years old. One can see where a sort of frame, or sunk mount, has been first chiselled out deeply in the rock, in order to get a good surface to work on, and then the artists have begun their marvellous work, which is of such remarkable interest, and helps to throw so much light on the costumes and manners of the people in those bygone days. Undoubtedly a fortified townlet,

or large village, must have stood in this valley, and have been a natural stronghold capable of withstanding the armies of the world; but now not one stone remains upon another, nor is any trace left behind, with the exception of these curious old rock-carvings. Probably many more exist, covered over with ferns and bushes, others, being in exposed places, have worn away; but, at present, the tribes living in the mountains about there are so savage that it is difficult to make a prolonged stay, or, at any rate, to get the police to do so with you.

The first carving represents two men on horseback, facing each other, and each horse is standing on the prostrate figure of a man; between the horsemen three figures are crouching in a supplicating position to the left-hand horseman. All this is still clear, except the horseman on the right-hand side.

The next carving, about forty yards further on, is in a hollow under the cliff, with ferns, &c., like a huge grotto. Here are carved about thirty figures of warriors, the square being

divided into four parts, each containing seven or eight figures.

The next we saw was on the other side of the valley, and the river had to be waded through, which was rather hard work for the mules, as the rain had made the water deep, and the current was very strong, bringing down a lot of flotsam and jetsam. Then a steep climb up the side was done on foot, and a path cut out in the rock brought one up to the third carving, which was like the second one—a mass of armed warriors standing one behind the other. There appeared to be about thirty of them, and wonderfully well preserved, but, unfortunately, a tree was there spreading its branches and covering half the carving. A few steps further on and we came to a superb piece of work, in very good order, of gigantic size, standing out bold and clear, representing two men on horseback, facing each other, and leaning forward, clasping what looked like a couple of wreaths; the bits in the horses' mouths, the bridle, the crowns on the kings' heads, the exquisite

symmetry and proportions, give one the idea of a Greek or Roman work, instead of one belonging to an era dating back 3000 years or more. Further on is another carving of the same size, or rather covering the same space, but, apparently, with a mass of small figures. The rocks above have given way in places, and it is impossible to get close to it, the best way being to look at it through glasses from the opposite side of the valley. It is a pity there is no writing whatever; they appear to be portraits, no doubt of certain famous people of those times, but who, or what, can only be the purest conjecture. There are no ruins or anything near the spot to indicate the presence of a large town; in fact, comparatively speaking, the valley is so narrow and shut in at the end that, unless the town was higher up, there would be little or no room for anything of the sort to have existed at all. We know for certain that old Persian capitals existed at Persepolis, Tesiphon, Susa, &c., and indisputable ruins remain to this day, but, with due deference to a certain body of men, it seems difficult to believe

that every spot that owns a few features of interest should necessarily have been a place of mighty fame and glory in bygone times, as some foreign excavators seem to believe.

It now began to pour with rain, and the sloppy places became sloppier, and we retraced our steps slipping, slopping, sliding in the mud and slush as though we were all tipsy. We came up to the mules, and, getting into our nice wet saddles, off we started again, *en route* to the village of Kamarij, which was to be our resting place for the night. Of our return journey to Bushire nothing more need be said, insomuch as it was an exact reverse of the trip out, except that we slightly altered our stages. We were exceedingly fortunate in finding a British India steamer just about to leave, which we managed to catch, and in a few minutes were steaming down the Persian Gulf again, calling at several places which we had visited on our way up. On this occasion we were quit of quarantine rule, and free to land wherever we pleased, which we naturally took advantage of. The first place we

stopped at to deliver and fetch the mails was Linga. The natives here, as all along the coast of Persia, are Arabs, or half Arabs and half negroes, as slaves from Zanzibar, &c., are shipped up the Persian Gulf in Arab dhows flying the French flag, which prevents them being fired at. The means by which they are enabled to pursue that course are very ingenious: at Jibuti, which belongs to the French, they buy for a few hundred rupees a strip of land, and thus become French subjects, and sail under the French flag! A good many slaves are landed also on the Arabian coast and marched away into the interior; their food consists of dates and water. The Arabs generally take good care of them, but, as a rule, these negroes are a lazy, stupid, bad lot, and those which our consuls have succeeded in liberating are, of course, unable to claim any nationality, and are totally at a loss as to what to do. So, perhaps, it would be better to leave them alone, as I have never heard anyone say that these slaves have shown the least gratitude for anything that has ever been done for them; moreover,

an owner of slaves, who has bought and has to keep them, is not likely to risk losing them by cruel or neglectful behaviour. I described Linga on my way up, as seen from the sea; and there is very little of interest to be seen inside the place itself—a mosque with a tall minaret, the usual bazaars, and an old fort with some obsolete, perfectly useless cannon, a handful of Persian soldiers, and outside some rather curiously-constructed wells, like huge beehives, for catching the rain-water. The mountain ranges behind and around Linga are very fine, the further range having a white appearance, and the nearest a beautiful blue tint, and the combination with the sky, sea, and sands is very striking indeed, and not seen anywhere else in the Gulf, or, indeed, in the world. The next place we stopped at was Bunder Abbas, which has the reputation, amongst people who know the Gulf, of being the hottest place in summer about here — and that, I suppose, means the hottest place on the face of the earth. This is partly due to it being screened in by a semicircle of high

hills, which shut out all the air. There are no trees to break the hot winds, and, as elsewhere, the rock and sand formation holds the heat, and makes the place like an oven. There is also another spot, possessing a dry heat (and therefore not so exhausting as the moist, damp heat of Bunder Abbas), which is up the Karoon River from Mohammera, a district slightly north of "Ahwas," where the thermometer has frequently reached 135°.

Bunder Abbas used to be considered a good place for the purchase of Persian carpets, as it is the port for the caravans from Shiraz, &c., but now, unless you go to the custom-house and are prepared to give large prices (when you may be robbed), you can get very little to choose from, besides which the merchants are very independent, and not at all inclined to come down in their prices. We purchased a few carpets in Linga, and they were very good value, and, from what I saw, I think for ordinary rugs Linga is the best place; but wherever you go in Persia to get Persian carpets you are never sure, unless you be an expert, that you are not

being cheated. In many rugs they use an aniline dye for colouring, and in a very short time the colours in the cheaper sorts fade away altogether—in fact, the getting of a really good carpet is a fluke, and one has to live in a place and look about, and, with luck, you may drop on a fine specimen. Besides Persian carpets, there is a "sweet" made at Shiraz, called manah, which is widely celebrated in these parts. It is made from the tamarisk plant, with flour, almonds, and pistachio nuts, in round cakes about an inch thick, and put up in tins; it is very like our nougat, but not so hard, and with a curious flavour of its own. Whether it is wholesome or not is hard to say, and, considering what frightfully dirty people the Persians are, it might be wise not to eat too much at a time. A slice of this and a glass of sherbet, which consists of sugar and water excessively sweet, is sometimes offered you by natives you come in contact with, and it would be excessively impolite to refuse it.

These Orientals are very fond of giving

presents, and if you admire anything they usually press it on you, but, of course, they expect something else five times its value in return. The Arabs are just the same in that way (as are also the Turks), but between the Arab and the Persian there is a good deal of difference. It seems to be in a Persian's blood to cheat you—he can't resist; but a well-to-do Arab of the same standing will not do so. The Persians, however, are a more characteristic and sporting lot, and in using the latter term I mean it in its true sense. One of their chief amusements is hawking; several of them go off riding, accompanied by their dogs and their hawks, and a very pretty sight it is to see them hunting. When the game is spotted the hoods are taken off the birds and away they fly, and you have to ride for all you are worth, and sometimes the ground is awful. There is a good deal of game of all sorts in Persia, and they are very fond of shooting; but, in a few notes like these, it is impossible to enter into a subject on which volumes could be written.

Our next stopping place was Jask, which

is a telegraph station simply, with about a dozen Europeans and Eurasians, and a very small native village. About a couple of hundred miles inland the natives make a very curious and beautiful carpet, or rug, but, as they only make a very few, there are none on the market, and thus they cannot be bought. I was lucky enough to obtain one of these specimens through the kindness of the superintendent of telegraphs there, and that is, I think, the only way strangers passing through can obtain them, and then only if there are any to spare down on the coast.

Immediately our steamer dropped anchor she was surrounded by a lot of funny little boats, about the shape and size of a small canoe, and made of twigs, or branches, twisted together like ropes, and these ropes are formed into the shape of a boat, and look like skeletons. Made in this way, of course, they are not water-tight, nor are they supposed to be; they rest in the water instead of on it, and hold one or two men, who sit on little seats just above the water, with their

legs and feet in the water at the bottom of the boat. They generally have fish to sell, which leap about in these basket boats, and whether they were originally made for keeping the fish alive for a long time in that way or not, I do not know; suffice it to say that they are the most curious boats I have ever seen, not excepting the Bagdad "goofahs." These boat-skeletons I only saw at Jask and Bunder Abbas. The large sailing boats that one sees all over the gulf are really most wonderfully picturesque; they sport only one huge mainsail, and have very high prows, and some of the very large ones remind you of the old Dutch boats you see now and then in old paintings; they are capable of stowing away a lot of cargo. The Arabs and negroes often paddle, or row, as well as sail, and you see oars of enormous length, with square and round blades, or, sometimes, the bottom of an old wood box is nailed on to the oar as a blade, and with a great deal of singing and slack exertion three or four lazy beggars take about two strokes in a minute. It is certainly most

amusing to watch the craft of all kinds buzzing round a steamer like a lot of flies directly she stops at a port.

Our next stopping place was Muscat, which I described at the beginning of these notes, and it struck us again as the most romantic-looking place, buried, as it is, between high rocks rising sheer out of the water to enormous heights, overlooking a deep, circular harbour, which the biggest of ships can enter. Its funny little round turretted watch-towers, dotted about the summits of the rocks in the most unexpected places, look as if they had grown there, and are very romantic relics of the time when the Portuguese used this stronghold for purposes of piracy and slavery. The Sultan of Muscat now owns the place; he is half a negro, his mother having been a slave. At one time it would have been easy for the British to have taken the place, as the Bedouins from the desert came in force, and for six weeks held Muscat. The Sultan fled from his palace, and escaped to one of the forts on the rocks, and his brother to the other, and

desultory firing was kept up, but no damage done. The Sultan sent his wife to the English consul to say that if we helped to drive the Bedouins out he would henceforth submit to British rule, &c. There was a gunboat in the harbour, and we could have taken Muscat with the greatest ease; but nothing was done, except losing a great deal of prestige, and the usual exchanging of consuls.

You can purchase some very handsome daggers, of silver workmanship, with belts; they are peculiar to Muscat. Most of the natives there, who can afford it, strut about with one of these curved silver-hilted things stuck in front in their silk sashes. The weather now became hotter and hotter every day, in fact, ever since we had left the Persian Gulf there was a change in the temperature—a damp and still feeling in the air; whereas, higher up in the gulf, there seemed to be always a fresh breeze, and, in some places, when a strong "shamal" is blowing, the sea gets excessively rough, almost without any warning. There is, at night, to be seen sometimes a lot of phos-

phorescence in the water, and waves of blue flame leap and play about, and the night seems as light as day. I shall never forget one night coming up the gulf between Linga and Bushire: it was a glorious, starlight night and a dead calm, but as the steamer ploughed its way through the sea, every wave that we threw aside became lit up with a glittering blue and gold light, and for miles behind the boat's wash was like a lake of fire So extraordinary was this spectacle that we went forward to the bows, and every now and then porpoises jumped about and played around, and, as they dived and rushed through the water, their forms caught the glow of blue phosphorescent light, and one could plainly see their seemingly-transparent, blue-shining bodies, leaving a streak of gold in their tracks as they gambolled about around the steamer, deep down below. In the Gulf of Siam I once saw the water lit up in this way, but never before have I seen this curious blue sheen, as if some giant electric light were throwing up its rays from beneath the surface.

Yes, I can safely say that in the cool weather a trip up the Persian Gulf is one of the most interesting and health-giving, probably, in the East. For people who are fond of the sea, or who wish a change from India and have not time to go home, nothing could be more enjoyable. Every day you see something new, and with very little trouble a stop could be made at Bushire, with a trip to the ruins of Persepolis, *viâ* Shiraz, with its insight into Persian life and scenery. It is well worth the trouble, and our one regret on our return was the time we had wasted up the Tigris river, which we might have spent in seeing far more interesting things. From Muscat two more days brought us to Karachi, and thence two more days brought us back again to Bombay.

Part II.

NEW ZEALAND AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

NEW ZEALAND.

Dunedin — Railway Travelling — Lake Wakitapu — Christchurch—Land Law—Wanganui River—New Plymouth.

On June 10th we left Colombo in s.s. *Oceana*, caught a few monsoon squalls, and got to Fremantle, the port for Perth, West Australia on June 20th, making a ten days' run, arriving at Sydney on the morning of the 29th.

A large sheep show was taking place, and the elections were coming off on the Wednesday, and Sydney looked as dirty and squalid as it struck me on my first visit three years ago; the same quantity of evil-looking idle loafers, and the same bustle in the public buildings. What a difference after clean, well-kept Melbourne, with its orderly crowds and clean wide streets! However, after a trip up the Parramatta and the Hawkesbury Rivers, and a drive round the "Seven" Hills, visiting the

famous orange groves or orchards *en route*, we left for New Zealand on July 6th, arriving again at dusty Wellington on the 10th, and at Lyttelton, the pretty port for Christchurch, on the 11th.

The cold at this time of the year (the New Zealand midwinter) is pretty severe, although refreshing and bracing, after the somewhat muggy and enervating climate of Sydney.

Lyttelton, the port of Christchurch, is a quaint, quiet little town, built on the hills, which landlock the harbour on every side. A pretty walk along the coast, with the blue water beneath, the green hills all round, sprinkled with a little white snow on their summits, reminded me a little of the green hills jutting out of the water on certain sea coast ports of Southern Japan. A little further on, snugly reposing in cleverly arranged pits, are some forts, with here and there a few gunners scrambling about. These colonial gunners wear the same uniform as the artillery at home, and seem a fine body of men.

Christchurch is about half an hour's run

by train from Lyttelton, but, as the steamer only stopped a few hours, it was not worth while we thought to run up there.

The next morning at about 9 a.m. we left the "Heads" behind, and were steaming up the water gaily, passing numerous pretty buildings dotted about the green hills, and finally got alongside the old wooden wharf, and this ended our journey from Sydney to Dunedin.

Dunedin is the principal town in the south of the South Islands, with a population of about forty-seven thousand, chiefly Scotch, and a stranger thinks he is in Scotland at first, for everywhere around the voices you hear are nearly all broad Scotch; in fact, the very children born out here, and who have never been home, pick it up and talk in the same way (and, after all, what is prettier than a "wee" Scotch accent, although a broad one, with its confiding monotony, sometimes wants digging up?).

The streets are broad and dirty, electric trams run up the hill at the back of the town, from where a most extensive view can be had

of the harbour and the surrounding hills, which shut out the actual sea.

About two miles out by train is the suburb of St. Clair, a collection of neat little villas, built in the usual style—wood, with gables and verandahs running around the front, generally one storied only, and never more than two. The sandy beach stretches away for miles on either side, and the sand cliffs rise perpendicularly all along it.

There is a charming club in Dunedin, and although there is not a large society in the English sense of the word, the little town nevertheless seems as prosperous and as self-contained as any other place in the colony.

Leaving Dunedin by the 9 o'clock train, we journey through the usual uninteresting New Zealand country of low, irregular, yellowy-grass coloured hills, with the everlasting sheep grazing, or past occasional patches of "bush," or clumps of trees left untouched (as in most places the forest land has always been burnt to turn it into grass), in fact, my experience is that all over New Zealand, in travelling by

railway, unless you are running along the coast, you need never trouble to look out of the window, as you always know what you will see. And, *Mon Dieu!* how tedious are these awful journeys; the carriages all wobble about, and make the most unseemly noises, and are built apparently to let every sort of draught in, and such things as hot water bottles are unknown. Now and then meals are served in a dining-car, but what a mockery they are!

The fastest trains don't seem to travel more than about fifteen miles an hour, and usually stop at every station—in fact, the only difference, as a Yankee said to me, was "That the fast trains were slow trains, but not quite so slow as the slow trains." They have a way of running certain trains only two or three times a week, and so on, and if you ask the public for information about these things, they none of them seem to know, and are all ready to agree with you cheerfully that there is "much to be done as far as train travelling is concerned" in this little Colony. The carriages are very badly built, and the first-class equals the third of any other country. We arrived at

Kingston at some late hour, and stumbled along the railway lines, carrying our bags (such things as porters are unknown here, or, if they exist, are busily engaged with the registered baggage), till we reached the slippery, little, wet decks of the steam cockle-shell, whose business it is to carry you across to Queenstown, a large village or townlet on the other side of the Lake Wakitapu.

It was now pitch dark, and there being no moon you could only see the sparks flying out of the funnel. Supper was served on board; the price for all meals in trains, at stations, and on boats is 2*s.*, and if they gave better food and charged more, I should think it ought to prove more profitable in the long run. After two hours we got to the wharf of Queenstown, which is considered the most central point to stop at for making trips in this part. It has two or three hotels, and is a little, wood built town situated on the shore of the lake. The next morning we started at ten o'clock, in one of the poor little steamers, to the head of the lake, to

a place called Glenorchy, where there is a comfortable hotel.

The mountains surrounding this lake on either side form a valley, at the head of which you can see Mount Earnslaw, which towers above the rest, its white summit gleaming in the sun, a few clouds resting about it, and backed by a bright blue sky; it makes a pretty picture standing out in a frame of emerald hills. Its height is 9165 feet, and, in summer, people fond of climbing can make some interesting excursions in this direction.

The steamer started on its return journey to Queenstown at 5 p.m., and we arrived at our hotel in a couple of hours' time, and were uncommonly glad to warm ourselves by the fire once more. The cold on the lake was intense, with an icy wind blowing the whole way. All there is to be said of the lake is that it is a fine sheet of water, but the green hills on either side, which we skirted the whole way, failed to impress us in any way whatever; and, on the whole, we were disappointed with the scenery, particularly after the glowing accounts we had heard of it.

The other lakes, viz., Manapouri and Te Ananek, are the same sort of thing, with more rock scenery and occasional bush.

Near here on the west coast are what are called the "Sounds," equivalent to, and very like, the Fjords of Norway; but, unfortunately, a trip is only taken to visit these by the Union Company's steamers during the month of February. From photographs I have seen of them, and from what people who have made the trip have told me, they must be worth seeing, one Sound in particular, which apparently eclipses the rest in its rugged wildness, being Milford Sound.

The next morning we left for our return journey to Dunedin, having to get up at 5 a.m. to catch the boat at Kingston. Dark, cold, and wet, with a fine drizzling rain, and after a long and monotonous journey we once more got back to Dunedin at 5.30 p.m.

The next day we left for Christchurch. For some distance the train runs by the sea, and the coast scenery with the spray breaking over the rocks presents now and then pretty peeps. At nine o'clock we reached Christchurch, in many

ways the best town in New Zealand, or, at any rate, considered so by many of the Canterbury people. There are good shops, clubs, and society, and it has an air of prosperity not seen everywhere else. There are some nice buildings, a fine cathedral, and a most interesting and complete museum of things Australasian, &c.

The town is flat, and its surroundings are not in any way picturesque, as in Dunedin. The port is Lyttelton, a short run by train.

The sheep farming around this district is more productive than in other districts; but, from what one gathers, the Government is so strict in its laws that the squatters who made their way in the "good old days" do not farm with the same zeal as formerly.

The Government can purchase any ground from the owner, whether he wishes to sell or not, at a price to be settled by arbitration. There may be advantages in this manner of dividing land up, it no doubt peoples a larger proportion. There are many laws respecting freeholds and leaseholds, and the more one goes into it the more complex it appears, and one comes away

with the rightful or wrongful idea that New Zealand seems a very much over governed country, and one which nowadays the Insular Briton would no longer care to venture to live in. The enormous wages which have to be paid to the working class and the strict rule of working hours must cut in more than one way.

After a few days we left Christchurch, *viâ* Lyttelton, and a trip of about nine hours across a very rough sea brought us to Wellington, the capital and seat of Government (*see* in "Over the World," Chapter II.), and taking the train in the early morning we reached Wanganui about 3 p.m. This is the great tourist centre, a large town near the mouth of the Wanganui River.

Excursions in the summer run backwards and forwards to Pipiriki, and the scenery on either side consists of high banks and cliffs, which are clothed in thick bush to the water's edge. It is called the New Zealand Rhine. The trip up takes about seven hours.

There are good driving roads near Wanganui on either side, so, taking a fly, my friend and I decided, as the weather was fine, to go as

far as we could in the short space of time before us. Our driver told us that the views were more or less the same all the way, with an occasional waterfall or small rapid thrown in to break the monotony. The scenery is peaceful and homely. The cattle grazing on the banks, occasional small boats, &c., lazily floating along add to the general effect; but nothing we saw was striking, or of a nature to make one anxious to take the complete trip.

An eight-hour journey through the country brought us to New Plymouth, a pretty coast town of some importance. The port is excessively pretty, and at the back of the town stands Mount Egremont, crowned in snow, about nine thousand feet high. This mountain is easily climbed, and the view from the summit is said to be very fine, and the mountain itself, seen, as we saw it, on a very bright moonlight night, standing like a pyramid of white marble against a background of blue black sky sprinkled with stars, was a beautiful sight.

The recreation ground, or park, in New Plymouth is quite the prettiest in the islands,

with its rockeries and ferneries, pretty lakes stocked with trout, &c., and little rustic bridges built over the waterways. Black swans swaggered about the lake, and semi-wild ducks came to be fed by children, reminding one of Battersea Park and its surroundings.

There are some pretty walks by the sea, and some curious rocks which stand up in the form of sugar loaves.

This place and Napier have appealed to me more, on the whole, than any of the other towns in New Zealand for the pretty spots and bits they contain.

The waterworks, about three miles from the town, are worth a visit, as from the summit of a hill you look down on a swift flowing clear stream, the produce of the melted snow on the mountains, which is pumped up to supply the town; the bush and scrub around soften the scenery, and the peculiarly green grass and foliage brings one's mind back to similar scenery in Japan. Alike, ah! but how unlike!

Leaving by the Northern Steamship Company's steamer about 10 p.m., on a sea which

the skipper explained in the usual way, "He had not seen the like of for eleven years" (it seems to be always smooth around the New Zealand coast whenever yourself or your friends are not travelling on it), we arrived at Onehunga, Manukau Harbour, Auckland, and the next day, July 31st, we boarded the s.s. *Manapouri en route* for our trip round the South Pacific Isles.

CHAPTER II.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLES.

The Tongans—Bush Scenery—King George II.—The Trilithon—The Haapai Group—Cocoa-nuts—South Sea Villages.

The s.s. *Manapouri*, a boat of some two thousand tons, belonging to the Union Line, which runs its boats between Australia and New Zealand, and around the latter's coast, used at this time of year to make special excursions round all the most interesting South Pacific Islands, visiting all the best spots; the trip lasted about a month, and was entirely a pleasure one. Unfortunately, the last two years these special South Sea Island trips have not been run, so now one has to content oneself with the ordinary passenger steamers that carry cargo and call at certain places only. The best time of the year to take these trips is in the winter, any time between May and August, as in the

Australian summer, viz., November, December, and January, the heat is very oppressive.

On the fourth day from Auckland we passed a small island popping out of the sea, called Pylstaart. A few natives lived there at one time, but some trading vessel passed and collared them all, and sent them to South America as slaves. It is a most bare-looking place, and owes its origin to a volcanic eruption.

The approach to Tonga, or Tongatabu, the first island of the Tongan group the steamer stops at, is through a few scattered islands of different sizes, feathered with trees and bush, where white breakers foam and swirl over treacherous, smothered coral reefs. Slowly the steamer ran alongside the wharf, where a crowd of Tongans awaited her arrival. These men are splendidly made, tremendously muscular and sturdy looking, and upright as gun barrels. They mostly wear a cotton shirt, and a coloured cloth around their waists stretching down to just below the knees. Their heads are always bare, with short curly or wavy hair; some of them dye their hair a reddy-brown colour,

but it does not seem to suit them any better than their own. They are, both in face and physique, far superior to any Maoris I ever saw in New Zealand, and they have not such thick lips or flat noses.

Some of the women, and children particularly, are sweetly pretty, with charming expressions, the very height of good temper and fun beaming in every feature, and they have magnificent teeth. They hold themselves very upright, but are too stiff to be called graceful.

The men seemed to be rarely under five feet eight inches, and many we saw were about six feet, broad and muscular, with huge arms and necks like bulls.

What struck us as curious were the scars or eruptions of some sort which so many of the men and the women had on their legs; round scars about the size of a shilling, looking like the result of boils.

These natives of the Tonga, or Friendly Isles, are supposed never to have gone in for cannibalism like the Fijians. The town, or large village, the capital of Tonga, is called Nukualofa, and consists of one-storied wooden

A Tongan Girl.

houses, with corrugated iron roofs, scattered about, and standing in small gardens surrounded by low wooden fences. The streets are of grass, and where there are any gaps they are filled in with quantities of dried leaves, and when there has been much rain driving is easy and pleasant in the light four-wheeled traps which are sent over from Auckland. The natives mostly ride, using cheap English leather saddles, their toes holding the stirrups monkey fashion. They usually go at an Arab canter. All the horses are of the poorest description.

After a certain amount of bother, we managed to get hold of a half-caste native willing to hire us his horse and trap, but as the steamer was leaving in the evening about five it was impossible to go for a very long drive

The bush scenery, through long grass roads, like broad "drives" in shootings at home, was very pretty. Many beautifully coloured flowers and the tall slender cocoa-nut tree everywhere around you. The natives cultivate this tree, and think nearly as much of their cocoa-nut groves as the Arabs do of their date palms. They

grow and ripen their fruit all the year round, and to see a man quickly swarm up to the top of one of these tall trees, and knock off four or five nuts, is astonishing. Then, with a large, sharp knife, he deftly cuts the top off, makes a little hole, and you drink the milk; this is best when the nut is quite ripe, or a bit over-ripe, like we get them at home, otherwise the milk tastes like sour water.

As we drove along this undulating grass road, with thick flowery bush on either side, we came to a clearing with a small pavilion and a few huts erected, the whole surrounded by a wooden fence. On entering, we saw two men killing a pig, which they were going to prepare for a meal for the King, who was expected around there in the evening for a drive. The operations were quite worth watching; the little pig, instead of being immersed in boiling water and scraped as is done at home, was simply rubbed over a fire of smouldering hot bricks, burning in a small hole in the ground, till most of the hair was singed off, after which it was tittivated up, and then trussed in the ordinary way. About five hot stones were

picked from the fire and wrapped in leaves from the banana-tree, and placed inside the pig, the lot then carefully laid on the fire, or rather smouldering charcoal and stones, then sticks were placed in gridiron fashion, and leaves again on these, and "yams," things like huge potatoes, were piled around. Leaves again were spread over this, and the fire went quietly smouldering on, the leaves keeping in the steam, and in about two hours little piggy and the yams were done to a turn.

Further on we noticed a little incident which shows well what good tempered, well-balanced minds these Tongans usually possess. It seemed that two men were quarrelling over a cow that had strayed from a village into the bush some weeks before, and each of these men, who had at last discovered it, declared he was the owner, &c. After a little hot argument, one of them proposed driving it into the town, and putting the case before the judge to let him settle it, and immediately both the men rode along, driving the cow in front, chattering together about all sorts of things in the best of good part.

Tonga is an independent group of isles, which are ruled over by King George II., who is a popular monarch of about twenty-six years of age. He was educated in New Zealand, speaks English perfectly, and although in his home he wears native dress, is the proud possessor of several uniforms, frock-coats, and the usual paraphernalia.

The palace is comfortable and ornamental, being a painted wooden building of fair size, and furnished in English style. The King has a bodyguard of fifty men, and a small retinue of courtiers. There is also a Parliament, which he opens; but he nevertheless is more or less supreme, and as all his subjects look uncommonly healthy and happy, it is not necessary to question his rule.

His father was a wonderful old man, who died at a great age, and his tomb is an ornament to Nukualofa, although it might be better kept.

The King's quarterings, &c., are a "Dove," and the Crossed Swords of the Rosicrucians, three stars, and a crown.

There is another pretty drive to what is called the "Point" along the seashore through

an avenue of cocoanut palms. Heaps of fishermen wade about in the water amongst the rocks and coral at low tide; but how it is they don't cut their feet and legs to pieces on this sharp formation it is hard to tell, as a cut or scratch from coral often produces blood poisoning, &c., making amputation necessary.

Another spot to visit is the "Lagoon," a fine sheet of water, or inland sea, surrounded by tree-covered shores, and the island is perfectly flat.

With more time at disposal there are two places worth driving to. Homea, about eight miles off, an interesting native village, and Uma, about twelve miles off, where there are some tombs of ancient kings, spaces surrounded by huge blocks of coral, which the present generation of natives do not seem to be capable of copying, as the modern graves are simply mounds of sand and coral.

Another curiosity, a relic of bygone, and no doubt "greater," times, is called the Trilithon, composed of two huge upright blocks of stone, with another gigantic block across the top, making a sort of large doorway. It is over-grown with creepers, &c., and as there appears

to be nothing else like it in any of the other isles no conclusion can be arrived at concerning it.

There is also on the same island some caves with a subterranean river and lake of fresh water.

But naturally these sights, which of course furnish an object for the ride or drive, do not appeal to the sight-seeing stranger so much as the beauty of the thick jungle and exquisite tropical growth through which he passes. Lofty palms incline their graceful trunks with various curves, and the tall slender cocoa-nut trees—the most graceful of trees that grow—gently bow their crowned heads to every breeze that fans them; then there are the banana with its huge waving leaves, golden oranges and yellow guavas shining like balls of fire against their rich green leaves.

Of flowers, the yellow hibiscus, with the stain of blood at the bottom of its golden cup, and its queenly sister of the crimson variety, are indeed miracles of beauty; the convolvulus, with its large and clinging vines, stretches from tree to tree, mixing with the handsome foliage and crimson flower of the Indian shot; the scarlet pods of chili are

Coral Reefs.

thick by the wayside amid patches of sugar canes, dalo, yams, and the bursting pods of the groups of cotton trees which every now and then come into view.

There are some curious corals, and beautiful shells of great size, with pink insides. The natives make fans and bouquets from wood curled and dyed, but nothing of lasting value. The stamps here are pretty, and, of course, uncommon, the complete set costing about fourteen shillings.

The next port of call is in the Haapai group, the capital or chief township being Pangai on Lefuka Isle. Like the other islands, it is flat, the coral reef shelving out to a distance prevents a large steamer coming in close, the landing here having to be done in small boats, unlike most of the other stopping places, where the steamers are able to get alongside the wharfs. There are a few good houses, a store (shop) or two, and the king has his small palace here. The curious grass huts are dotted about over the velvety turf, and you hear the continual knock-knock, thump-thump, bang-bang, of the women as they beat out the "tappa,"

laying the thin fibrous wood on a thick beam and hammering it with small wooden spade-shaped blocks; and the triple time beat or tap-tip-tap that the women make as they pound the root of the kava tree with which they make their great national feast drink, similar to the stuff the Hawaians make, but not quite so strong. This is kneaded up with water, then strained through cocoa-nut fibre, and poured into cocoa-nut cups and drunk with a degree of ceremony.

In times gone by, instead of crushing the root between two stones, it used to be chewed by girls, and then put into the bowl and mixed with water; but this process of mastication is rarely used now.

One of the prettiest walks is through the woods across the narrowest part of the isle, over delicious, springy, soft grass hedged in on either side by thick tropical growth of various lovely coloured flowers, with the usual countless cocoa-nut trees rearing their tall heads over the path. On the weather side of the island the thick jungle growth reaches to the very edge of the sea, which dashes up

at high tide, moistening it with its fairy spray as it leaps and plays in frothy joy over the coral.

When the tide goes out one can jump from rock to rock, and, looking down into some deep pool with the sun shining therein, one indeed can well imagine fairy land; the exquisitely tinted seaweed, coral, and shells, and fish of every sort and colour, fascinate you in this new little world of wonders. Strolling along we came across part of the vertebræ of a whale that had been stranded on the reef some time before.

On our way back in the damp heat we met three native children riding on one pony. We showed them sixpence, and the eldest boy was scampering up a tree and had knocked off three good cocoa-nuts in less time than it takes to write about it; then, getting his knife, he peeled off the shining outer hard yellow skin and dug out the nut, dexterously whacked off the top of its head, as one might cut off the top of an egg, and presented it to us to drink with the air of a courtier. We scraped out some of the white, which we ate, and thus required no luncheon.

This is a charming *dolce far niente* way of passing the time; whenever you feel hungry, nature is there with a luscious orange, delicate guava, or even a sweet potato or yam, and the never-failing cocoa-nut.

Later on, pretty little girls, with their shiny black hair done up in coils on the top of their heads, with singlets or loose chemisettes and a short "kimone" or cotton cloth wound round their waists down to the knees, with bare arms and legs, came along with fruit and shells to sell; they are always good-natured and jolly, and it is hard to see one without a smile—these gay, charming, and reckless children of nature.

We too soon had to leave this lovely little isle for Vavau, where we arrived after eight hours' sailing. This island is the most northerly of the group, and, unlike the coral-formed Haapai and Towgatabu isles, owes its existence to volcanic formation, and the boat draws up at the wharf belonging to the town Neiafu. The entrance to this place is extremely beautiful, being more like an inland sea, or a succession of sounds, than one huge land-locked harbour.

There are numerous islands dotted about, thickly overspread with trees, bush, and dense vegetation down to the water's edge; pretty little bays and woody headlands, silvery beaches, with here and there a grass hut peeping out from amongst a grove of banana and palm trees.

There are two or three hills on this island, from which beautiful views of the surrounding islands and the harbour can be had, while there are lovely walks in every direction. Along the broad grass rides thousands and thousands of orange trees were growing, and in places the ground was strewn with the fruit, simply rotting or waiting to be eaten by the semi-wild pigs that scamper about in the bush. In sauntering about the isle one comes across large grassy spaces where stand native villages, and it is hard to find anything more picturesque and peaceable, more what Providence must have intended before the time of so-called civilisation, than these small South Sea Island villages, particularly as viewed for the first time. Huge knotted and gnarled forest trees stand like giant sentinels about the soft, green, velvety sward, and here

and there a grass or reed built hut surrounded by an artistic, neat reed fence with a creeper of convolvulus entwined thereon, enclosing groves of shady orange and citron trees lighted up by the scarlet flower of the pomegranate, and perfumed with the heavy fragrance of white gardenias. Women are sitting in front of an outspread role of tappa, which is being painted with curious dark brown patterns; little children play about naked as the day they were born, and the men, living towers of strength and good nature, tending the horses or busying themselves by yawning and singing in monotonous rich tones. These natives—men, women, and children—love singing, which was no doubt a great help to the missionaries in earlier days, as half of them flock to church to hear the little harmoniums or whatever instrument the rustic village churches are supplied with, and to chant away like canaries on a perch. There are Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, and all the natives are, of course, baptised.

A South Sea Island Village.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CHAPTER III.

THE WRECK — "PAPASEA" — ELEPHANTIASIS — HAIR DYE—CORAL REEFS—"SIVA-SIVA."

THREE or four miles down the harbour there is a cave, the entrance to which is a narrow cleft forming a doorway, and a few steps lead into a huge hall. Enormous columns rise from floor to ceiling, dividing the cave into curious alcoves, and when the sun is shining brightly a variety of beautiful colours, far surpassing the grotto at Capri, reflect from the light without iridescent gleams of liquid sapphire, and, looking down into the water, clear as crystal, a perfect garden of variegated coloured coral growth can be seen, a veritable mermaid's garden. Bats and swallows flit around the roof, as you stand glued to the spot, blinded by the soft delicate glistening colours, as if for a short space you were verily allowed a peep into a land of living fairies.

The course to Samoa is very nearly due north,

and takes about eight hours, and the further north one gets the warmer it becomes, and on arriving at Apia, the harbour of the island of Upolu, the thermometer stood at eighty degrees. A good deal has been said and written about this harbour, but in my opinion it is not a patch on Vavau, as in rough weather it is an exceedingly dangerous anchorage ; there are innumerable coral reefs coming up to within a foot or two of the surface scattered about in every direction.

It was here in 1889 (the year following the fight between the Samoans and the Germans) that that frightful catastrophe happened, when seven men-of-war were wrecked. A storm took place which lasted three days, and there were lying in the harbour three American, three German, and one English men-of-war. About midnight on March 16 the storm burst in full fury, the *Eber*, an American ship, was the first to strike against the coral reef, and immediately sank in deep water, four men only out of eighty being saved ; then the German boat, the *Adler*, was also hurled on to a reef, keel up, where she now remains, her gaunt, brown, rusty

iron skeleton being broken in two, a sad memento of that terrible day. Then the American *Nipsic* luckily ran ashore and succeeded in beaching herself on the sand. The *Vandala* also, with the *Teuton*, the American flagship, with Rear-Admiral Kimberley on board, drifted helplessly towards the reef, which they struck, and both vessels settled down together, but not before the German battleship *Olga* collided with the *Teuton* and was washed on to the beach at Matautu. Meanwhile the English boat *Calliope*, Commander Captain Kane, still steamed to her moorings, but as the danger of collision became more imminent every moment, her crew tried to steam her out of the bay in the teeth of the hurricane, which they at last succeeded in doing. So that out of seven men-of-war, riding serenely in the bay at anchor, only one was spared. I heard that the coal that they had on board the *Calliope* was somewhat superior to that used on the other ships, but whether that was the case or not, the fact remains that she was able luckily to squeeze her way out and to weather the storm.

The harbour town of Apia consists of houses,

shops or stores, a post office, and two or three little hotels, all built of wood, scattered along a shady road which runs along the bay. At the back rise dark green hills about two thousand feet high, densely wooded from base to summit.

The Samoan group comprises ten inhabited islands, the three most important being Upolu with Apia harbour, which now belongs to Germany; Tutuila, which belongs to America, with Pango-Pango harbour; and the island of Savaii, which, unfortunately, has no good harbour for large vessels.

On all these islands traders live, and the export of copra from the cocoa-nut is something immense.

Samoa has become rather more famous than the other Isles from having been the home of Robert Louis Stevenson, the great author. His home, which is situated on a hill at the back of the town, is about half an hour's ride, and is now owned by a wealthy German. It is a very pretty wood built villa with a fine view of the sea; the way lies through cocoa-nut plantations and thick bush. The roads about are well made and kept (unlike Tonga, where they are simply

of grass), and are drivable even in bad weather. A good two hours' climb along a winding path up the hill takes one to his grave.

Some of the German plantations are well worth seeing, and one of the most interesting is an estate at Vailele, a charming wooden house with a large, broad, cool verandah, with pretty glimpses of the sea seen through the waving cocoa-nut trees. These trees are all tended, and some of them form the most beautiful avenues around these planters' estates.

The land is cleared, giving in some cases the appearance of a small English park (if you can imagine brown women stripped to the waist and barefooted working in the fields ?).

There is a very curious plant or weed which grows all over these islands, and although cattle and sheep do well on it, it is most harmful to crops or cultivation, as it chokes and smothers everything it grows over; it has a small pink flower like a tiny thistle, and its leaves are about an inch long, very thin and dark coloured. This thick undergrowth of weed has the peculiar property of instantly closing its leaves, which are delicately cut like a fern, when

touched, and if one walks over it one's footsteps are as distinct as they are in snow, leaving a dark brown path behind as if the plant had suddenly withered up where it was touched; but in a short time the little leaves gradually expand, the fluffy pink balls regain their brightness, and it all looks as it was before. This plant is called the "Mimose Sensitiva," and sensitive indeed it is, for as the sun goes down it folds its little self up and goes to sleep, opening again as the sun rises and regains its warmth.

There are some very good bathing pools and waterfalls near Apia, where one can enjoy a delicious swim. Papaloa is a particularly pretty spot, with a wooden bathing shed; it is surrounded with trees, and a small waterfall which serves as a douche pours into a deep, delicious looking clear cool pool. In order to get there you can pass through a cocoa plantation belonging to an American, for which leave has to be obtained, or you can go around by the lower road.

There is also another place which has gained some notoriety as a picnicking and bathing place; it lies some four or five miles from Apia,

through cocoa plantations, thick bush, native villages with their oval reed-built huts dotted about, and lastly through magnificent bush, with some fine trees spreading their branches in every direction, entwined with huge bark-covered creepers hanging down like giant snakes. In this spot there is a series of cascades which flow over the slanting rocks and pour into deep pools at their feet, overflowing again and forming other cascades. These rocks are so smooth that the natives sit on the top of the waterfall and then slide down with the water on the face of the rock, hence its name, "Papasea," or "Sliding rock," and after the first toboggan down it, with the final plunge, one feels what an exhilarating sport it is, shooting down the face of the rock like lightning into the pool twenty feet below.

The Samoans have the reputation of being the most intelligent and best-looking natives in the South Sea Islands, but, as far as physique goes and the looks of the women, we did not think they could compare with the Tongans; at any rate, round Apia we did not see such magnificent specimens as the natives at

Nukualofa, in Tongatabu; but perhaps in the interior, or where the Samoans have not come into contact with the Colonials or Europeans, they may be finer; at any rate, with the exception that they are tall, fine, fairly good-looking people, they were by no means so striking as we were led to suppose. Some of the women have pretty faces, but their skins and complexions are not very good. They have the reputation of being a very immoral lot, but this is not true.

Elephantiasis is very common amongst the men, and you see many poor fellows walking along with tremendous growths and thickenings below the knee, but no cause has yet been found for the prevalence of such a disease here. The natives differ in colour very much indeed. Some, with a mixture of blood, are nearly as dark as a negro, but the ordinary colour is a fine, light, rich mahogany, not the washed out tawny or yellow look of the Indian half-caste or the celestial Chinese, but a fine rich colour, and when one sees some of the men digging in the fields, their limbs covered with cocoa-nut oil, glistening like bronze, and

all their muscles standing out, they certainly remind one of Greek and Roman statues of gladiators, &c., added to which their hair is always very curly and somewhat closely cropped, and dyed a yellowish white colour, which lights up their faces in a wonderful way. Many of the women crop their hair closely, too, and dye it like the men, but they look better with it left long and twisted up behind in the ordinary way.

To dye their hair the yellow or auburn colour, they crush up some coral and mix it into a paste like lime, and the alkali turns it to a red or auburn shade, which soon becomes a semi-fashionable canary colour (done without the aid of peroxide of hydrogen!).

When the sea is quite calm and the sun bright, it is very enjoyable to take a boat and row on to the edge of the coral reefs, and then look down into the clear water and watch the coral gardens and animal life within. These gardens are most perfect when covered by about three feet of water, and one can stare down into the depths and watch the slender, lily-like flowers wave to and fro in the eddying

currents; shrubs with many coloured leaves spread along the bottom like gaudy Persian rugs; huge masses of coral like petrified sponges, of pink, brown, blue, and green, form homes for several kinds of fish, one of the most conspicuous and lovely being a tiny fish about the size of our minnow, which swim in shoals of a dozen or so, of the most exquisite bright sapphire blue, which in the sun becomes a soft turquoise green; there are also many others of various hues and sizes, the whole forming a scene of ever changing colour, which becomes more fascinating the longer you gaze, taking you into a new world. It is with difficulty you are able to tear yourself away from this enchanting miniature forest of maritime wonders.

Another sight to see in Samoa is the national dance called the "Siva-Siva." There is a similar dance to be seen in the Hawaian Islands called the "Hula," which is described in "Over the World" in the notes on those islands, but it does not come up in any way to the "Siva" of Samoa. A party of about a dozen of us witnessed the dance after dinner; lamps

A Samoan Girl.

were dotted about the lawn, which were, however, unnecessary, as the moon was at the full, mats were spread out, on which squatted cross-legged a number of men and women—these were a sort of orchestra and chorus—then in the front rank sat eight natives, in the middle the *prima donna*, a pretty girl of about eighteen, daughter of a chief. On her head she wore a curious metal arrangement, the shape and about the size of a violin; her hair was dyed auburn, a long necklace of red shells was round her neck, and she wore around her waist a short "liki," or girdle of dried grass stained black, which came about half-way down her thighs, otherwise from her shoulders to her feet she was quite naked, as were all the other girls in the front rank. Their hair hung down their bare backs and their skins shone like glass from the plentiful supply of cocoa-nut oil which they always rub well over their bodies. It is a pity that the women do this so much, as when you are near them the smell is overpowering and sickening, and the odour of the oil is imparted to whatever it comes in contact with. It is quite impossible to explain this dance in anything like

a comprehensive manner, as it is so totally different to European ideas of dancing. It embraces the gesticulation of the hands and arms like one sees in Siamese theatres, also the curious swaying and wriggling of the lower part of the body, with the head, neck, and bust motionless, and *vice versa ;* the walking slowly round about, and all in the most perfect time, first slow and then fast, stamping the feet, the clapping of hands, squatting down and standing up, swaying the body to and fro. Song follows song, the soft cooing voices of the women and the deep bass voices of the men getting gradually shriller and louder as they get more excited, and they finish as suddenly as they begin. Then the *prima donna* comes up, her round virgin breasts and well-shaped arms shining with cocoa-nut oil and perspiration, and shakes us all by the hand in a most self-possessed way and with a charming smile. (I learnt afterwards that this young lady was engaged to a wealthy chief and she herself was the possessor of many acres of cocoa-nut trees.) Then comes a lot more dancing in which the dancers imitate different scenes in nature, such

as the sea dashing against the coral reefs, or fishermen spearing fish and so on. They also act small pieces: a picnic party, a quarrel, a fight, and peace. All this is much enjoyed by the native audience, but it is difficult for a stranger to understand unless things are explained, and certain actions and grimaces which might seem lewd really only represent such scenes as the motion of climbing up trees to gather the cocoa-nuts, the drinking of the milk, and so on. It was all over too soon, and was the first thing of the sort I had ever seen which was not monotonous. The chief performers all came up after and shook hands with us, then we all wandered off our respective ways to sleep the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IV.

Sketches on Deck—Fijian Cannibals—Copra—Fijians—Ovalau—Suva.

All the islanders are fond of amusement, and to have to work ever so lightly, if continuously, is something they can't grasp at all. If they show a little energy when a steamer comes in or work conscientiously for four or five days on the plantations they then think they have done quite enough and have earned a good rest. Planters find it sometimes very trying not to be able to depend on the natives when the gathering of the nuts, &c., is necessary. This is a big business, as each cocoa-nut tree bears an average of over eighty nuts per annum, and about forty trees grow to the acre. These trees last for seventy or eighty years, so that a plantation of two or three thousand acres is a paying thing. The husk is torn off and also the inner shell. The kernel is then broken up and dried and packed away ready to be shipped; this is

called "copra," and is now worth about £12 per ton.

Coffee is also grown in Samoa, but copra is the chief product. The islanders grow sweet potatoes for their own consumption, and very good they are, even when eaten raw at a pinch; and also yams, a wonderful fruit, which is also grown extensively in other countries, and very easily, too, as if a piece be put into a hole dug in the ground the yam grows to the same size as the hole—thus you can have yams of almost any size, but the very large ones are somewhat coarse. They are most nutritious, with a curious taste of their own, and like huge potatoes to look at.

We went to the German post office to purchase a set of Samoan stamps; they are very pretty. The old set, which it is now somewhat hard to get, is, I believe, of some value.

Passing on we came to a German bluejacket off the *Cormorant*, a pretty gunboat lying in the harbour He was drilling some Samoans. There is a small regiment of these men, who are mostly chiefs or sons of chiefs; they are very keen on their drill, and being fine men

ought to prove good soldiers. In time, perhaps, conscription will be the rule in German Samoa.

One hears sometimes reports that German colonisers are too overbearing and harsh, and even cruel in their treatment of natives; but all that seems absurd, particularly when you see how happy all the Samoans look. It seems odd for so many of our countrymen to think that we English are the only people who make good colonists, and that the German and French, Dutch and Portuguese, &c., have so much to learn.

The journey from Samoa to Fiji takes about three and a half days. On the evening of the second day we passed close to the Isle of Niou-Fou, which has the reputation of growing the largest cocoa-nuts in the world. A few natives live on it, but it looked so lonely and dreary, and so far away from anywhere—like a great living black mass of something towering out of the water—we felt unconsciously sorry for it. This isle belongs to the kingdom of Tonga.

The next evening a lieutenant from the German gunboat, whom we had picked up at Samoa on his way home, pointed out some land. There

was the usual general rush of passengers to the side of the ship as if they were all going to be sick, hands went up to foreheads, necks were stretched to the utmost, some skedaddled down below for their glasses, others began to argue and say it was only a cloud, and so on and so on. There was an old Scotch farmer and his wife who were taking their first voyage, and therefore, of course, knew everything. It was curious in the smoking-room to hear him discoursing as if he had been all his life at sea; sucking away at an old pipe he would argue with anyone, not caring a jot whether he was right or wrong, just for the fun of it I suppose (if that is Scotch fun); or, as a man might walk up and down the deck by way of exercise, he used to take it out in arguing. For instance, you might say, "Mr. S., black is black." "Waal, mon," he would answer, "I canna agree wi' ye there, ye shid jest see in Aberdeen," &c. Then there was another married couple from New Zealand, of middle age, the man was suffering from diabetes and was therefore travelling for his health. The poor chap was a living skeleton, but had

the most gigantic appetite I think I ever saw. His poor little wife looked rather sat upon, or at any rate suffered from the sea, as whenever we were away from the isles we had a sort of sea-saw roll on the whole time, which must have been very trying to a bad sailor. Then there was an Australian from Melbourne who was always fond of running down Sydney, in which we would all heartily agree except a little quiet man, who used to sit always near the smoking-room door, and at regular intervals would spit through it, and whom we afterwards discovered was a native of Sydney. Then there came a stout old Scotch lady with a moustache and beard which she wouldn't shave, travelling with a niece, a young lady of about forty, with spectacles, bitten nails, and a piece of cotton wool in one ear; this child was seasick at the start, and unfortunately a passenger (one of the inquisitive, busy, would-be-popular sort of men) made himself disliked by considerately asking the aunt how her "daughter" was. Then came an English doctor, retired, who seemed somewhat grumpy and bored with the whole thing, I think by reason of his having an undesirable

Irishman in his cabin who talked and swore in his sleep. And lastly, my friend, who used always to cap anyone's stories in the smoke-room, and was able to tell some of the most astonishing lies that had ever——"Look here, old chap, what about Fiji?" I hear a voice say over my shoulder. Well, the fact of the matter is I gave him these thumb-marked, dog-eared notes to read, and in that plausible, self consequential, grandiose way of his, he gave me a piece of original advice (this is quite confidential, mind you)—anyhow, the pith of the thing was and is, that all these isles are very much alike, and that people get sick of green sward, gnarled trees, golden sunsets, coral gardens, brown natives, &c. "Spin it out, old chap," he would say; "put some stuffing into it, never mind if it's only sawdust." Of course, after that there was nothing more to be said.

However, I must apologise to my reader for keeping him waiting so long and am returning to Fiji post haste. Soon islands are seen dotted about the horizon, gradually becoming more numerous; and a little later on one is sailing swiftly through them. The Fiji group consists

of over two hundred isles scattered about, but of course there are not more than about half a dozen that are really well known and considered.

The first port of call for the steamer is Leveuka, the old capital, prettily situated in a bay strewn with dangerous coral reefs, causing the sea to break and dash its surf and spray in all directions.

High hills rise up behind the town, covered with thick bush of a soft green which it is a pleasure to let the eyes rest on after the glare of the sea and sun. Here the steamer stops about five hours, so that we have ample time to wander about the place. As at Apia, there is only one street facing the front, with houses and shops of wood, with verandahs painted white, straggling along it. A long wooden wharf runs out to sea, alongside which the steamers draw at high water, and roads run into the country to the right and left. When the tide is out you can see the rocks and pools of water, and coral of every shape, size, and colour, some brown and spiky with blue spots on the tips looking a little like antlers, the sea anemones of different colours, and fish of extraordinary shapes

and colours, with long tentacles which move to and fro as a slight breeze ruffles the surface of the pools. Women with nets like children use at home and small baskets on their backs, some naked except for the "lava-lava" or piece of cloth round their waists, were pottering about looking for something or other, but the baskets were empty, so I do not know for what!

It was certainly an ideal place for children to play about in, and mothers would give a lot to have a sea-side like this at home to send their children to instead of the endless sand and mud castles to amuse them.

It was a glorious day, bright and shiny, the air bracing, and one felt it appreciably after the heat of Samoa.

The Fijians are quite different to either the Samoans or Tongans. The men wear their hair sticking out all round on end like a huge mop, and the longer it is and stiffer it stands out the more pleased they are. They also dye it in the same way as the Samoans, but go in sometimes for a blue or silvery grey colour, like you see on some tame rabbits. They have a some-

what ferocious look, particularly as their features are rather hard. In this respect they differ from the Samoans; they lack their soft friendly dignity and grace as they lack the haughtiness of the Tongans, who are rightly or wrongly nicknamed "The snobs of the Pacific" (an appelation which I should think they secretly liked rather than otherwise). The Fijians, however, are remarkably fine men, darker than the other islanders, in fact some of them look as if they had negro blood in them, their lips being thicker and their noses broader than the others. The women have very pleasing faces and are well made and seem to be full of fun, judging from the way they are always grinning and chattering.

The children you see running about are lively little things, and look very much more mischievous than the little docile creatures of Samoa.

When Leveuka was the capital of the Fiji Islands it was in a much more flourishing state, but in 1882 the Government thought it better for various reasons to make Suva, in the island of Viti-Levu, the capital.

Fiji was first discovered about two hundred and fifty years ago by Tasman. Many years after some convict settlers who had escaped from Botany Bay, a large convict settlement near Sydney, in Australia, found their way there and preferred to exist amongst the natives, even with the fear of being eaten up at any moment, rather than face their prison life again in New South Wales.

The Fijians were the most noted cannibals, and the revolting extent to which they used to carry their orgies would be incredible if facts, and sometimes instances, had not occurred to make it indisputable. Cannibalism, infanticide, human sacrifice, and suttee were common occurrences. Whenever a chief died, the usual habit was to dig a grave, put the favourite wife alive at his head, the rest on each side of him, the slaves around him, and then bury the lot, his canoe included. In fact, when anyone of importance died, the burial ceremonies were on an appropriate scale, and his followers used accordingly to hold a tremendous orgie, thus consoling themselves for their terrible loss! After a battle the victors would celebrate the

event by roasting hecatombs of human beings, and in times of peace suitable people were set aside and fattened, awaiting the final clubbing and eating.

In the island of Ovalau you are shown the "braining stone" on which the victims' heads were smashed, and notches cut in the trees—a bygone record of the numbers sent to the ovens. It may seem hard to believe about these atrocities, but they are nevertheless true, as there is very ample evidence to show, but when one is on the spot it is even harder to believe. You see the natives before you—mostly good-tempered, jolly-looking, lazy beggars, sometimes scowling or fierce, but without the very slightest trace of real evil or viciousness. If, for example, one had been told all this of some of the awful-looking people to be seen about the Levant, &c., with a mixture of Turkish, Greek, Egyptian, and negro blood, or even of the latter blood alone—those awful nigger faces that you see so frequently in the States and so seldom in Africa—a sort of child's nightmare, with its sinister, sneering, smiling, sensual thick lips, its hard, glitter-

CANNIBALS DRAGGING PRISONERS TO THE OVENS.

ing, snaky, deceitful eyes—then, indeed, one could easily swallow the most gruesome of the tales you hear told of the early history of Fiji.

The chief industry now is sugar, and there are about a dozen mills at work. They also export copra and fruit, chiefly bananas and pine apples, also bêche-de-mer, pea nuts, tea, cotton, and tobacco.

As the natives are not good workers, it was found necessary to import a lot of Indian coolies to work in the plantations; these have to sign for ten years, and are then returned to India at the Government expense.

In 1874 Fiji became a British possession, and Suva, the capital of the island of Viti-Levu, is the seat of Government. Here Government House, a large, cool, wooden building, stands in tropical grounds, well laid out, but very badly kept, commanding a fine view of the sea and scattered islands.

Suva possesses one or two passable hotels, and a small English club, consisting of a reading and billiard room; two or three churches, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, &c., the natives

here, of course, as in all the other Pacific Isles, being Christians.

There are some fairly good shops in about half a dozen streets, the principal facing the sea and forming the esplanade, with a line of trees running along, giving it a cool and shady look. Verandahs cover the pavements, just as they do in New Zealand towns (so that, I suppose, you can stare in the shop windows and be protected from the sun and rain); they look, however, very ugly, these street verandahs, and I think it must be partly that which makes all the towns in New Zealand so hideous. But here in the houses, &c., there seemed a sort of stuffiness, and in this matter it would be good for the inhabitants to copy the New Zealanders in having as much fresh air as possible. This is a thing which, however, strikes you very differently when you are in New Zealand in winter; in all the hotels and clubs every available window is always open morning, noon, and night, and if one ventures to remonstrate in any way it is looked upon as a crime! The consequence is there are draughts everywhere, and fires are therefore useless; and instead of this

Suva, Fiji.

foolishness hardening people you see nearly everyone going about with nasty, snuffling colds; the climate of New Zealand (which is very like our own, only not so good and with more rain) is not the sort to play pranks with in winter time.

CHAPTER V.

Walking over Hot Ashes — The Rewa River — Waterfalls — Politics — The "Meke" — M'bau — Cannibalism — Coral — Farewell.

On the west of the town a good road leads up the hill, where there are numerous villas of painted wood, one-storied, with verandahs and corrugated iron roofs like you see for the most part in New Zealand; they stand amidst their own groves of tropical vegetation and look cool and cosy. From the top of the hill a fine view is to be had of the sea and the rugged coast line, with jagged hills and peaks making a curiously irregular outline against the sky. One peak stands out in a singular way by itself, and is called the Devil's Thumb; it was scaled once by a mad Fijian, but no one has ever attempted to copy him.

There is also the island of M'Benga, which is worth mentioning, as some of the inhabitants,

like the Japanese priests, are able to walk over hot ashes. The Japs, however, do it as a religious ceremony and only on certain occasions, but these people will at any time do it for money, and generally a party is made up to go and watch the performance; they demand £8, and the show is over in about three minutes.

Captain C——w, the skipper of the steamer on which we left Auckland, had seen it done on April 15th, 1898, as also had a trader I met. Apparently a small circular pit about twenty feet in diameter and a few inches deep is filled with cinders and red hot stones, which are fanned and raked into a tremendous heat, and then these natives walk once around it, fairly quickly but with perfect decorum.

Both these men told me that the heat was too intense for them to stand nearer than a stick's length to the margin, and when a gust of wind blew towards them they had to back quickly or get scorched. One of the party with Captain C——w brought a thermometer, which he put on his stick and held over the ash bed, but only succeeded in dropping both the articles, which were at once consumed, and

he had to retreat to the background with his hand to his mouth.

Whether they had found some solution or something which prevents their bare feet and legs burning it is difficult to say. We know that a person can dip his hand into a white hot solution of sulphuric acid, and his not being burnt is due to the evaporation, and it may be that something of this sort will explain the immunity of the fire-walkers. Anyhow, it seems a particularly useless form of amusement, and both parties came away dissatisfied, as they said the whole show was over so quickly, and no one was burnt!

One of the best excursions to make is to take the local steamer up the Rewa River to Nausori, which is the extent of the boat's journey, and where there is a small hotel. The Nausori sugar plantation is quite near, and visitors are gladly shown over the works, which are, of course, similar to those in the Hawaian Isles. The Rewa is the largest river in Viti-Levu, and from Nausori you can go up further in a smaller launch and also in native canoes. The banks are clothed

with tropical forests, sugar and fruit plantations; here and there you glide past native villages, the scenery being quaint and interesting and unlike any other scenery that I had ever seen before. Without being in any way striking it might be described as peaceful, but has not the monotony which characterises so many river trips (which it is well for the unwily tourist not to rush at, any more than to be taken in by waterfalls, the majority of which are real "flat catchers," or tourist catchers). Many a time in different parts of the world have I been persuaded to walk miles in a broiling sun, with a guide, to see a few cupfuls of water dribbling down a rock and sprinkling a few ferns with its minute spray. (What ho, Lodore!) After all one cannot blame the people for exaggerating the feeble attractions in their district to fools with an ever ready coin, but one does blame guide books which grossly exaggerate and tell the most monstrous lies. The tourist buys the local production, picks out an easy excursion described with a lot of top dressing, then procures a guide, whom he has to pay (and, worse still, sometimes a carriage for which he has to

pay through the nose). On arriving at last his first intention is to throw the guide book at the guide's head and tell him to quit, as he can find his way back without any aid—and yet he had told the guide to take him there.

There is also running from Suva what is called the "Inter Island" steamer, that makes various trading trips to the outlying islands or runs round the coast, being away about a week or more at a time. The steamer is comfortable, with nice cabins, electric light, and very good food, and by travelling in her one sees typical native life; and as she stops in some places for six or seven hours ample time is allowed for passengers to ramble about on shore, and in fine weather it is delightful.

The best way, of course, to see these islands is to go on a yacht and take camping outfits, with a man who speaks the language and who can act as guide; in that way you could see the Fijian, Navigator, or Friendly Isles to perfection, and it would be best to start from Sydney, so as to visit Fiji first, and not to start from New Zealand as we did. Talking about New Zealand, it was curious to see in the newspapers at

the little club in Suva long paragraphs *re* "Fiji and New Zealand" or "Mr. S——n and the Fiji Islands," and ever so many headings of the like.

It seems that there was some wish on the part of New Zealand to take over the government of the Fiji Isles, and the premier, Mr. S——n, visited them, and in consequence there was at this time a good deal of talk and indignation expressed. From an outsider's point of view, considering what a very much over-governed country New Zealand appears to be, it would seem rather a daring undertaking; added to which, being such a small country, it has neither the army nor the prestige. If it was Australia the case might be different, and it would no doubt turn out very favourably for Fiji.

I have heard New Zealanders call their country "Little England," and so on; but before doing that it would be better to leave off so much bragging, which is heard amongst a certain class only, and for the young and rising generation not to consider that they become men or more manly by swaggering and using foul language, as my own experience is that "b—y" is the accompanying epithet to nearly

every speech these grandiloquent youngsters make. The country is small, and so is the typical New Zealander of that breed.

The Fijian dance, which is like the Samoan "siva," is called "meke," and is well worth witnessing for a short time; the dancers frequently represent incidents in battle, the flight of the flying fox (a large bat about as big as a crow which feeds on fruit, common here and in India, &c.), and such-like things. They generally have an orchestra of old men and boys beating in a monotonous way a hollow cylinder of wood.

The dancers are in the usual way plentifully smeared with cocoa-nut oil, they have flowers in their bushy hair, necklaces, and anklets of shells. Then begins the swinging of arms, clapping of hands, kicking of legs, leaps into the air, accompanied by a lot of minor gestures, and a sudden ending to begin again anew.

Near the mouth of the Rewa River is the Isle of M'bau, and it is considered the Mecca of the Fijian group. Fijians born there are reckoned of the bluest blood, even the language is the *lingua franca* of the group; but apart from this it is in itself a gem of an island, and

as you stand on its tranquil shores, with the limpid water breaking into baby wavelets at your feet in soft low whispers, and watch the sun as it gradually dips behind the hills—yes, it is indeed hard to think that this peaceful spot was the scene of atrocities which must make the coldest blooded creatures squirm.

Tanoa, the grandfather of the present chief, was noted in his day for being one of the most atrocious cannibals that ever lived in recent times; and even his son, Thakombau, in his youth behaved in the same manner, in a milder way, until the missionaries came and gradually stopped it. Thakombau died of intestinal trouble not so very long ago, and there has not been a case of cannibalism in the islands for seven years. Great praise is due to the missionaries on this account. The Fijians are, however, like good-natured children, and readily take up anything new.

There is also more than one way to look at cannibalism. In none of these islands, nor in New Zealand, nor with the Hawaians in Hawai, was there any animal life, except a few birds and fish, and in that must lie their excuse—and

now a free pardon! Chief Tanoa, ruling prince of Fiji, who died in the fifties, was really the last man-eater of notoriety; after a successful war expedition he would return to M'bau with his canoes laden with the bodies of the slain and captured, together with numbers of children exacted as tribute from their parents. The manner of cooking was the same as the pig we saw prepared for the King of Tonga near Nukuolofa, only it is said on these occasions that Tanoa made his victims build their own ovens and place themselves in a convenient position for roasting. Holes were dug in the ground in the shape of a saucer, about seven or eight feet across, then this was filled up with wood and set alight, and well fed, with stones thrown in. When the whole thing was fiercely hot and aglow, they would pick out the longer unburnt pieces of wood, rake the cinders over, and the body was placed thereon and covered with a quantity of wet leaves, which would slowly steam, the heat being kept in, and after three or four hours it would be ready to cut up and distribute.

There is an exceedingly pretty spot on the

Fijian Cannibals.

south-west coast of Viti-Levu, with a typical Fijian model village called Cuva. In fine weather some of the steamers stop there and take on board a cargo of bananas, for which this district is particularly famous. Unfortunately, the steamers cannot go very close in, as there are coral reefs all round, so that they anchor in fine weather in a channel between them; almost immediately the steamer is surrounded by small native sailing boats, the men shouting and gesticulating, reminding one very much of the hubbub that goes on at the ports in the Persian Gulf when a British India boat pays its monthly visit for an interchange of cargo.

Thick tropical foliage spreads itself about almost down to the water's edge, which runs to and fro in little ripples over the sands, on which thousands of exquisite shells lay, of every tint and size; leggy black crabs scampered about with their funny sideway motion, and groups of scantily clad children played about at the water's edge.

A little further along we came to a group of natives roasting bananas over a fire; they

first skin them, then lay them carefully on the ashes so as not to burn, and then wash them in the sea, the salt flavouring them. We tried some, but they turned out hard and nasty, and reminded one of a badly toasted chestnut.

Branching inland through the bush, we came to the mouth of a river, but luckily saw a native in a boat, who took us across. These Fijian boats are most curious things, rather like the so-called catamarans of Colombo—large upraised rafts, with a sort of scaffolding on one side, the arms at either end supporting a beam of wood which rests on the water. This native had a number of green bananas and yams all done up in separate neat bundles, wrapped round with leaves and rope made of twisted grass, the little cargo looking delightfully fresh and green. The boatman had his head of hair sticking out like a huge mop, in the usual Fijian fashion; he had not before seen many white people very close I should say, and, after he had got over his rustic shyness, proved himself the good-natured, jolly child they nearly all are.

Skipping out on the opposite shore, we found

ourselves close to a village. These villages are usually surrounded by low grass or reed palisades, with stumps of trees knocked into the ground far enough apart to allow of a man squeezing through, at the different openings, but close enough to prevent pigs and cattle from entering. The pigs in these islands run about in the bush, and in Tonga they often have their litters in the hollow trunks of trees. The villagers usually know their own property, and the pigs, as a rule, don't stray far into the bush.

The houses are all built of grass and look like huge hay stacks; they have wooden doors, and are usually raised a few feet from the ground and often have a flight of wooden steps leading up to the door; the interior consists of one large room, with huge beams or rough tree trunks holding it all together. The beds generally occupy one corner and are raised about one foot from the ground, plenty of dry grass and leaves are piled up, over which mats are spread, forming delightfully cool and soft beds. In houses belonging to chiefs, &c., are usually seen one or two wooden boxes which lock, a table with the Bible and

Prayer Book in Fijian, and a few round baskets containing odds and ends. As a rule the inmates are only too glad if you go in and look round, and the good natured women split with laughter to see us showing curiosity at what to them is all quite ordinary.

There are some very pretty parrots in Fiji of a beautiful dark crimson colour; when obtained young they become very tame and can be taught to speak.

The coral gardens in Fiji are also well worth having a look at on a fine day when the sun is bright. By taking a boat over the reef, as at Samoa, or by wading out and pottering about you can see the species of living coral as well as their bleached skeletons, the branched stag horn, the curiously chased and convoluted brain coral, and the fluted crimson organ coral; all these look lovely enough under the water, but they lose most of their beauty when seen in glass cases. The pure white coral if kept clean is, however, very beautiful; the natives sell a good deal of it. The coral is first buried till all the animaculæ are dead and then placed in the sun which bleaches it to a snowy white.

From the Fiji Islands to Sydney is a sail of some eight days, where we caught a steamer of the American Australian line for San Francisco, *viâ* Tutuila, another island of the Samoan group, owned by the Americans.

The harbour of Pago-Pago is the best in the group and excessively pretty; as you pass between the heads, the almost perpendicular high hills covered with dense bush from crest to base surround you on either side. A few wooden buildings are scattered about on the shore, such as the custom house, post office, and one or two shops.

A small American transport was lying in the harbour, and boats full of natives put out from the shore to meet us.

A path leads from the village along the shore round the harbour, and here and there you come across pretty grass-built huts. The natives here seem to suffer from elephantiasis to an even greater extent than we noticed in any of the other islands; in some cases it is indeed a pitiable and revolting sight.

A good many curios can be bought here, such as "kava" bowls, imitation wooden

weapons, &c. None of the men struck us as being as fine as those we saw in Apia, but some of the women and children were very pretty, with their unsophisticated, taking ways. They are all good hands at bartering, however, from the little child of eight, wishing to sell the necklace of shells it wears round its neck, to the old women with cocoa-nuts or bananas.

Unfortunately the steamers do not stop more than about three hours, so that there is very little time to see the place, and it does not look sufficiently inviting to stop over for another steamer, the climate even at this time of year being damp and relaxing.

We soon weighed anchor, and amid a lot of shouting and waving of hands the screw began to revolve and the boats with their crowds of gay occupants were soon lost to sight, no doubt to jabber and laugh over the money they received for their native wares.

Thus ended our cruise amongst the South Pacific Isles.

THE END.

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