

Life and Scenes in India

The first description of India, was related to me by my Uncle, who gave me an insight, to the best of his ability, of life and things in general; little did I ever dream of making a journey to the said Country, but now I have seen it, I will endeavour to give a slight description of same.

On our arrival in Bombay, I was greatly surprised to see so many Electric lights, and the first place I noticed was a brilliantly lighted building, which lay about a mile or so back in the large Bay; latter, I came to find out it was a Theatre, or some place of amusement, after passing the night on board within half a mile from the Docks, we were awakened by the Steam Winches on board, which were already unloading the Cargo at quite an early hour in the morning. Eventually we all packed up our beds and Hammocks, and about 9 a m we were all ready to disembark.

We had all marched off the boat, on to
 the Quay, and no sooner we were on the
 latter, we were encircled by hosts of
 Native hawkers, with all sorts of wares;-
 imitation Pearls, Bracelets, rings, and all
 sorts of India goods, and they did a
 fairly good trade until they were moved
 off by the Dock Police, which look a
 fine spectacle after seeing nothing but
 Helmeted Police in England. These Native
 Police are a sturdy built body of
 men, and their clothes look very smart,
 they are dressed in blue, with a
 leather belt round the waist, and
 a heavy looking Trenchion, suspended from
 it. They wear Trousers and puttees the
 same as our "Infantry men" at home,
 but instead of boots, their feet are
 highly polished, and neatly placed into
 leather sandals. In Bombay there are
 all classes of people, and nearly all
 Nationalities, but as I only stayed there
 the matter of a few hours I had little

time to look round, and we were only allowed in the Street opposite the Docks, but I saw quite enough there, to convince me of my statements.

The heat, at that time of the year was at its greatest, and I can assure my readers, that we were only too pleased to get into a train, and get on the move, so as to get a little breeze; but, we found the breeze, much to our regret, nearly as hot as the burning rays of the sun. We each had a small fan made from a certain Palm leaf, which we found to be of very little use.

The trains are of a Modern pattern, and the Engines, are very powerful, and if anything, slightly larger than those in England, but they have not, such comfort and convenience. Our train was a corridor, which enabled one to walk to the last carriage, which carried a good supply of drinks etc, which is a god-send to anyone travelling in a tropical climate.

as it is only natural that one develops such a terrible thirst owing to the intense heat; and to make matters worse the carriages are none too well ventilated considering the Climate.

On our way we passed many quaint buildings, and houses, built in Eastern style, with their Verandah's and flat Roofs. We soon emerged into the Country and found everything was not so far advanced as in Bombay. The Natives were busy all day long, ploughing, with their wooden ploughs, drawn by Oxen; hand weeding their crops; and digging channels by which means they irrigate their land. The Country people are more hardy looking than their town brothers & sisters, and their skin is much darker, as they are out all day, both men women and children alike, in the burning sun.

Their clothes which are very scanty consist of a loin cloth, which is nearly as black as themselves.

There houses are built in many shapes and sizes, and of numerous kinds of building material, for instance; if a village is near a stone quarry their houses are built of Stone, or if they are out in the jungle they are either built of Mud and sticks; or Bamboo poles, with Palm leaves interwoven, and the poorer class have only a piece of cloth propped up with poles, so if it happens to rain at all, they are soon flooded out. The men, like the Akah, will make sure, that their women do the hardest of the work, and they, the easiest, or in fact hardly any, I have seen a cart load of men, going back to their homes, with their wives walking behind, and perhaps carrying a child on each hip, as it is their custom to carry them that way, it is a noted thing for any native, to illtreat his wife, or wives, which ever the case may be, a thing which would not do in England if it were known to the Police

Their Children are mostly well built, strong, and healthy, which, is only natural, when one thinks of the open air life they lead, and their absence of clothing up to the age of 12 to 14, enables their bodies to form and develop without hindrance. There are numerous castes of Natives in India, which may be easily noted by their caste mark, or charm, the former being painted on the forehead, and the latter which is either carried by a piece of string round the neck, or on the arm, or wrist, these different Castes, are forbidden certain classes of food, the majority are forbidden to eat meat; others are only forbidden Pork, but their staple food is Curry, and Rice, and they do not look bad on it.

If they should do anything against their Caste, it is afterwards broken, and it costs them quite a sum of money to buy a new one, also a good

amount of pain, as they have to starve for so long, pray for so long and by the time they have finished they look physical wrecks, In the case of a very poor person breaking his, or her caste, and not having enough money to renew it, they go out into the jungle and kill themselves. There is one certain Caste that will not even eat their food, if the shadow of a white person has passed over it. The two chief Castes, in India, are the Hindue, and the Mohammedan, and they are not at all the best of friends, and if a quarrel breaks out between two of them, there is almost sure to be bloodshed, and in some cases they will fight on until one kills the other. The majority of Natives have a dread of a white man, whom they call (Burrak Sahibs) which means, "Big Masters", or "Superior Masters," although some have the audacity, to give back answers,

and chaff, and swear at you, in their own language, but when one knows a little of their language, one can get them to do anything. To proceed on my narrative; The train speeds on through the burning plains, and jungle, and oft times one can see a large herd of Buck, grazing in the distance, or Monkeys, springing from tree to tree, and what with the different kinds of birds, both large, and small, with their beautiful plumage, flitting amongst the evergreens of the jungle makes a fine aspect. Eventually we come to a stop at an out of the way station, and after taking in water, another Engine; or two; perhaps, are attached to the rear of the train, and soon one finds that the train is climbing a steep gradient, gradually working its way up into the Mountains. The scenery here is magnificent, the beautifully tree clad Mountains, and silvery streams

winding in a sort, as they rush through the deep crevices, in the rocks, caused through so many years of heavy rainfall. The stream travels on, until it comes to the edge of a precipice, where it washes over making a fine fall, and is caught again in its foaming state perhaps a hundred feet below, where it passes along its winding trail until it is lost to the eye. The higher up one gets the cooler it becomes; and after passing through tunnels, cut through solid rock, on the side of the Mountains, we find we have travelled up to a great height; for on one side we have the steep tree clad Mountain and on the other, we are looking down into a valley perhaps a thousand feet deep, with its small streams running from all directions until they meet and form one, and run on to their destination. The next scene, after passing through

another Tunnel, is perhaps the Snow Capped
 Peaks towering above all, with the
 clouds wrapped round them, which
 makes a sight very pleasing to the
 eye, after passing many more scenes, similar
 to the aforesaid, we come to a Station
 which is the topmost of all, here we
 stay for a short time, detached our two
 spare Engines, take in more water, and
 then start off on the path of descent,
 The next station could be seen nestled
 in the deep tree clad valley, ^{below} which looked
 more like so many little red dots from
 the height we were; and we were some
 considerable time before we reached it,
 as we had to circle the Mountain
 many times at a good angle with
 brakes grinding hard on the wheels
 all the time. After twisting our way
 through many more Mountains, we eventually
 reached the Plains again which seem
 more like running into an oven; after
 the cool and pleasant Mountains

On this side of the mountains we found much the same class of people, and their standard of wearing apparel was much the same. It will be noticed in India, how many ^{different} means of Transport they have, in some places one can see nothing but rough looking carts drawn by Oxen; in another, donkeys are used, and Camels in another, and so on. They have also many ways of conveying passengers; up in the Mountain where there are roads, they have the Rickshaw, and the Pony Trapps, the former are not used a great deal in India. The real homes of the Rickshaw, being China, Japan, and South Africa. Another notable feature on the roadsides of the Mountain, are small buildings, at intervals of a few miles, for stabling the horses which carry the mails, to the Mountain stations, these will only be noticed; in the absence of a Mountain Railway. On going up the Mountain the horses are changed at each Stable, and

on coming down, are changed at every third. There are two men, with the mail (Gharry) or Cart, one, who drives the horses, and the other, who stands on the back step, with a Trumpet, to give warning, on turning the sharp corners, for when coming down, the horses travel at a very good speed, In some places the roads are not wide enough, for two vehicles to pass, and if the horses were to shy, it would be good-bye to men, horses, and Mail, for in some places there are very deep precipices; but, the horses have been trained, and brought up to the work, so there is little fear of them going against their drivers will.

The Jungle, is a place which draws many Sportsmen to India, as one finds nearly everything from an Ant, to and Elephant, in the India Jungle, but there are certain animals in certain parts, The Elephant for instance is an inhabitant

of Southern India; the Tiger, Central India and the North, Snakes, abound everywhere, the largest Snake being the Python, which can be found in all lengths up to 20 feet. The majority of snakes, will not tackle a person unless, they have been hurt, or teased into a frenzy. Two of the most deadly snakes, are the Cobra, and the Python, both having a different way of dealing out death, the former is the most venomous of all, it has been known for a man to die, in the space of a few minutes after being bitten by a Cobra. The Python carries no poison, but his way of killing is by encircling anything in his coils and crushing the life out of it, in much the same way as the King of African Snakes, which is known as the Boa-Constrictor and is looked upon as the largest snake in the World. There are another species, which are very dangerous when one is travelling in the jungle, and are known as "Whip Snakes" they are

not very large, and not venomous, they live in trees, and, at evening-time, suspend themselves from a branch and have a nasty habit of darting for the eyes of any person who may be passing beneath, and in nearly every case they blind the person who is struck by them. The most harmless snake in the jungle, is known as the grass snake, which average from 10 to 15 feet in length, they live mostly on frogs, and insects; much different to the Python, and Boa-Constrictor which will eat nothing but meat, they have been known to swallow a Goat, in its whole state, which gives one a good idea of their size and capabilities, and after having their feed, they will find a quiet spot, where they coil up, and sleep for a few weeks, until the Goat or whatever they have swallowed has masticated.

The Tiger, Panther, and Cheetah, which are plentiful in India, are a terror to the

Natives, as they are so fond of carrying off their Cattle, only the last time I was out in the jungle in S. India we were stopped by Jungle Police, and (Shicari's) or Native Huntsmen, who begged and prayed of us to go over to a certain part, where a Tiger had been seen, which had also carried off a lot of Cattle from the surrounding Villages, we were given to understand that it had 2 cubs and was very (Barbaric) or fierce; but unfortunately our guns were of little use against such big game, much to our regret; or we would have tried our best to get rid of the beast.

In another place we were asked to shoot some large Monkeys, which is rather an unusual thing for a Native to ask, as the latter are looked upon in many places as sacred, but the reason for asking, was because a deal of damage had been done in

their Mangoe Orchards, so we consented to have a shot at them, I managed to bring one down with my first shot, which caught the animal in the right shoulder, and it came down with a bump, but I had to waste another round on it to put a finishing touch to it. It was a monster too, measuring from head, to tip of tail, about 6 feet. After having a good days sport, we returned with two jungle Fowl, which made a good meal for 4.

In some parts of the jungle there are a great many Bucks, of all sizes, and the majority of the Male sex carry a fine pair of antlers, which makes one wonder, how they force their way through the thickest of the bush, without getting tangled up.

The Peafowl much the same as those in England are very plentiful in certain parts, and are one of the largest birds known of in the Indian Jungle.

Parrots of all sizes and colours abound in the jungle, and it is the sight of a lifetime, to place oneself in a secluded, and hidden spot, on a River bank, and to watch every animal and bird, taking his morning drink just at day-break, The noise is terrific, what with birds screaming, and ^{wild} beasts making most horrible noises, and the rush of the stream as she travels on her course, over the Rocks, making lovely falls, and whirl pools, enough to please the eyes of any artist. But after a time the sound dies away in the distance, and there next drink is just before dusk, when they flock to the River again. This is the time when the Sportsman can have his choice of animal, or Bird, for he has only to watch the animals as they emerge from the bush, on to the banks, or wait for his special bird winging its course to the River. These Rivers are well stocked with fish,

of nearly all the fresh water, kind.
In some Rivers, there are plenty of
Crocodiles, which are not very nice to
run into, when one is having a dip.
It takes a practised shot to kill a
Crocodile, as there bodies are covered
with a thick, horny, armour plating,
if it may be termed as such, and
to an unpractised shot, he will find
his bullet will bounce off, like a
Tennis Ball from a Racket. The places
to aim for, are the eyes; or behind the
shoulder joint, of the foreleg. The Crocodile
when shot, will sink at once, and not
come to the surface until about the
third day afterwards. The Crocodile will
very rarely tackle a person on land;
but should they do so, it is best to
run in a zig-zag course, as one can
tire him out that way, more quickly
than running in a straight course;
for his legs are so short and his
body, including his tail are so long

that he cannot turn quickly, & should a man run into a Crocodile, whilst bathing; he has little chance of escape; but should he escape; it would be with an arm, or a leg, missing. On the sunny banks of the River, one will find some very bad Reptiles, and Insects, to come in contact with; two of which are the Scorpion, and Centipede, the former being a venomous Reptile, I happen to know them quite well, as I have been stung three times by them, whilst serving in Mesopotamia, but as luck would have it they were not the most deadly. The Black Scorpion is supposed to be the most venomous, but I was stung by the smaller, yellow, ones which I can assure you, are quite bad enough. I was stung on the cheek, the hand, and the foot, the sensation is just the same as burning oneself with a match but the pain lasts much longer. The Centipede is an insect with many

legs, and I have seen them anything up to two inches long, they do not give one a very pleasant feeling, if once they get their legs dug into ones skin. These insects are very fond of crawling on ones arms, or any exposed part of the body, and if they are not brushed off the proper way, their legs will dig into ones skin as I said before; the way to tackle these insects, is to either knock them off in the direction they are travelling, or hold a piece of paper for them to crawl on, for if one brushes them off, in the opposite direction to their course, their legs dig in in a second, and cause considerable pain. Whilst speaking on insects, I must not forget the Bug, as they are such a nuisance in most parts of India, and I may say they are not to be forgotten, after a sleepless night or two through them, for they are wonderfully fond of good old English blood. They have a

characteristic difference to the Flea, for they will not live on the body like the latter, they live mostly in the framework of the bed, and cause considerable unpleasantness when one is taking their repose. The Mosquito, another Tropical insect; which is very common in India, has a very bad habit of keeping one awake all night, the female of which carries a germ known as Malaria, and I may say she is also very fond of distributing it; having had the Complaint numerous times myself, I take good precautions now, against their bites. For I have laid at death's door through them, once, but never again are they to get the upper hand of me. There are thousands of Natives die; each year with this Fever. Another very notable scene in India, are the trees and plants which are green and fresh nearly all the year round; one of the most beautiful trees is the "Banyan Tree," which covers a lot of ground, if left to

take its course; for it throws out suckers from every main branch, which in due course reach the ground, and set as roots. This tree has been known to cover over an acre of ground, it is grown in parks, and grounds, quite a great deal; owing to the great amount of shade it provides and its density which keeps out the rays of the sun. There are many other trees of greater importance than the one mentioned, for instance there is the Rubber Tree, the Eucalyptus Tree, and the Palm Tree, the former which is tapped at certain times in the year for its sap; which is turned into rubber. The Eucalyptus tree which is grown in certain parts of India and is noted for its oil, which is crushed from the leaves, is a great temptation to a passer by; more especially if there are a plantation of them, for the perfume is glorious. Now the Palm Tree, is more for Native use than anything, for the Trees are tapped for their sap, which is brewed into a

Native beer, known as ⁽²³⁾ Toddy, and is a noted drink for them in all parts of India, and by what I have seen of Natives; under the influence of it; it is quite as intoxicating as beer to an Englishman.

Another fine sight are the Butterflies, and Moths, which abound in all sizes and colours, and cannot be compared with those in England for colour and size. Some fellows make a hobby of catching them with a net, attached to the end of a stick; I have seen one or two collections, prior to them being sent to different Museums in England; and they look fine when boxed up in their different sizes, and shapes. There are also some fine looking Beetles about, which can be found in all colours, and shapes, some have wings, and others haven't, one which is known as the praying Beetle, has a very peculiar way of putting its two front legs together, and

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moving its head at the same time, which
looks very graceful;

Ants are very common in all parts of
India, and a species known as the White
Ant, are very destructive, for they will
eat through nearly anything. The black
Ant, is the largest I have seen in
India, some are quite an inch long.
Their mounds which they make, are
wonderful, and tower up to a great
height, some are 6 or 7 feet high.

One animal, I have never seen in India
is the Rabbit; there are plenty of
Hare, in certain parts, which are much
the same size as those in England