UNCONDUCTED WANDERINGS

AUGUSTA HOUSE

UNCONDUCTED WANDERERS

THE AUTHOR

UNCONDUCTED WANDERERS

BY ROSITA FORBES

WITH 72 ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

UNDINE

and to all those dwellers in the wilderness who unfailingly helped and encouraged us, who lent us their own knowledge and resource, who laughed not *at* us but *with* us in all our strange journeys through the back of beyond! To them I dedicate not only this book, which they one and all suggested my writing, but my sincere gratitude and admiration and a strong desire to welcome them all one day in this England for which they have done so much.

"There's a legion that never was listed
That carries nor colours nor crest,
But split in a thousand detachments
Is breaking a road for the rest."

Kipling

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CHAPTER I

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

UNDINE came from the hospital weary-eyed. Many months in icy corridors and over-heated offices had not dimmed the *joie de vivre* that made the whole world a Pandora's casket for her eager fingers, but they had drawn faint lines round the blue eyes that demanded so arrogantly, so eagerly, the best and the worst that life holds !

We called her Undine in India because she had no soul, and because her moon-gold hair was the reincarnation of the siren locks of the Rhine maiden, but to-day I know she is veritably Undine herself, for there was not a river in Fiji, not a stream, a lake, a bog in Siam and Cambodia that my elusive companion did not fall into ! Anyone but Undine would have been drowned twenty times over.

" I am so tired," said the London maiden, " I want to go right away, round the world. I suppose you couldn't come with me, could you ? "

"Of course not," I replied emphatically. "Quite impossible," I added, all the more firmly because a fleeting vision crossed my mind of my last misunderstanding with a baker's cart, and the peculiar look in the sergeant's eye as I asked for some green paint for the Government Daimler of which I was the optimistic driver.

Now, though Undine has no soul, she has an unfailing sense of humour, a smile which is extremely useful with passport officials and customs inspectors and a wonderful power of unravelling the most mysterious time-tables and shipping lists. She is also the only woman I know who can distinguish between telegraph posts and miles on a survey map, while her knowledge of obscure details of geography, such as the relative positions of Shigashi-Ogawa and, let us say, the Billigherungen hills, is really uncanny. Therefore, when she began to talk wistfully of coral islands and tropical forests, I knew my fate was sealed. It only remained to persuade the A.S.C. authorities that the Ministers of the Crown might suffer from heart failure or nervous collapse if I continued to drive them in record time from Downing Street to Dulwich—why Cabinet Ministers *wish* to go to Dulwich, I've never yet discovered!

A few weeks later we were on board the largest Atlantic liner that German perversity has left us. Twenty-six passengers played hide-and-seek in her vast saloons, or huddled together on her wide,

grey decks. Undine and I spent happy hours discovering submarines. Our two most realistic ones turned out to be a playful porpoise and a whale blowing his nose ! Most of the passengers passed unpleasant nights in the saloon, clutching an odd assortment of their dearest possessions. The selection sometimes puzzled us, as one woman insisted on supplying herself with two large bath towels, and a famous theatrical manager refused to be parted from an extremely ancient umbrella. Undine and I, in the reaction from hospital and garage, slept outrageously and were ruthlessly awakened about 11 a.m. by an indignant stewardess, who graphically described to us the horrors of being torpedoed at midday and being obliged to join the crowd of fully-dressed passengers, attired in a golden nightdress and a dragon-embroidered kimono !

New York burst upon us with her towering sky-line early one morning, and we had time for a swift impression of height and space, and motors as thick as ants, and a station that put Buckingham Palace to shame, before we found ourselves on a private car lunching on waffles and peach ice as we swam smoothly over a beautifully laid line at something like eighty miles an hour, as registered on the neat little speedometer at the end of the pink and white drawing-room. Thereafter I could have imagined the clock of time had been put back three years and I was again in August 1914, when I heard such sentences as, " Jack's

got a commission." "Oh, my Freddie has enlisted, you know."

I remember thinking then that America was eager and anxious to *give* with open hands, but that she had not yet learned to *go herself*. Now, she is giving her youth and her strength with just as much vigour as eighteen months ago she gave of her wealth and her stores. I remember every woman had acquired the knitting habit, and every man the taxation craze, and talked of "putting down" everything from breakfast girdle cakes to motors, though petrol was still only one shilling —25 cents—a gallon. It was the second time I'd been in America, and once again I was overwhelmed with her vitality, energy, efficiency, self-sufficience, practical comforts, power of enjoyment, superficiality, good temper and vegetables! The latter, of course, are pluperfect. I remember, weeks later, Undine being asked by an enterprising reporter what she liked best in the U.S.A., and she promptly replied:

"The vegetables—and the people!"

We were supposed to be staying in the country, but we dined and lunched at gorgeous neighbouring villas every day, we played an inordinate amount of bridge, we motored endless miles in one of a small fleet of cars which was always anchored in the drive, we wore out all our best frocks which were woefully out of fashion in go-ahead New York, we acquired the iced-water habit, and learned to look upon long distance telephones

as aids to friendly conversation, not as in our own country as mere trials to temper and the vocal cords. Also we tried to keep pace with American conversation, but in this we failed miserably. How they do talk, these effervescent products of concentrated vigour! I remember going to one delightful lunch where I managed to squeeze in two sentences, Undine never said a word, and our pretty hostess never stopped talking even to eat!

Our first shock came when, having lunched at some discreet restaurant, we calmly lit cigarettes, unconscious of the thrill of excitement that ran through the hotel, till horrified waiters scurried up and ordered us to desist. It was almost as bad as on the observation platform of a Canadian train, when my enjoyment of my Lady Nicotine was suddenly interrupted by a feminine voice exclaiming:

"That is a most criminal and unladylike habit!"

What a wonderful thing an American tourist ticket is! It grasps you and your belongings on the east coast, whirls you through four breathless days and nights on a highly efficient train, equipped with barbers and stenographers, but burning very bad coal—I don't believe if you sat in a funnel in England, you could get quite so grimy—hauls you out at a totally unknown station, restores to you your hitherto invisible, and therefore given-up-for-lost, luggage, deposits you in a large car with an unnecessary quantity

of cylinders, whirls you up and up over a nine thousand feet pass, along ninety-five miles of almost impassable roads, and finally deposits you, gasping, in an eight feet square tent, with a handful of coloured tickets entitling you to eat, sleep, fish and shoot, and very stern instructions as to how to find a return train at the other end of the Rockies.

Of course we went to see the Yellowstone Canyon like every other tourist since the year one. We sat on a sulphur rock and gazed down into the immense gorge, precipice after precipice slipping away below us to the silken green torrent, crag after crag flinging up its mighty summit to meet its crown of pines, while the roar of the falls was like organ music in a temple of the gods, and the sheet of foam was the incense swung before their altar. There are supposed to be forty-seven different colours in the rocks of the Canyon: purple and yellow and every shade of red, from carmine to terra-cotta, streak the sulphur white. I counted five eagles' nests below me, mostly with young birds in them, and once we came upon a little bear cub asleep in a tree with its head on its paw. Chipmucks, squirrels and ground hogs, and occasionally a shaggy black bear came and looked at us, and once as we rode up a sulphur mountain we saw a herd of elk dotted on the plain far below.

For the rest, I confess to being bored with geysers that spouted with the regularity of clockwork whales, and hot springs that smoked like

angry railway engines, so we went on to Salt Lake City, and listened to the largest organ in the world, and gazed at the house of Brigham Young, who had nineteen wives and sixty-three children. We also motored up the Canyon, down which the Mormon pilgrims came in 1847, when they were driven out of Missouri and Illinois. It took them forty years to build their temple, and when they first came there wasn't a tree in the valley.

Now, there are avenues down most of the streets and all the houses have gardens, yet there is practically no rainfall, so every tree has to be watered separately. Lately, the Mormon church has forbidden polygamy, and its members live like quakers, giving a tithe of their income to the church, calling each other "brother" and "sister," believing that the end of the world is imminent—a religious community of excellent farmers and citizens, ruled by their elders and pastors.

We loved the Middle West. We rejoiced in its warm hospitality and its wholesale enthusiasm for the War, in which it welcomed prohibition and universal service, accepted the fixed price of wheat and lynched the leader of an I.W.W. strike! Denver, at the foot of the mountains, introduced us to one of the few real terrors of America—the reporter with an absorbent mind and a fiendishly inventive brain. We dined one night at the Country Club, and I sat between a

bishop and a judge, so, as a suitable subject for conversation, I chose women's war work. Next day we were mobbed by reporters, who photographed us at breakfast, tried to interview us through the bathroom keyhole, lay in wait for us in unsuspected corridors, and rang us up before we were awake, so that we took to laying our telephone receivers in lonely solitude on a chair !

Now, ere I left England, a patriotic parent had requested me to impress America in general with the fact that German air-raids were more amusing than annoying, and on the whole, were looked upon as a vastly more diverting spectacle than a mere cinema ! Therefore, when a goggle-eyed individual, with the expression of a cod-fish and the pencil of a post-impressionist, asked me what we did when bombs dropped around our Government cars, I said cheerfully :

" Oh, we put up our umbrellas, silk ones if possible, because of the shrapnel ! "

This was translated in the evening edition into, " *She* put up her umbrella when strong men ran for real cover ! "

After that we fled to the Grand Canyon of Arizona, which is one of the seven wonders of the modern world. It is not even situated in mountainous country—that is the most amazing part of it—in the midst of a flat plain, one suddenly comes upon this vast chasm, twenty-five miles across, and a mile deep. The forest creeps up to the edge of the gorge, but there is no trace of

vegetation amidst the red granite rocks of the Canyon itself. It is as if two sportive giants had played tug-of-war with the earth, and broken it in two. In the sunset, when the mighty crags are dyed blood red, one imagines it a battlefield of the ancient gods, split in twain by Jove's thunderbolts hurled from heaven. Then violet mists come down, the towering pinnacles are lost in strange shadows, and it is a desolate, haunted world of gorgons and dragons, issuing from enchanted caves!

We went across the Painted Desert, past mud-walled Indian villages, surrounded by strange shaped hills with rugged caves and altars hewn out of the rock—I believe they are supposed to be Aztec remains, for the Mexicans once inhabited Southern Arizona—till cactus and aloes gave way to palms, and California met us with scent of oranges and a cool sea-breeze. I thought then that I would like to live in an orange grove in the open country at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains. I would grow pink oleanders, in fat, green tubs outside my vine-wreathed porch, and have a gently bucking broncho with a high-pommelled Mexican saddle and fringed bridle to ride.

Los Angelos, the city of the angels, is a bustling, commercial town, but there is an old Spanish Mission of San Gabril, half buried in vine and convolvulus, its golden sun-washed belfry bending beneath the burden of its music, where mellow

parchment-coloured hands seem to clutch at one from the shadows of quiet *patios*, where a breath of wind is the rustle of a mantilla, where surely a spirit, furtive, mysterious, cruel, walks in the columned aisles! Undine insisted on going to Mass there; and all the congregation was Spanish, the women with embroidered shawls and coloured fans, bare-headed save for a wisp of black lace. I wished I had accompanied her, for, at the Cathedral, the sermon began, "England, with *all* her faults, has seen the light," which annoyed me quite unreasonably.

There are twenty-one of those ancient missions, strung like pearls on a golden string, all along the dusty Camina Real, the original highroad of California. They were founded by wandering Franciscans between 1750 and 1776, but, sad tribute to the ruthless march of civilization, of the ninety-three thousand Indians converted by the friars before 1800, there are only two thousand of their descendants living to-day. There used to be big Indian villages attached to each mission; but, when these latter were confiscated by the "Young Californian" Government, the Indians were ordered to work or to retire to the Reserves. The new settlers introduced strong drink, and this was responsible for a holocaust of the red men. There were endless fights and a few cunning murders, upon which whole tribes were wiped out in retaliation. In Arizona we saw some Hopi Indians dance, and the children had the saddest,

gravest faces I've ever seen. They reminded me of the tragic, painted butterfly-girls of the Yoshwara—the nightless city—of Tokyo.

Los Angelos reminded me of an Earl's Court Exhibition or a " people's paradise." It was full of megaphones, jitney-cars, guides, cinemas, soda-fountains and sight-seeing trolleys—the latter with a large notice painted on the door: " Keep your temper; nobody else wants it." Certainly the Westerners are adepts at humorous placards. We stayed once at a small, tin shanty outside a mining camp chiefly frequented by cowboys and miners, and we were infinitely amused with a big notice on a bare wall: " Gentlemen are requested to remove their spurs before getting into bed." Once again, in Santa Cruz, we were struck by the determined enjoyment of the working-classes on a holiday. It was neither rowdy nor carelessly light-hearted—it was deliberate, forceful, good-tempered and as overpowering as a ceaselessly spinning merry-go-round!

Santa Barbara is like a gem from the Italian Riviera, only its atmosphere is as sparkling and exhilarating as the wonderful climate of New South Wales. When we arrived at a fairy-palace-hotel set in gardens of palms, with a circle of mist-capped mountains behind and a blue, blue sea beyond a hedge of scarlet canna, and dined amidst masses of pink, tropical lilies, with an overpoweringly sweet scent, on shrimp cocktails and chicken

Maryland and thousand-island salad, we sighed happily and said:

"We'll stay here a long time."

Alas, the moving-on craze is not lightly to be escaped! Two days later, after watching a lingering sunset die over flame-red oleanders and grey eucalyptus trees, when the dry, burnt umber hills "stood up like the thrones of kings," a restless light came into Undine's eyes.

"Let's move on," she said.

And I replied thankfully:

"Yes—to-morrow."

Here is an extract from a letter I wrote home eighteen months ago:

"Every one asks, 'What do you think of America?' How can one answer? I admire their tireless activity, their clean, personal pride, their powers of organization, their blatant optimism, their consistent never failing cheerfulness, their friendly interest, their genuine democracy, which is not the howling, climbing, theatrical type of some countries. I hate their habit of chewing gum and expectorating! I loathe their curiosity, familiarity, noisiness, and their boots which have bumpy toes! Of *course* they will win the War. They *must*. They are as energetic and efficient as the Germans, and I am beginning to think they are as observant and far-sighted. Just one thing I wonder—can they, for a year or two, discount the power and the lure of money? That is their difficulty. Each

nation, I suppose, would gladly give the greatest thing she has. Will America count her gift of wealth greater than that of personal service? Perhaps not. I went to see a doctor the other day, and in course of conversation he said, quite simply, 'I've a wife and two children dependent on me, and I've nothing but what I earn, but I simply must get to France. I *will* manage it somehow, you bet!' "

CHAPTER II

CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII

WE went to Del Monte, and drove round a wonderful wooded promontory, where cedars of Lebanon grew out of the cliffs at the edge of the sea and enormous spotted seals lay about on the rocks, lazily flipping their fins, ready to dive the instant they were disturbed, while flocks of pelicans and cormorants sat in rows on every available crag. We saw two more old Spanish missions. In one was the oak-tree under which Fra Junipera Serra formally took over California for Spain in 1770. He is buried at El Carmel, a lonely, deserted church on a river. It looked cold and grey except for its pink plaster tower, which reminded me of Siena.

I left Undine reading novels in a villa on the coast, and made a dusty pilgrimage to the Yosemite —of which the Indian name is the "valley of sudden shadow"—to worship the big sequoias in all their lonely splendour. Their height impressed me much more than their girth—for, after all, an Indian banyan covers more ground —and the fact that it is quite dark and cold in

the middle of a grove. The giant redwoods—the highest trees in the world—grow to a height of between three and four hundred feet, while their girth is sometimes one hundred and twenty feet, and their diameter, thirty-six feet. The oldest tree is supposed to be eight thousand years old.

We drove over an eight thousand feet pass amidst giant grey boulders and red barked sequoias, and then, in the evening light, began to drop down into the golden valley, slipping between huge, smooth crags, which shut out the sun, till, under the towering majesty of El Capitan, we reached a lush green meadow, with the clearest of all mountain streams winding through it, an absurd little log-hut village clinging to one bank, and, at the end, a glimpse of white tents playing hide-and-seek with scented incense-pines and more granite boulders, under the perpetual menace of a crag which rises a sheer three-quarters of a mile in one straight precipice from the floor of the valley. The sun drops behind it at midday, and thereafter one lives in shadow.

It was so beautiful that I almost forgot my harassing journey. Generally, Undine looks up the trains and I get into them, half an hour before they start—that is one of the Water-maiden's harmless fads! I have implicit faith in Undine's interpretation of time-tables, even though, through following her directions, we spent ten nights in the train crossing America. I cannot imagine

how or why! However, when I parted from her at the window of my Pullman car, deep peace enfolded me, and I sat placidly in my corner till long after I'd passed the junction, and then descended rapidly, leaving my suit-case in the rack. Of course, there was a taxi strike, and a crowd of Japs and dagos fought for the ferry. In the next train I could only get an upper berth, and dropped all my garments one by one on the suffering head of the peevish individual below; and lastly, I overslept and missed breakfast. Consequently, when even American enterprise confessed that it saw no chance of retrieving my suit-case for several days, I collapsed in wrath!

I remember I arrived in San Francisco with eighty-one cents and a great hunger. I instantly fell in love with the gay, switch-back city, built on a dozen little hills with the turbulent Pacific on one side, and the calm, blue bay, shut in by the cliffs of the Golden Gate, on the other. Every third building is a restaurant or a cafeteria, and every fourth a theatre where patriotic war films were displayed. San Francisco had caught the war-fever. The most pathetic touch was a tram-car conductor, who came from my own English county, and said to me:

"My wife is dead and I've only one son, so I wanted 'im to stay, but 'e says to me, 'Father, some one 'as to be the first to go, and I'd like it to be me.' So 'e up and went!"

China-town is only a parody of the real East,

so we said good-bye to our newest Ally and sailed away in search of real sunshine and the crowded languorous life of the unthinking tropics.

First we came to Oahu, where the sky is still the mist-blue sky of Europe and not the molten sapphire of the hot lands. We took a little white bungalow in the middle of a huge garden. The scent of wild ginger was intolerably sweet. Pink oleanders tapped against the mosquito netting which shut in the wide verandas, and tall, spindly palms waved above our roof—I always hoped a coco-nut would fall down for us to eat. There were magnolias in bloom and fig-trees, and only a hedge of scarlet hibiscus separated us from the far-famed Waikiki beach where brown Hawaian boys came flying in on their surf-boards—bronze statues upright upon the breakers, kings of the whirling surf, foam-crowned! It was quite a different effect whenever we tried to do it. With fiendish ingenuity, our surf-boards used to turn over, deposit us on a particularly vicious coral rock, deliver several sharp blows on the head as we tried to rise from underneath them and float triumphantly away, leaving us puffing and panting a quarter of a mile from shore. You learn to swim in self-defence at Honolulu, but I am always considerably happier when I have one foot on the ground!

A favourite pastime is to try to ride slippery, round logs which pitch about on top of the breakers. I have never known anyone sit upright

for more than one second, and I spent all my time lying flat on my face till I slipped off head first, when some incautious stranger would helpfully seize a disappearing foot and try to pull me back with the result that the rest of me remained under water, head downwards and drowning. Insult was generally added to injury by such remarks as, "You'd get along much better if you would open your eyes and shut your mouth!" But, oh, the joy when first one mastered the intricacies of the surf-board and came sweeping shorewards at the speed of an express train, on the very edge of a wave, tilted a little forward with the foam whirling right and left before one!

The population of Honolulu is amphibious. It wanders about in bathing kit, generally *à la* Annette Kellerman, at all hours and in all places —on foot in the hotel gardens, in cars along the big avenues, cloakless and undisguised and burnt a beautiful, dark copper brown.

After we had been battered black and blue by recalcitrant surf-boards, and had danced our shoes through to the music of soft ukeleles on moonlit verandas above an onyx sea; after we learned to appreciate a pine-apple cocktail and the papaia that tastes so like bath soap on first acquaintance; after we had driven up to the high Nuana Pali, from which towering ridge the first missionaries used to be lowered in baskets to the other side of the island, we decided to explore the islands of Hawai and Maui. We

departed, laden with the laïs — garlands of sweet-scented frangipane, wild white ginger, and creamy-gold numaria flowers—that are given to all travellers to bring good luck.

We landed very early at Hilo and motored thirty miles over the worst road in the world, to a little wooden hotel, overshadowed by giant tree ferns, and another eight miles over a still more bumpy track, along the edge of old craters, through black lava country, bare and bleak, with sulphur fumes pouring out of every hollow. The living crater of Kilanea, " the House of the Eternal Fire," is a huge round bowl at the summit of the mountain, perhaps three hundred yards across. A hundred feet below the rim the boiling black lava is seamed with lurid lines of flame, hissing and curling like the serpents of Inferno, while sudden fountains of fire rush up from the centre. Strange black crags tower out of the molten mass, and clouds of suffocating charcoal fumes pour out of the crater.

We watched the sun set and the moon rise over the great bulk of Mauna Lua, thirteen thousand feet high. As night came on, more and more flame broke from the darkness below till all the smoke was crimson, and blood-red rivers burst into showers of fireworks.

The crater is the home of the goddess Pélé, and in olden days she had to be propitiated with sheep and pigs and chickens, and sometimes even a soft-eyed Hawaian maid. Only two years ago,

when a flood of lava threatened a village, a mournful little procession of men and maidens, ancient crones and tiny children, set out, singing sad songs of doom, to fling themselves into the volcano, and avert the destruction of the country-side. Luckily they were stopped by the police, and taken home in Hudson super-sixes. Thus science and superstition were somewhat mixed up. When the great river of lava poured right down to the outskirts of Hilo, and the little town, crouched on its coral bay, was on the point of disappearing beneath the black mass, Princess Ruth, last of the Hawaian dynasty, was brought over from Honolulu to avert the disaster. A wooden platform was hastily erected on the very edge of the flood, and, while the slow-moving lava rolled gently round her, the princess poured out the blood of fowls as a libation to the angry goddess. Unfortunately the flood stopped, and the progress of Christianity was retarded several generations.

Pélé's hair, gleaming gold in the sunshine, litters the edge of the crater. To the unbeliever who dares to touch it, it is only a thread of fine-spun lava blown up from below, but it is certainly bright yellow when seen from a distance! When we got back to our wooden hotel in pitch darkness, a Hawaian boy was sitting in the *lanai*, or porch, playing the ukelele, and singing sad old songs of death and sacrifice in the volcano. All their music is intolerably sad and heart-breakingly

sweet. The Hawaian race is dying out. Nowadays the islands are populated with *haapa haulies*, half whites, and there are five hundred thousand Japanese. I doubt if we saw more than a score of the real natives. There are no more grass houses, and the old industries are forgotten. Only their music is left, and at every sheltered corner in the towns you may hear the sobbing thrum of an ukelele. The natives will not work—they leave all the trade to the busy Japs and the intelligent Chinese—their ambition stops at becoming a "beach-boy," who swims all day and plays in a string band at one of the big hotels at night.

Maui is one of the most primitive islands. We arrived at Lahaina at 1 a.m. to be landed from the middle of the bay in a fishing-boat, and taken by a little Filippino boy through many palm-trees to a clean, small cottage, where, in spite of vigorous mosquitoes, we slept for five blessed hours. We breakfasted, in the *lanai*, on papaia and bitter orange juice, broiled barracuda fish and olives. Then we explored the little village among the palms and looked across at the mist-capped mountains of Molokai, Father Damien's Isle. There are about seven hundred lepers there now, and there is still a gallant Franciscan brotherhood and sisterhood living an imprisoned lonely life in the tragic colony. The lepers have a cinema and a club, gardens and small farms, and they are allowed to marry, but the children

are taken away at once, as only a very small percentage are born leprous. They are educated in a Roman Catholic home in Honolulu, and very few of them develop the disease.

We motored right across the island to Wailuku, twenty-two miles along a wonderful road slung between sea and sky on the edge of the mountains. The "hotel" was a tiny wooden house, full of mosquitoes, and we had an amazing lunch, which consisted of fish and 'poi,' which looks like grey glue, tastes like bitter starch, is made of pounded Taro root, and is also used for pasting-up posters, and pine-apple pie. It is so funny, one never sees a horse on Maui, and legend tells that a child from one of the smaller isles on first seeing a pony in the streets of Honolulu shrieked with interest, "Oh, mother, what a 'normous cockroach!"

The animal that really looms large on those sunlit shores is a huge, hairy centipede, about twelve inches long and as thick as a ship's cable. No, it is much too large to be an insect! It is a wild animal, and it has a pleasant habit of falling on one suddenly from the *lanai* roof. It requires great moral courage to squash one of these beasts, and I sympathize entirely with the Russian officer who exclaimed with intense pride one night, in slightly defective English, "Madame, I am a heroine! I have killed a centi*metre*!" A small boy caused nearly as much joy in the Cathedral one Sunday by remarking suddenly

with an ecstatic glance at St George and the Dragon, " Look at ve big centipede, mummy."

When we got back to Honolulu, we tried a new water sport. Four people paddle out about a third of a mile in an outrigger canoe that looks like a large spider, and lie in wait for the great breakers. When you see one rising in the distance, the Hawaians shout, " Paddle ! " and you swing the canoe round and paddle wildly till the wave comes up behind, lifts the canoe on its crest, and hurls it shorewards at a terrific rate. Great fun, but very strenuous !

We saw a Hula-Hula dance, when pretty Hawaian girls, dark-eyed, with pale skins and flower-like mouths, in full skirts of long swinging straw, crowned with scented wreaths, went through the usual African posturings, with more grace than is usually found in the " *danse du ventre.*" The only merit that I could see was the fact that it was utterly different from the London music-hall conception of it, except that the dancers occasionally used the butterfly-flutterings of the finger-tips. Afterwards the girls sang, to the music of guitars and ukeleles, old, historical melodies, but the rhythm for the dance was thrummed out on dry gourds, and at some moments the musicians flung themselves about with jerky abdominal movements, singing wildly and shaking calabashes with dry seeds rattling inside.

In the olden days, apparently, the King would

play on the gourd while the Queen led the dancing girls. Queen Liliuokalane composed several hula songs. When we were in Oahu she was still alive, and kept up royal state, but she had been deposed by the U.S.A. some twenty years ago, as she tried to resuscitate a despotic monarchy and, I gather, intended to cut off a large number of free-born American heads! It is all such pathetically recent history, for King Kamehameha, whose last great battle with the heathen natives of Oahu took place on the Nuana Pali, first made a unified monarchy of the Hawaian Islands in 1820, and now his race is extinct.

We saw some exquisite feather cloaks and helmets worn by ancient Hawaian royalty, and I have never seen anything so wonderful as these soft robes made of golden breast feathers of rare birds. The chiefs used a gorgeous red feather, but yellow was the King's colour, and it must have taken millions of birds to make one cloak.

CHAPTER III

SAMOA

A SUPERCILIOUS ocean liner landed us one vividly hot day at Pago-Pago, and then puffed scornfully away towards Sydney, laden with bags of copra, leaving us forlornly looking for a dwelling-place amidst the dozen ramshackle bungalows that line the lovely mountain-locked harbour, where two ancient American gunboats doze peacefully in the southern sunshine. Eventually we found a grimy room above a store, where you could buy tinned foods of, alas, very certain age and most original colouring, huge paper umbrellas, the lastest fashion in lava-lavas—the native garment like an attenuated kilt—mosquito lotion, coco-nut oil, and hurricane lamps, guaranteed to go out at the least breath of wind!

We spent the first night entirely exposed to the public view, as our room opened, by several doors and windows that would not shut, on to a wide veranda, where, apparently, the whole population of Pago-Pago lounged away its nights and days. But there were compensations—a flood of purple bougainvillæa rioted in turbulent

glory over the front of the house, and one looked through slender coco-nut palms and spreading bread-fruit-trees to the bluest water in the world and a towering mountain wall.

Far down the harbour lay the gallant little sailing-boat that had brought the marooned victims of the Hun raider all the way from Mopeha Isle. What a story for R. L. Stevenson—and these islands are his own country. A nameless raider escaped from a South American port, hiding among the sunlit coral islands of the Southern Pacific; seventeen ships captured by an unknown foe; then the landing of all the crews on the deserted coco-nut island on the outskirts of the Tahiti group. When we arrived in Pago-Pago rumour had become fact, for late one evening, while the American governor was dining in his mountain eyrie, an excited telephone message told of a mysterious sailing-craft, which would answer no signals, making for the harbour entrance. At that time all the little ports were on the alert for the mysterious raider, and I imagine the welcome accorded the fugitives was not exactly what they had pictured during their twelve days tossing in an open dinghy.

It was a wonderful story as one Williams, originally the mate of the sunk sailing-ship *Manila*, told it to me. Apparently, the raider landed her victims on Mopeha and was herself wrecked on the dangerous coral-reef there, after which some of her crew went off in a launch with a

maxim gun, to be captured ignominiously on one of the Fijian islands by a British harbour-dues boat, whose crew were armed with two revolvers! The rest of the Germans waited on Mopeha till the half-yearly steamer put in with stores for the handful of natives who looked after the coco-nut plantations. They easily captured her, and thereafter disappeared into the unknown.

Meanwhile, the refugees had very little food, as the raider had landed her stores too far out on the reef, and the tide had swept most of them away, and the only water was brackish and bitter, so they patched up a life-boat saved from the wreck, and four gallant individuals started off to sail to Tahiti, two hundred miles away, in the very teeth of the Trade Wind. After nine days' buffeting they were blown back to Mopeha, but, nothing daunted, they set off again, heading this time for Pago-Pago, twelve hundred miles away; and, with the perilous Trade Wind behind them, they actually arrived safely in twelve days. What an exploit!

Our first morning in Pago-Pago, we took one comb, two tooth-brushes, some loaves of bread, and a tin of sardines, and tramped right over the mountains through dense jungle of strange trees and hanging creepers. As we ascended, plantain trees and huge taro plants gave place to thickets of scented thorns, and slender trees burdened with waxen white blossoms, with here and there sweet-smelling ginger flowers, pale, creamy yellow,

and the star-cold blooms of tobacco plant. I remember it rained nearly all the way, and an exotic-looking person, dressed in a green lava-lava with a flaming hibiscus in his thick curly hair, followed us for miles, carrying an enormous curved scimitar, with which he doubtlesss intended to cut himself a bundle of bananas, but which we disliked intensely in close proximity to our undefended backs ! It came in very useful, however, at the midday meal, for after struggling in vain with the lid of the sardine box we handed it over to the gorgeous savage, who quite deftly cut a slit, prised it open with his fingers, and licked them so appreciatively that we were obliged to offer him a share.

On the other side of the mountains a little village grew on the shores of an exquisite coral bay. Looking down from the forest-clad ridge, the round-roofed houses looked like small brown mushrooms ; and, indeed, I never quite lost the illusion, for a Samoan house consists of a domed, thatched roof supported on a circle of wooden poles and generally raised a foot or so above Mother Earth on a floor of tiny round pebbles, covered in places with thin fibre mats. It is open to the winds of heaven, and dogs, children and fowls wander in at will.

In pantomime, as our knowledge of Samoan was very limited, we threw ourselves on the mercy of the chief, a large, statuesque person in a scarlet lava-lava, with neatly tattooed legs. The rest

of his muscular form was wreathed merely in garlands of strongly-scented flowers, and his curly dark hair was tinted red at the tips, the result of a recent application of lime. By signs we asked for lodging, and he graciously placed at our disposal a pile of bananas, pine-apples and cocoanuts—whose milk we drank with great joy—two very hard pillows stuffed with fibre and several square yards of his house floor. He also indicated that a chicken would shortly make its appearance, so we thought it was a good moment to bathe in the alluring blue waters.

With Indian cunning we escaped from all our village admirers and scrambled round several rocky promontories till we came to a veritable mermaid's cave. There we decorated the nearest bread-fruit-tree with all our garments and plunged into the exquisite sea, rippleless and translucent as the rarest emerald. No one can give any true description of a coral sea, as the ethereal, crystal colours exist nowhere else—a rainbow seen through rain or a soap-bubble flashing in the sun are only faint reflections of the prismatic scale of colour that tints the sea round the southern islands! We swam a long way above delicious ocean gardens, where strange blood-red lilies lifted huge coral flowers above smaller shapes of blue and green and orange, while flashing metallic fishes, vivid turquoise and sapphire, floated round our toes. We dropped into transparent depths, where feathery crimson ferns grew round giant sea-

orchids with blotched, evil petals, and picked up shells with the lustre of pearls and sharp as the newest razor.

Then we drifted lazily back, wondering whether the chicken would be eatable, hardly looking where we were going till we turned the sharp promontory into our silent cave—and found the whole village seated in an expectant circle to watch us dress! An animated dumb argument then ensued, and we ruthlessly pointed out every creature with short hair, insisting on their disappearance e'er we emerged from our ocean refuge. The women utterly refused to move, and a few curly-headed, wide-eyed fauns remained with them, assuring us loudly that they were girls, and this interested audience watched us with absorbed admiration as we struggled with refractory tapes and buttons. Never in their lives had they seen a bifurcated garment before, and stockings filled them with staring bewilderment. The instant the last garment was arranged the whole crowd fled helter-skelter to the village to entertain the male element with a graphic and spirited pantomime of our dressing. They are most wonderful mimics, and I laughed helplessly over a vivid reproduction of my efforts to bandage a coral cut with some strips of plantain leaf.

After that, as the chickens were still stewing in a shallow pan on some charcoal embers in the mysterious recesses of the women's house, presided over by an ancient crone distorted and monstrous

with the elephantiasis which attacks so many of these children of the sun and the sea, we played cricket with the village infants who hid their brown birthday suits under wonderful belts and chains of flowers and leaves. It was not *quite* cricket as she is played at Lord's—the ball was a small, green coco-nut, the bat a taro stump, the wickets three dried coco-nuts stuck on sticks, and, if I remember rightly, the whole field made runs at the same time. I know it was a wild game, played with loud mirth in the gathering dusk, while fires began to gleam under the mush-room roofs, and splendid bronze statues, smoking rolled leaf cigars, came strolling in with wild pig from the forest and with spear and silver fish from the reef.

Our chicken was cooked in such a way that the utmost ingenuity could scarcely find a morsel to eat and, as Samoan custom necessitates a guest leaving a portion of every dish for his hosts, we felt rather hungry at the end of the feast. We sat cross-legged in the centre of the matted floor with a circle of the village headmen round us, while, in the shadows, crouched the serving boys who prepared the native meal of taro-root, and brought it on large plantain leaves to each chief in turn. Later on, the remains of the feast were eagerly shared by the boys ; and then a muscular youth, with a crown of plaited grasses, brought in a dried calabash full of water and some great bunches of bananas, which he promptly stripped

from their skins, and squeezed in his sinuous hands into a yellow pulp that he dropped into the water.

We looked on in fascinated horror as he stirred and pounded the pulp with bare, brown hands, but there was no escape. A half coco-nut shell full of the sweet syrup was handed to each of us, and we had to drink it. It tasted rather like banana fool, and was, of course, delicious in comparison with the kava which we subsequently drank for the first time that night. The making of it is a solemn ceremony. A flower-crowned girl wails a little song or incantation over a green root freshly wrenched from the earth. Then some powder from a prepared root is given her, and she crushes this into water in a great flat wooden bowl, kneading it with her hands, and using long strands of fibre as a sieve, while the circle of headmen clap hands at intervals, and sometimes chant monotonous dirges.

When the kava is ready, the girls fill a coco-nut bowl with this native whisky, and a crouching boy hands it to the oldest or most important chief present, who pours a few drops on the ground as a libation to the earth, drinks the rest in one long draught, and sends the black polished bowl spinning back across the mats to the kava-maker. The ceremony is repeated for each headman in turn, and then the boys finish up the noisome liquid. It tastes like liquorice, hair-oil, vinegar, and sand mixed, and, often as I have drunk it,

A SAMOAN BEAUTY

CLIMBING FOR COCOANUTS

I have never managed to do more than sip slowly with an anguished expression and watering eyes!

When the long ceremony was ended, a few women crept in and joined the boys in the shadows. The circle of gorgeously tattooed warriors smoked on, so we decided the only thing to do was to choose the darkest corner, and try to sleep on our brick-like pillows. We apparently took the right step, for gradually the floor was covered with bronze forms in infinitely more graceful attitudes than we ever achieved, for the coral stones of the floor cut into our shoulders through the thin mats, and we dared hardly move for fear of touching some dusky savage dreaming of a hunter's paradise. Dawn brought a swift turmoil as the headmen slipped forth one by one till only a few old men remained with the chief to watch Undine struggle with her floods of golden hair. A Samoan's charm of manner is only equalled by his curiosity. One smiling villager seized our only comb, briskly combed up his lime-tinted curls, laughed happily, patted Undine's bare shoulder, and stuck the comb in her hair; but when our host, who had been toying with the bottle of mosquito lotion, suddenly drank the contents at a gulp we felt it was time to go.

We fled somewhat rapidly up the mountain path, and only paused to breakfast on bread and pine-apple, when some miles separated us from the village! Half-way down the other side we were met by runners bearing a note from the

American Governor, asking us to dine in his white bungalow, perched high above the harbour; so we rejoiced in the flesh-pots of Egypt—of the tinned variety—with a dark-skinned band discoursing native music in the veranda, till it was time to descend to the terrible 17-ton cargo-boat which would take us across to Apia. Various friends assured us cheerfully that the *Manua* had been known to take five days to get across to Upolu Island, that she leaked, that her engines broke down every other journey, and that the weather was always rough!

Thereafter followed a nightmare, whose chief ingredients were a crowd of oily natives, wreathed in flowers strongly scented, and an overpowering smell of copra, while the fact that the only cabin was a 6 ft. by 4 ft. hole in the deck-house wall, with two board shelves as bunks, did not add to our delight, especially as every second wave broke well over our grimy floor, destroying a few dozen enormous cockroaches and sending the rest scuttling into our skirts for protection. With the morning light came a vision of low-lying Upolu across our bows, and I remember eating sardines in a perilously swaying cabin, where everything fell from side to side, and the sunburned captain, in dripping oil-skins, opined that we *might* make the harbour in this weather, but it would be better to hang outside till night-fall—his last words were lost as a vicious roll sent him suddenly into the scuppers.

Apia harbour is a tragic sight in spite of its fluttering coco-nut palms, and the cheerful circle of red-roofed houses under the shelter of R. L. Stevenson's hill, for the cruel barrier reefs, against which eternally thunder the white Pacific breakers, are strewn with the iron skeletons of the seven German and American men-of-war which were wrecked there twenty years ago. The only British ship, the *Calliope*, steamed out into the teeth of the mighty gale, and so was saved while all the rest were dashed to pieces on the rock. It is splendid to remember in these days, when America has sealed her blood-fellowship with us, and is upholding our joint tradition of courage and self-sacrifice in the trenches of France, that the doomed American ships in Apia harbour cheered the *Calliope* as she steamed out to safety and the open ocean, which their own engines were not strong enough to make!

CHAPTER IV

SAVAI ISLAND

MY chief recollections of Apia are a temperature too hot to be mentioned and a horde of particularly vicious and vigorous mosquitoes with striped legs. I know we left it as soon as possible, and a small launch took us to Savai Island, a delightful spot outside the realms of civilization, inhabited by brown, smiling Samoans, and one specimen of the white race—a charming creature as bald and pink as a baby, with a smile almost as broad as his immense person, which was invariably clad in silk pyjamas of peculiarly vivid hues!

Even our little launch could not get inside the reef at Fango, so we paddled ashore in a long canoe, and were met by an inquisitive turtle, amidst a circle of native huts and a forest of palms. While some cargo was being unloaded, we induced a kindly half-caste to cook us fish freshly caught, doughnuts and eggs, and, thus fortified, we re-embarked and disposed ourselves to sleep on the deck-house roof, my feet in Undine's hair, and hers kicking me about the

chest. All went well till she nearly killed the native captain by falling on him suddenly as he slept on the deck, clad only in a loin-cloth. After that we huddled in the stern in a large pool of water, watching the Southern Cross describe giddy plunges in an unsteady heaven, and prayed for the dawn.

However, long before the first faint light started the golden-throated natives singing their sad morning hymns, we swung suddenly through the reef, and were landed from a wet small boat in a mysterious whispering place, with inky feathers of palms shutting out the stars, and sudden flashes of murky fires showing natives shrouded in cotton—to protect them from mosquitoes—lying on the floors of faintly looming huts. We stumbled some way along the sandy shore till we reached a large wooden house, belonging to a hospitable half-caste, which we made our head-quarters while on the island. That night, I only remember sleeping soundly on a 5 ft. camp bed without a mattress, sheet or blanket, my feet sticking out into space, a horde of hungry mosquitoes taking advantage of my unprotected state, and my very grimy travelling cushion slipping backwards from under my head.

Next morning, we woke to a glare of colour—the walls were salmon-pink with red doors and window-sashes, and our hostess, a graceful Samoan girl, wore a scarlet holoku, or overall, with strings of pink coral beads and a wonderful crimson lily

in her hair; while even the ink was vermilion. A savoury smell was wafted from the kitchen hut, and we soon sat down to roast flaky bread-fruit, slices of toasted grey taro-root and sea worms! The latter are an acquired taste! They are a great local delicacy, as they only come into the reef once a year. They are very long, and very green, and when wrapped in moist leaves, and cooked very slowly over ashes, they taste not unlike caviare. In any case, one has to get used to them in Samoa in the spring, as they form the chief native dish.

The natives are the most delightful race in the world, I think. The girls are veritable nymphs of dance and song; flowers seem to be their natural clothing and tropical forest their fitting background, while the stalwart, vigorous men are just as much Tritons of the sea, where you see them swimming all day with long, lazy strokes or leisurely patrolling the reef, gleaming fish-spear in hand. They are a laughing, sunny, childlike race who play at life in brilliant sunshine. Their hospitality is amazing; any traveller may stop at the chief's hut in any village and demand lodging and food—it will never be refused. In the larger villages several guest huts are always kept ready, and the Taupa, or chief maiden of the village, has the honoured task of looking after all guests. She sings and dances for them, makes them a wonderful bed of piled mats, and very often curls up to sleep beside them.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE DAWN

SIVA DANCERS OF SAVAI

A quaint ancient custom decrees that if the traveller is a man the Taupa shares his couch for the first hours of the night, while her attendant crones sit round with torches. These old women never leave the girl. They are her guardians, and if it is an important village, she also has a train of young girls to carry out her orders. When she marries she loses her position, and another princess takes her place. The Taupa arranges the Siva-Siva dances, and leads them with the men, sometimes wearing a heavy helmet made of wood and hair, and she is always first of the laughing crowd who sing enchanting songs by moonlight to the goddess of the great volcano.

That scarred desolate mountain is the one sinister land-mark in all Savai. From its dark crater, a few years ago, flowed the mighty river of lava that ruthlessly destroyed a whole country-side, swallowing up crowded villages, cultivated taro-swamps, and great stretches of forest in its relentless progress to the sea. Like a dead leviathan the black streak, fifteen miles wide, now cuts in two the island, and the only structure that withstood its burning rush, that, roofless and gutted, still stands triumphant above the tragic waste, is a white mission church, whose walls are half-buried beneath the lava but whose carved windows still look out above a few hardy creepers to the untroubled sea!

We made a weary pilgrimage to the top of the volcano one day, and the expedition was typical

of the pleasure-loving Samoan. We had engaged a sloe-eyed Adonis with delicious curls to act as guide, but three or four dainty bare-footed maidens insisted on coming too, and several swains added themselves to the procession in order to carry unnecessary provisions, and some very necessary blankets. We had procured two wonderful horses, which we named Rosinante and Dulcibella. The former weighed a ton, and when he trotted the earth shook and all his legs went in different directions at the same time. He was shod on two and a half hoofs, and he was only held on his feet by the strength of his reins. Dulcibella could have been blown off the face of the earth with a fly-whisk. She was bright pink, and shaped like a pyramid, with no shoes at all. She had a mournful mind, and could only run like a cockroach, in short jerks.

I always had to ride Rosinante because he cow-kicked, and Undine was not tall enough to give the flying leap on to his huge back which was necessitated by this unpleasant habit. Consequently, my bones felt like jelly, and I ate my ribs several times when they bumped into my mouth! However, I scored one morning when we had to swim a river, for portions of Rosinante stuck out like a mountain range, whereas poor Dulcibella disappeared altogether in a wave of pink, and Undine got remarkably wet. This was before she took to falling as a matter of course into streams, swamps and ditches in

Fiji and Siam—in fact, when we finally recrossed the Atlantic, we decided we had fallen off or out of everything, including a rickshaw in the Pekin plains and a dining-car seat on a swaying Canadian Pullman.

Our volcano expedition proceeded slowly, for Adonis—who carried a toy rifle, and wore a blue yachting cap—insisted on weaving us wonderful garlands on the way, and the girls placidly went to sleep under every flowering tree. The forest was a joy to every sense, but the black, sun-scorched lava fields were an aching weariness. We plodded over them for hours, stopping occasionally to drink one of our store of coco-nuts, but it was not till the swift twilight was gathering her tinted robes for flight that we looked over the rim of the world into smoking depths. It was not a flaming fountain of fire like Hawaian Kilauea, it was not a battlefield of the ancient gods like the Arizona Canyon, but it was shadow-haunted desolation, and I can understand the terror of the Samoan race, who believe that an insatiable devil dwells therein, held down and half crushed by the huge mountain, bellowing forth his rage and agony in hissing steam and boiling lava—his breath and his blood.

It was entirely exquisite sitting up there on the rim of the mountain, white moonlight staining silver the river of destruction; but Adonis was so exercised as to whether the devil might not require a breathing brown sacrifice that we

hastily turned our thoughts towards supper. We fried bananas above a wood fire, made excellent coffee, and ate large slices of pine-apple and the ubiquitous yam; then we camped for the night in a tiny wooden hut, originally put up for some visiting geologists. Undine and I took possession of the wooden table, while Adonis balanced himself perilously on a very narrow bench, and the rest of our retinue slept in a tangle of flowers and mosquito wraps on the floor.

I do not look back upon that night with pleasure. A table top is *not* the epitome of comfort as a bed, especially if you are wearing heavy riding-boots and gaiters to outwit the hopeful mosquito. Then the retinue insisted with pitiful earnestness on shutting the door as well as every other chink and cranny "in case a wild pig" came in. They assured us that the mountain was the home of ferocious boars, but I had a suspicion that their fears were not unconnected with the unearthly occupant of the volcano! The last straw was when, in the middle of the night, I woke to feel a perfect flock of mosquitoes feeding healthily, and, groping for the net, discovered that Undine had cunningly grabbed the whole thing and sheathed it round her like a closely-wound cocoon!

When we returned from the volcano, we started off to ride round the island on our jaded steeds. I always think we must have looked very funny in Tautz's pluperfect breeches, surmounted by dungaree shirts and panama hats, with immense

paper umbrellas held over our heads, bulging plantain baskets full of food, and a few clothing necessities tied to the world-worn saddles, and knocking against boots which had not been cleaned for several months! A little road starts away from the lava fields, wanders through exquisite coco-nut groves, dips down to the brown villages clustering along the sea-shore and finally loses itself in deep forest shade. Along this we rode at the strange pace chosen by Rosinante and Dulcibella. When we came to a river our steeds first rolled into it, and then condescended to swim it, puffing, snorting and splashing all quite unnecessarily.

We spent the middle of the day under a convenient bread-fruit tree, and when it was cooler rode on to a large village, where the oblong house of the chief was conspicuous among the round beehives. The bronze statues asleep on the floor, or leaning against the pillars which support the roof, weaving fibre nets, roused themselves to shout "Talofa" [1] as we dropped from our mildly surprised horses. The Taupa came out shyly to greet us. She was pretty, and was going to be married to an old chief on Upolu Isle, whom she had never seen. Both she and the owner of the house where we spent the night could speak a little English, and they asked us about the "big war." They told us that they knew that the German King had killed our great general, and

[1] "Greeting."

I am sure that they pictured the Kaiser as having personally murdered Kitchener with a battle-axe when he was asleep.

Before we were allowed to sleep that night, on a perfectly good deal bedstead standing alone in the centre of a sea of mats, we had to hold a sort of levee of all the headmen of the village. We sat enthroned on two very unstable deal chairs, while a great circle of dark figures crouched round us on the floor. The oldest made a long monotonous speech of which we could understand very little, except repeated words of welcome, till there came a sudden sentence which reduced us to helpless, uncontrolled laughter, for the old man gazed at us solemnly and remarked :

" We are very interested to have you here. We have never seen anything at all like you before ! "

I looked sharply at Undine, and realized apoplectically that he was speaking sheer truth, for the spectacle of two dishevelled young women, clutching knobbly sticks of kava—sacred symbol of chieftainship—and clad in scarlet silk kimonos —which I had insisted on being much more suited to the dignity of the occasion than undiluted riding kit—from which protruded large brown top-boots, must have been certainly unusual in those solitudes. To make matters worse, Undine, fumbling feebly for a handkerchief to stifle her unseemly mirth, encountered nothing more suitable than some very sticky fly-paper, and the remains of a treasured lunch that we meant to

substitute secretly for the sea-worms, which would certainly constitute our supper!

Our laughter endangered the chairs, so we had to subside on to the floor for the rest of the ceremony, which, by the way, needed considerable courage, for the largest cockroaches I've ever seen rushed aimlessly about our feet, and required constant attention to prevent them scurrying up into our hair! I have seen a Samoan boy drink at a gulp a pitcher of water in which were several dead cockroaches without turning a hair!

That night, for the first time, we saw a Siva-Siva. We sat cross-legged on the floor with the whole village in serried ranks around us, while a monotonous rhythmic thudding, made by the beating of scores of bare fists on the rolled mats, took the place of music. This strange exotic noise in the semi-darkness strung one's nerves to intense excitement, till, with a wild shout, half a dozen splendid half-naked figures, polished and gleaming with oil, wreathed in huge garlands of glistening plantain leaves, leaped into the centre of the floor. For an instant they stood, poised rigidly with clicking thumbs and straining muscles, then they whirled suddenly into a rapid fiery dance.

As I watched the gesticulating, leaping figures, vague reminiscences of a Highland Gathering reel at about 5 a.m., and a dervish dance one moonlight night at Benares, flitted through my mind, but the Siva is really entirely original, for

it combines every form of dancing known. At times its attitudes compel comparison with the vulgarest postures of a London music-hall; at times it is a ferocious war-dance, when the performers shout and yell, leap frenziedly over each other, hurl themselves from side to side with such growing enthusiasm and excitement that the whole village generally loses control and joins in! Sometimes the performers seem half asleep, merely swaying slowly and moving their hands in stiff gestures. Occasionally it is a romp of playful children, when boys and girls join together in a laughing line, clapping their hands and stamping energetically.

It is strange how the character of native dancing changes as you go south through the islands of the Pacific. In Hawaii there is the slow and sensuous Hula-Hula, which is merely a variation of the age-old *danse du ventre* seen in every Moorish café or desert tent. The Siva follows as a representation of the overflowing vitality of a happy nation who express every different natural emotion in their dance. Further south comes the Meke of Fiji, which may be described as a dance with a story, inasmuch as a complete drama, generally of battle, is worked out at every performance. A complete contrast are the sex-dances of New Guinea, or the ghastly war rites performed generally after a cannibal feast. The East Indies are out of the Pacific, but near enough to continue my illustration. In Java there is a

slow posturing dance, with stilted movements of the arms and feet, while the finger tips, long and sinuous, flutter and dance like fairy butterflies in a southern breeze. This form of art reaches its highest perfection in Siam, where a dancer practically moves only her wrists and fingers, the latter being exaggeratedly supple and capable of being doubled backwards till they touch the wrist.

To return to lovely palm-clad Savai, we saw the largest Siva in a big village which was *en fête* for the marriage of the chief's daughter to the son of a headman near Apia. The bridegroom had already arrived, and was being royally entertained on roast pig and taro-root when we appeared on the scene, infinitely tired, having lost our way several times in the forest. Dulcibella drooped like a pink ice, and Rosinante even forgot to cow-kick, while he trailed his nose a few inches above the ground till I thought the ancient reins would crack.

The Taupa was rather older than is usual, but she was very gorgeous in a wonderful lava-lava of painted *tapa* cloth, which is made from fine inner bark soaked in water, beaten into a pulp, pulled out into long strips, dried in the sun and then painted by the women with the dark red juice of certain trees. Above this festive garment she wore a gold embroidered blue velvet jacket, and her hair, dyed red with lime, was twisted up with horsehair and leaves into a great cushion

on which she wore, when dancing, a huge helmet.

This time we were ushered into a vast hut, divided up with hangings of painted *tapa* cloth, while the floor was piled with fine mats. A princess on her marriage generally gets several hundred of these mats given her by her friends, and if you can pile quantities one on top of another they make very comfortable beds.

That was a wonderful evening. We sat cross-legged in a vast circle, men and women together —a rare occurrence—while deferential serving-boys brought us a sort of chicken soup, which was very good, slices of feathery yam, grey sticky taro-root, neat little bundles of sea-worms done up in big leaves, pine-apple, and, finally, some young pigs roasted whole in plaited rush baskets. These latter were first displayed whole, and then torn to bits by the boys' muscular fingers and divided up among the guests. Long before the feast was finished our backs ached, and our legs were painfully cramped. Surreptitiously we stretch our agonized limbs out through the pillars into the darkness where all the unimportant, uninvited gazed wistfully at the feast. When repletion reigned throughout the huge circle, the kava ceremony began, and we had to return to our crouching tailors' attitude.

Then, when we were getting so sleepy we could hardly keep our eyes open, a cheerful stir

announced the arrival of the dancers. First, the whole audience began to sway back and forth from the waist, chanting softly, and moving their arms to the rhythm of the song. This is called "the sitting dance," and is supposed to encourage and enliven the waiting Taupa and her following, who appeared wreathed with intricate, floral decorations, and burnished with oil from head to heel. The Taupa danced slowly in the centre with half a dozen splendid, statuesque boys gyrating madly round her. It was too gymnastic to be pretty. The performers might have been acrobats, and, as they grew more and more excited, their wild leaps took them over the heads of the enthralled audience, who uttered hoarse shouts of encouragement and delight, while all the time they kept up the endless thrumming on the mats. Finally, the Taupa sank down with gestures of exhaustion, and the men grew madder and wilder, grimacing hideously, brandishing curved knives, shrieking at the top of their voices, and straining every nerve and muscle in their fevered antics.

Imagine the scene in the vast dark hut, dimly lighted with a few feeble oil lamps, and the gleam of a charcoal fire: the brown, half-naked bodies leaning out of the shadows, eyes staring, hands beating time automatically; outside the rustling, wind-swept night, the intolerably sweet perfume of crushed flowers; inside those leaping, gyrating, dance-maddened figures with torn fragments of

leaf-garlands whirling round them, sweat and oil gleaming in the distorted light, faces demoniacally twisted, a wild cry shuddering through the strained suspense—till, with swift grace, the whole audience rose suddenly, and flung themselves into a veritable turmoil of dance and song.

What a night! We were not allowed to creep behind the *tapa* cloth, and sleep on the yielding mats, till we, too, had danced. In breeches and stockings, hair flying, Undine and I danced reels and Irish jigs to a highly interested audience, who caught the time with wonderful quickness, and beat it accurately for us on the mats. The crowning touch was when the morrow's bridegroom crept up to Undine and, murmuring that she would make an excellent Taupa, suggested that his own house was "exactly opposite, and it is *quite* dark."

The saddest Siva I ever saw was the death-dance for a young chief's wife who had died in childbirth. Samoan custom allows forty-eight hours mourning, but on the third day all the Taupas from the neighbouring villages gather in the bereaved house and dance till the dawn to cheer up the family. I remember so well that gathering. There was a blind girl who sang with exquisite pathos, and a cluster of old, old women who gently massaged the limbs of the ancient mother as she lay prone on the ground, her neck on a brown wooden pillow. There was the gorgeous young husband, like a brown Dis-

cobolus, shedding slow tears whenever he looked at the tiny baby, which Undine held pitifully, and there was the whole clan, from the smallest child to the oldest crone, gathered in the background, while the slim girls in straw lava-lavas danced on a strip of *tapa* cloth.

We hated leaving sunlit, lazy Savai, especially perhaps as we left at midnight in a twenty-ton yawl, which seemed utterly incapable of facing the terrible storm which crashed and roared against the barrier reef. For twenty-four hours we clung for dear life to the rails of the tiny deckhouse, when we weren't lying in a huddled mass of bananas in the scuppers with the sea pouring over us. Whenever we stopped being utterly seasick, and gazed forlornly shorewards, we saw the same mass of black rocks, and I think we were only prevented from feebly slipping overboard by the native captain, who was like a freckled eel, and who spent several hours clutching us both, or when a particularly vast wave flung us into the midst of rolling copra cases, in helping the rest of the crew to rescue our long persons from complete collapse in the scupper. I still have visions of my head on a bare, brawny knee, and a stalwart chocolate arm, smelling strongly of copra, to which I clung frantically, and lastly, I remember a soft Samoan voice saying, " May I leave you now to guide my boat into the reef ? " and looking up miserably, I saw Vailima.

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse ye grave for me,
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

I wonder if Stevenson was a good sailor ?

CHAPTER V

TONGA AND FIJI

A DAWDLING banana boat took us to the Musical Comedy Tongan Isles. It was chiefly inhabited by rats and cockroaches; the former gambolled in our hair, and the latter made nightly meals off our finger nails, so we were glad to get ashore. Tonga owns the only real native king in all the Pacific. He is a splendid person, about 6 ft. 7 ins. high, and broad in proportion. He wears gorgeous European uniforms, and looks a most dignified personage.

Tonga has a constitutional government with a hereditary house of peers and an elected, representative house of the people. The chief difference between them seemed to me to be that the former wore clothes and the latter did *not*! The King lives in a large European house, with panelled rooms, stained-glass windows, and this motto over his door: "God and these Islands are my inheritance." Unfortunately when we were there the Queen's brother was in prison for sheep-stealing, but he went out for a drive every afternoon in the royal carriage.

Altogether it is a topsy-turvy country, for over the prison door is posted a large notice reading: "Any prisoners not in by 6 p.m. will be locked out for the night."

The Tongan Isles are just low-lying banks of coco-nut palms, barely raised above the treacherous reef. Only Vavau rises into little hills, from the top of one of which you look down on the world's loveliest harbour, cut into a thousand bays and islands by promontories of palms and bread-fruit-trees with an undergrowth of tall, scarlet canna lilies. Further inland there are mango-trees on which the flying foxes hang as thick as peas. We walked right across Haapai to the reef on the other side, and watched the natives fishing with long prongs, which they dig into their odd-shaped victims as they swim inquiringly round their toes! Whenever we sat down to rest, Tongans rushed at us with bananas and coco-nuts, so we felt rather ill when we got back to the pathetic little settlement on the other shore. There we met a white man who said to us:

"Can I do anything for you? I am the chief auditor to the treasury, so I am quite respectable."

I had visions of extracting much local information from him, but Undine, having no soul, demanded hastily:

"Could you find us a bath? We haven't had one for *so* long."

"Of course," he replied. "Come along to Mrs B.'s, and we'll borrow some towels. Then

I'll take you to Mr F.'s; he's just fixed up a shower, and if it doesn't come down on your head when you pull the string, it's very nice."

So we amused ourselves by dancing round under a widely swinging pail with holes bored in the bottom, occasionally getting a dribble of water on our hair! However, our friend cheered us by explaining that he knew of a "much better bath in Nukualofa."

We lost the last trace of civilized manners there for, hearing that the British Consul actually possessed a Ford, we calmly marched into his house and asked for the loan of it. He was so amused that he gave us the car and some tea and plum cake—at 9.30 a.m.—and himself as guide. The road only went eight miles, so we left the car, which the natives look upon as a direct incarnation of the evil one, in a patch of orange flowers, and tramped through muddy trails always bordered with flaming cannas to look at some huge "blowholes" in the reef, through which the breakers come shooting up in dazzling pyramids of foam. When a line of great breakers crash against the coral barrier it looks as if a row of mighty fountains were playing all down the coast.

On our way back we came to a delicious sandy cove full of large green crabs. They were not quite so large as the famous land-crab which eats the coco-nuts, and causes havoc on the plantations. I have heard a mariner's tale of the

way the natives kill these monster crustaceans which seems to me to be too ingenious to be true. The native climbs far up the palm and ties a thick wedge of rope round the stem about twenty feet from the ground. Presently Mr Crab, having eaten a solid meal, thinks to himself, " Dear me, it's time to be getting back to Mrs Crab and the children," and commences the long descent. All at once his hind claw touches the ledge of rope. " Down already," he ruminates. " Who'd have thought it ! " Upon which he promptly lets go, falls twenty feet to the unsympathetic earth and breaks his shell on a rock conveniently placed by the expectant native !

I remember on the occasion when this was told me—a burningly, hot evening on a cargo-tramp somewhere off the Queenland coast—the captain promptly capped it with the story of the coco-nut rat which easily climbs up the tree, but dislikes the idea of sliding down again so, having made his supper off the interior of a coco-nut, curls himself into the empty shell, kicks until the great green husk is loosened from the stem, and falls earthward in a comfortably padded sheath !

" It is splendid fun," added the captain with an unsuspected twinkle, " to try to shoot the rats as they jump out a few feet from the ground ! "

" Oh," said the hitherto silent planter from the Malay States, " why don't you train your rats to pick the coco-nuts for you ? We send monkeys

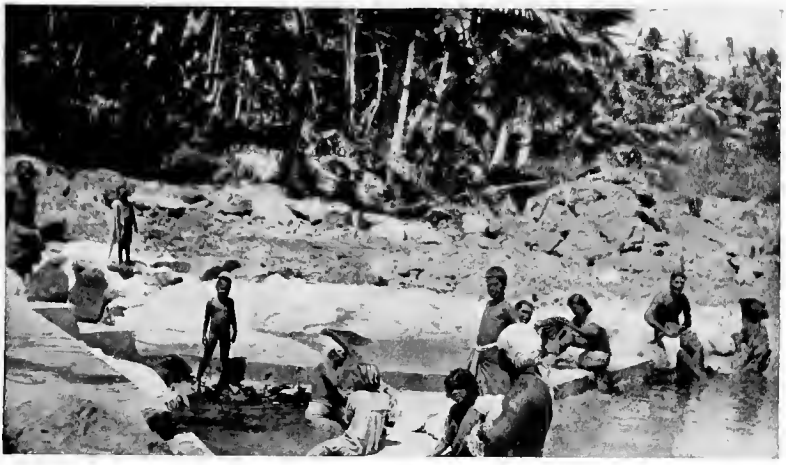
up to do it, but it takes a long time to stop them shying the nuts at the overseer. Sometimes we have to send a piccaninny up to stop them quarrelling, and he generally saves himself trouble by picking a large leaf and using it as a parachute to sail down with!"

Tongan architecture differs from Samoan, in that the houses are oval instead of round, and entirely shut in with reed screens. Unfortunately for the picturesqueness of the islands, cheap galvanized iron is gradually taking the place of rushes and bamboo. This is typical of the sturdy, energetic Tongan who, unlike the languorous, *dolce far niente* Samoan, is full of modern ideas, with a keen desire for progress and efficiency. Only when you come upon some travelling-party in the depths of a forest glade, the whole crowd flower-crowned and wreathed, carrying bundles of mats and all the family luggage on small wiry ponies, singing as they dawdle through the scented shade, do you recognize their blood-kinship to the lotus-loving Samoan. Nukualofa, a town of white houses dotted along a wide open road, is the capital. We arrived there just after the marriage of the King's daughter, when three hundred pigs had been roasted whole on a vast bonfire opposite the palace gates; yet I believe the bride wore European wedding attire, and all her trousseau came from Sydney.

Thirty-six hours over a sunlit sea, too often punctuated by some grim skeleton ship stuck

fast on the cruel reef, brought us to exquisite Suva, whose red roofs climb up and up low thickly wooded hills, while a great sweep of jagged mountains circle away to the west. In front, on the misty horizon, lies Biwa Island, the home of the fire-walkers. Its natives can saunter slowly across white-hot bricks without feeling anything at all. Envious dwellers on the mainland insist that they rub the juice of an unknown herb on their soles, but the true inhabitants of Biwa know that the gift was bestowed on their race in perpetuity, by a sea-god, caught by mistake in a fisherman's net. Why the fisherman demanded such a peculiar gift as his prisoner's ransom it is difficult to say, but I am told it had something to do with the great paved ovens which the Fijians built in their villages and in which they could roast a beast whole; apparently the clay bricks needed to be stamped or pounded into shape while hot.

Suva seems to be largely inhabited by Hindoos, who spend their leisure time in murdering each other, and maiming their somewhat fickle womenfolk who are in a vast minority. This seems to be taken as a matter of course, as a solicitor, meeting a placid Hindoo carrying the silver-decorated head of a young woman by its long black hair, and hearing that he was going to the police station to give himself up, merely urged the murderer to put his burden in a sack, and continued his way to the club and tennis! I



THE BATHING POOL AT SAFOTA

A RIVER VILLAGE IN FIJI

remember asking our bearer how many servants there were in the hotel, and he replied, "Forty-eight, and two dead ones." Further explanation being required, he explained that a waiter had killed a cook the day before, and would certainly be hanged by the Sahiblog, so he was as good as dead already.

We chartered a small launch, and threaded our way by intricate riverways, through endless sugar-cane country, to the eastern coast, and the tiny island of Mbau, the ancient capital of Fiji. It is most picturesque, for it stands between two long promontories of the mainland in a sheltered bay. Its houses are like wide-eaved haystacks, and the low doors are cut in the solid thickness of the straw walls. No house in the world looks so cosy on a cold day as the Fijian hay-dwelling, and, as one stoops to enter the miniature door, one can imagine one is a gnome playing hide-and-seek in a stack. Inside they are spacious and comfortable, as there are no stones under the floor mats as in Samoa, and a sort of huge broad divan is built right across one end. This, piled high with hay, and then with mats, makes a most comfortable bed. Of course the whole family sleep on it in a row, and you may find a sociable hen laying an egg in your hair, but it is far preferable to the floor!

Luckily, the hereditary Roko, chief of Mbau, was at home, and he entertained us with infinite courtesy in a beautiful wooden house adorned

with very artistically plaited reeds in various colours. He spoke English fluently, and his son had been educated at Oxford, and was now fighting in France, yet his wife spoke only sibilant Fijian, and was infinitely puzzled as to the correct use of knives and forks, while the rest of his relations seemed to wander about in the usual skimpy lava-lava and little else. Rato Jhonny is the descendant of the old kings, the last of whom, Thakambau, having contracted too large a national debt, sold his country to the British, went to Sydney on the proceeds, and brought home the germs of measles, which exterminated a large portion of his race, as they would insist on bathing in the sea as soon as the spots appeared. He was served, we noticed, by kneeling boys, and even the villagers came into his presence crouching.

He saw us off most politely when we re-embarked next morning, and wished us luck with Rato Pope, the Roko of a district farther up the coast. All that day we climbed slowly north, skirting a wonderful mountain coast-line deeply indented into exquisite rocky bays, keeping inside the reef the whole time, and arriving at Viti Levu late in the afternoon.

Here our troubles began, as the Roko was away and there was no one who could speak any English except the schoolmaster, whose fuzzy head was decorated with leaves, and who actually added a white singlet to the usual lava-lava. There was no white person in the place, so we firmly

took possession of the Roko's European bungalow, and called for food, which appeared after a few hours' waiting in the usual form—fowl, yam, bananas. We slept on thin mats spread on wooden bedsteads, and we both had a bad attack of nerves, and imagined every inquisitive nocturnal prowler to be intent on murder, chiefly because the Fijians are a wild and fierce-looking race, very dark-skinned, with rugged, lined faces and immense shocks of outstanding fuzzy hair. After a disturbed night we started at daybreak to get together our retinue for the seventy-mile ride to Nandarivato where, cut off from us by rolling hills, deep ravines and forest-clad mountains, a district commissioner and a few native police perched on a mighty peak and looked down over pale green sugar-cane to the turquoise sea.

We had much difficulty in getting horses, and wasted several hours before we unearthed for ourselves "one poor lean horse" and one unbroken "two-years horse only just out of bed." This was the schoolmaster's description. He, himself, coming with us to act as interpreter, bestrode the most amazing quadruped I've ever seen, off which he fell with patient persistency every time he tried to trot, and much time was lost in picking him up. A policeman preceded us on a fat buckjumper, which was the terror of the party. He was becomingly dressed in a blue uniform coat with brass buttons, a spotless white lava-lava, and a wreath of pink flowers,

while his feet and legs were bare. The rear-guard was formed by the Buli, or headman of the village, his personal retainer, and one or two oddments. We had induced six boys to go ahead with our solitary suit-case and two cushions, but we soon found them lazily extended under a shady tree eating their morning taro-root.

The procession then started through hilly open country, rather like Scotland, crossing many rivers and drawing gradually nearer the high mountains of the interior. We passed many clustered haystack villages, each one more picturesque than the last, as they generally stand on small plateaux under the sheltering lea of some big hill often with a brawling stream protecting them in front. At midday we halted at a lovely place, ate the usual yam and fowl meal, and wasted much time with an elaborate ceremony of angona drinking. This differs very little from the Samoan kava, but sometimes the coco-nut cups are very pretty, being brilliantly polished on the outside and stained a delicate greenish-blue, looking like enamel on the inside, with repeated applications of angona. In Fiji a man makes the drink, seated cross-legged behind a wooden dish to which is attached a piece of the angano root on a string and this lies on the floor, pointing towards the most important guest. As the visitor drinks his portion, all the watching circle clap their hands, and shout "Sayandra" ("Greeting—good luck!"). Sometimes the dis-

penser of the brew is most ornately decorated with floral garlands, and has smeared his face black with charcoal. Sometimes the oldest chief makes a long speech of welcome, and then holds out a whole tree, root and stem, for the honoured guest to touch. If the latter cannot reply in sufficiently fluent Fijian, he merely takes the tree and hands it to some other chief as a request to make a speech of thanks for him. At big ceremonies a polished ivory tambu, or whale's tooth, is presented to the most important guest. This is a symbol of chieftainship, and extremely valuable, as any request backed by the gift of a tambu is theoretically bound to be granted. Thus, if a headman wishes to marry a neighbouring chief's daughter, he sends an ambassador first with the precious tambu. These objects are guarded jealously in the family, and any Fijian would purchase one from a foreigner for a very large sum. Tactful district commissioners follow the native custom, and often when asking for hospitality on their tours in the interior send a whale's tooth with their messenger.

Missing Page

a wholesome respect for the ancient system of " draunikau."

A district commissioner told me a strange story of this form of hypnotism. Apparently he himself had once been threatened by a witch-doctor, but had scornfully laughed at the old man's boasted power. The Buli of the village, who was loyal to the British, warned his chief that it was very dangerous to defy the hypnotist, but the D.C., secure in vivid sunshine, in perfect health, and in knowledge that it was the twentieth century, insisted on daring the witch-doctor to do his worst. I believe that some sort of a bargain was struck that if the Fijian failed to " draunikau " the Englishman he was to give up his doubtful art altogether. Well, the commissioner rode many miles down the valley, conducted an informal court under a spreading mango-tree, ate an excellent dinner prepared by his own cook-boy, and went to bed in the largest haystack in the village, having completely forgotten the witch-doctor's threat. Half-way through the night he woke up suddenly bathed in cold sweat and, thinking that he'd got a touch of fever, he tried to get up to find some quinine, but to his horror he found that he was incapable of moving.

At that instant he thought he saw, or actually *did* see, a distorted, livid face, with distended, fixed pupils in horribly glassy eyes, staring at him from a circle of misty light. Only then did

he remember his adventure, and set himself with all his might to fight the hypnotic power of the old native he had left twenty miles up the valley. It must have been a horrible struggle of wills. The commissioner told me how he felt the sweat pouring off his body as he struggled to move, how waves of faintness and sickness nearly overpowered him, how the vision of the witch-doctor's eyes alternately approached and receded before his face, how the darkness seemed to be a physical weight pressing on him, how he felt the desire to struggle gradually leave him, till with a violent effort he managed to call out, and the headman of the village appeared suspiciously quickly. He had evidently been told the story of the threatened " draunikau " and was interestedly awaiting the result.

When the headman saw that the Englishman was still alive, he was ready to hail him as superman, but the commissioner confessed to me that it was several hours before he could throw off the effect of that unhuman struggle with a far-away adversary in the fevered night. Also, he did *not* return to renew his acquaintance with the witch-doctor. Of course, as Christianity gets a stronger hold on the Fijian race, such hypnotism is dying out, together with the odd marriage customs that used to hold sway. The native is even learning the European custom of divorce, and, instead of settling his difficulties with a painted club, a young Fijian suggested to an

eminent lawyer that he should sue his rival in his wife's affections for damages.

"How much do you want?" inquired the legal luminary.

"Oh, five shillings; is that too much?" replied the anxious husband.

Nausonga appeared to us a perfectly peaceful village in spite of its lurid reputation, and we tore to pieces with our fingers a particularly tough hen, while we disputed peevishly over our worn-out horses which had already done over twenty miles. The whole village swore that we couldn't get over the mountains that night, but we refused to wait; and after an hour's wrangling, during which we chewed bananas, snarled at the porters, and reiterated our few sentences of Fijian relating to our immense importance, and the dire results of disobeying us, two intrepid and peculiarly ferocious-looking giants shouldered our luggage and marched off sulkily. Half-blind with fatigue, I started tying a small white bundle containing our last remnants of food on to the nearest horse, who promptly kicked off that and everything else including the saddle in considerably less than a minute. It was the two-year-old, and I have never in my life seen a horse kick and plunge and lay out with such freedom and vigour.

We collapsed into peals of laughter, and with renewed cheerfulness inspected the two wilted, weedy, evil-smelling horses, which were all the village could produce. On these we rode eleven

miles over a 2400 ft. precipitous pass at walking pace, zigzagging up through tropical tangled forest. Each mile seemed eternal, and darkness overtook us, while three miles of rock-strewn swampy trail, half-overgrown with creepers, still lay between us and the nearest village, which was fast asleep when we eventually arrived infinitely tired and hungry. The houses might really have been silent ricks in an English farmyard—not a sound, not a gleam of light.

After much shouting we were ushered into a very dirty hut overflowing with humanity of all sizes and shapes. I remember we crawled into the least crowded corner and ate our "last hope" —a tin of peaches and two three-day-old rolls, which we'd clung to all the way from Mbau in case of emergencies. Consequently, when we woke next morning, having slept in our riding kit as it was very cold, we had nothing but greasy taro-root and milkless tea, which we'd brought with us. Undine refused both; and hunger acted as a spur, so that after two hours' hard riding we burst through the astonished police camp at Nandarivato, and almost fell on to the D.C.'s veranda demanding food and a bath.

It wasn't till much later that I noticed that the bungalow was set in a perfect paradise of flowers. Banks of great tawny lilies, with a background of maidenhair, vied with every English favourite for pride of colour and scent. One hardly understands the meaning of hospitality till one is a

wanderer in the wilds of some outpost of empire, and then one is incapable of expressing the gratitude one feels to the gracious, kindly folk who harbour one in the homes they have built up with such care in the midst of barren desert or tropical decay. French and English, they are all the same, and without their unfailing and resourceful help, without their knowledge of the back-of-beyond countries, we could never have achieved our many strange journeys.

A few days later we came down from Nandarivato in state, in company with the commissioner. We had six cheerful convicts to carry our luggage, two mounted policemen apparently to minister to their wants, and a delightful cook-boy in a torn coat galloping wildly on a bay thoroughbred. This time each village turned out to meet us, and a chorus of "Sayandra" and "Sambula" went with us to the largest house, which was always specially decorated for our reception with splendid vermilion lilies and great branches of trees. Ceremony piled upon ceremony, but as we had become merely adjuncts of the magisterial glory we sank into the comfortable position of onlookers, while songs of praise and rhetorical flowers of speech circled around us. A bamboo screen had even been built in one house to divide off a portion of the haystack for our private use, but as they had forgotten to make our bedroom anywhere near a door, we had to grope about in funereal darkness,

THE START FROM NUMARA

ANGONA CEREMONY AT A MEKE

and, when I stepped bare-footed on a large wet hen, I nearly died of fright!

The greatest episode of our progress south was a huge "Meke" given in our honour at Numbomakito. We arrived early one morning to find a great awning of ferns had been erected on a plateau. We sat in the shade therefore, while some gorgeously decorated men made angona. Then a long procession of women came up with baskets full of yam and taro-root, which they piled in a great pyramid at the commissioner's feet, and which afterwards provided the convicts and policemen, sitting friendly together in a circle, with the largest meal of their lives. This is a custom of Fijian hospitality. A whole village may go travelling and may demand food and shelter all along the road—it will never be refused.

A huge war-dance followed the food presentation, when a hundred magnificent warriors, polished with oil and streaked with charcoal, in thick short petticoats of hanging straw and every sort of fantastical, floral decoration, gave us their idea of the Battle of the Somme. Shouldering huge ancient clubs, painted and carved, the two parties advanced towards each other with mincing polka steps. After advancing and retiring several times with warlike gestures, and much brandishing of weapons, they did a sort of *chassé-croisé* step, turned round and danced towards the centre of the sward with crouching, panther-like movements. At this point all the

German party suddenly fell dead, and lay flat on the ground till the medicine-men danced in among them, sprinkling them with water, when they immediately leaped to their feet and renewed the fray.

It is curious that, though Fijian houses are sometimes decorated with pictures of the war cut out from illustrated papers, the natives have a fixed idea that Hindenburg and French conduct a series of lonely duels on a carefully prepared field, between two circles of applauding armies. One headman remarked to me *re* the Fijian contingent that it would learn the English War-dance! I cannot describe how magnificently and ingeniously arrayed are these mighty warriors with their shocks of upstanding hair. They wear massive head-dresses of whole ferns *growing*, roots and all. They have necklaces, bracelets, armlets, anklets of plaited leaves, with thick girdles of bamboo fronds wound round their waists, and standing out like huge crinolines. Some original spirits wore looking-glasses, tin plates or framed photographs as breast-plates, and one head-dress consisted of an immense straw fan mounted above a big plant of maiden-hair. We asked the leader his name, and he replied firmly that he was "Lord George," so I suppose when French is weary, Lloyd George takes his place in the *pas seul* with Hindenburg!

After this excitement, our 100-mile journey to the Rewa river and the coast was uneventful,

except when Undine, riding a little ahead, startled us all by suddenly disappearing over a bridge while her mouse-like pony lay on its side and kicked! While rules for first-aid to the drowning swept through my mind, she proved her kin to the water nymph of old by rising slowly from the river encased in green slime, with reeds drooping from her hat, and water-lilies clinging round her feet! After riding twenty-three miles through one very hot day—always in the dank shadow of tropical vegetation and drooping groves of bamboo —and being still eight miles from our destination, we took to the river, and were punted down over the rapids, getting very wet in the process, and occasionally upsetting a fuzzy-headed oarsman into the stream.

We arrived in a state of complete exhaustion, so that in spite of evil-smelling pillows—I wrapped up mine in my scarlet silk kimona to shut in the strong odour—we actually slept well on our hard mats. Next day we rode twelve miles down the river bank, between banana plantations and the giant green ostrich feathers which are clumps of bamboo, till we came to the stopping place of the launch which, after many breakdowns, takes its crowd of native passengers daily to Nausori, within motoring distance of Suva.

CHAPTER VII

NEW GUINEA

FROM Fiji we went south, past pine-clad Norfolk Island with its ruins of the old convict prisons, to the land of the Wattle and the Waratah. Australia broke upon us with a line of dazzling golden sand, and the vision of Sydney heads towering out of the breakers, twin guardians of her famous harbour. We arrived in the middle of the excitement caused by the referendum on conscription, and I remember we dined with the Premier on the critical night, and went on with him to the G.P.O., where we watched the "noes" pile up their ever-increasing majority.

It was a despondent evening, but it is difficult to see how the Nationalists can ever carry Universal Service in the face of Labour's battle-cry, "Vote 'No' and keep Australia white." Before the war, when I spent a very happy year in N.S.W., it was borne upon me that the fear of low-paid native labour on the docks and on the stations was becoming a spectre which might some day be exceedingly dangerous to the progress and development of that great country.

The spectre has grown since those peaceful days.

We spent Christmas Day on a glassy sea somewhere within the Great Barrier Reef. It was torridly hot, but we ate plum-pudding with the delightful captain of an ancient tub which wandered slowly round the Solomon Islands and dreary little Queensland ports, and heard stories of the Sydney strikes when every labour man, butcher, baker, railwayman, tram-driver, sailor, engineer stopped work, and for seven weeks all the business of the town was done by volunteers. Women managed the bakeries, squatters with large bank balances ran the trams, farm-hands signed on as able-bodied seamen. The captain said it was a nightmare, as all the stewards were sea-sick and the men at the wheel never could realize that a ship was not run on the principle of a watch. One actually inquired: "Hi, mister, I've got her wound up and she's turning round. If I unwind her, will it hurt her works?"

It was a quaint voyage. We were the only women on board. The rest of the dozen passengers were flotsam from the hemp and tobacco plantations of the ruthless isles. They vied with each other in telling us strange tales, and sometimes slipped by accident into relating the simple truth, because the things they had seen and done under the Southern Cross were so much stranger than the stories they could invent! They talked glibly of vanilla and coco and copra as we lay

limply on the thirty-foot deck, while the scorching sun crept slowly under the tattered awning and licked worn canvas shoes, and glasses that had held "Doctor Funk" cocktails and, as the boat rolled on the oily sea, crept up to the white anæmic faces of those who earn their bread—and drink —in the tropics.

We slipped into Port Moresby harbour one grey wet morning, and all my preconceived ideas of savage New Guinea "slowly and silently vanished away." I had dreamed of a tangle of orchids drooping over dark fever-haunted rivers, with alligators lying on mud banks, great scented forests where cannibals performed their horrid rites, green snakes slipping into blazing masses of tropical flowers, birds of Paradise flitting like living jewels above huge painted creepers, honey sweet! Alas, we landed in the "dry belt." Port Moresby consists of a handful of red-roofed, corrugated iron shanties flung down pell-mell on a sandy hillside amidst a few stunted blue gum trees. Its roads are mere wandering trails with many a pitfall to the unwary, but its inhabitants point out with pride two excellent street lamps which shed a murky ray over various ant-hills and sand-heaps.

The hotel caused us infinite delight. It was like a large barn divided by sheets of galvanized iron into dim cubicles, which resounded with the sayings of every lodger under the spider-haunted roof. We began to realize the defects of such a

system when we were wakened at 3 a.m. by a violent altercation between two tearful individuals in the next compartment as to which should take off the boots of the other. Undine forcibly prevented me from issuing forth in great wrath and a pink *crêpe-de-Chine* nightgown to offer to remove all their boots if only they would be quiet. Port Moresby is hospitable, and it is cheerful, in spite of the heat which reduces every one to the consistency of oozing syrup, but it could scarcely be called quiet. It is too prone to settle its small differences with the aid of a revolver, or, taking an extreme view of the undesirability of human life, try to end it with a blunt razor outside the hotel dining-room.

One day we went along the coast for about an hour in a Government launch to inspect a hemp plantation. We were met by the overseer at the jetty, requested to seat ourselves on a couple of packing-cases on a tiny trolly and pushed along an uneven log track by a " bunch of boys." It was slow work, as the little line wound uphill all the time through endless blue gum-trees and tree-ferns, but, luckily, the overseer was a talkative young man, and entertained us with stories of the hundred and fifty boys working on the plantation. Labour is generally recruited from very remote districts, and from the smaller islands of the Archipelago. The boys sign on for one to three years at the munificent wage of 10s. a month and their food. They go back to their villages

with a few knives and belts and strips of bright calico, and are regarded with exaggerated respect and awe for the rest of their lives, which are not unduly prolonged, as they are generally killed and eaten when they are too old to work or even to look after themselves.

The Papuans do not seem to have much family affection. On one occasion we wished to see a feast on a certain far-off plantation, which we understood was in honour of the recent birth of a child. We found this was altogether a mistake, as the child in question formed the chief dish at the feast! Needless to say, this was only discovered later when, severe questions being asked as to the disappearance of various children duly registered on the plantation books, the only answer forthcoming was, "We eat him kai-kai!" These Guri-Bari boys are unpleasant-looking creatures, with their coal-black skins, broad repulsive features, and short woolly hair. They wear gleaming white bones stuck through their nostrils, enormous shell earrings, and huge knives stuck in the pieces of string which form at the same time their belts and their only clothing. They cheerfully eat raw toads and rats or anything else they can get hold of. You see them sometimes with a live bird or small rodent tied to their belts waiting till they have time to devour it, with or without cooking it. They have a great fear of horses, being utterly ignorant of what species of animal they are. When they first

came to that plantation they said, "The big white man rides a large pig. Let us kill it or it will eat us"; so they tried to murder the unfortunate beast with stones and spears.

Civilization, of course, is much retarded by the quantity of different languages spoken. A boy from the coast can't understand the talk of a village twenty miles inland, and sometimes two villages separated by a river or a narrow valley speak entirely different tongues. The white men have invented a sort of pigeon "Motu" which is understood a certain distance along the coast; otherwise it is like the Tower of Babel.

To return to the hemp plantation, the manager's house of red corrugated iron was set on a slight rise in the midst of two thousand acres of hemp, which looks like rows and rows of tall, smooth-leaved cactus. After an excellent tinned lunch —everything in Papua comes out of a tin, except when a rare steamer arrives with Australian meat in cold storage—we were mounted on the usual raw-boned, hard-mouthed quadrupeds and taken round the estate. We saw the boys cutting and stacking the long pointed leaves, piling them on trucks and pushing them down to the shed where an engine tore off the outer green sheath, and shredded the inner pulp into white, juicy fibre. We saw the latter drying, like tangled white clouds fallen out of a summer sky, on long lines of wire, and, finally, we saw the dried product packed into bales ready for transport to the coast.

Then we rode back to our launch and chugged through the winding harbour, broken up into so many bays, and dotted with so many islands that once the whole Australian fleet lay hidden there, and no one in Port Moresby knew there was a single warship in their harbour.

We passed some picturesque Water Villages, built high on piles above the sea so that they are protected from attack on three sides. They are only joined to the land by a few ladders and rough wooden gangways. The first sight of Elevara or Hanumabana is utterly bewildering: straw and reed houses perched up in the air, the family pig seated placidly in a rudely constructed stye just above the waves, brown babies hanging in plaited fibre bags from any convenient post, the next meal cooking on a tiny charcoal fire on a wooden shelf projecting in front of the house door, long boats, piled with bananas and sago, poled swiftly through the water streets by tall ebony figures devoid of other covering than a few shells or feathers, their massive mop of hair standing out like a bushy halo round their heads.

One is struck by the grace and poise of the women in their short, swinging petticoats of straw, sometimes dyed orange or red, barely sweeping their slender knees, open at one side so that the whole of an elaborately tattooed limb is visible. Generally the rest of their shapely persons, even their faces, is stained or tattooed in bright blue, and they wear armlets of shell

THE BELLES OF HANUMABANA

A PAPUAN GROUP

rings, and perhaps a lobster's claw or two in their hair. Add to this a nose bone and a scarlet lip-ring and the effect is startling.

Unfortunately, they all chew betel-nut, so their teeth are stained scarlet with the juice, and generally pushed forward almost out of their mouths by perpetually sucking the large nut. On shore, under the palm-trees, one sees women moulding the great clay-pots which, at a certain season of the year, they take down the coast on a big double-sailed lakatoi—which is made by fastening together many of their flat, fishing boats—and barter for sago.

When a lakatoi returns laden with grain there is a great dance in the village, always at night. We saw one on a very dark night, when no moon threw dancing shadows of palms across the beach. Out of the heavy blackness came the beating of a drum. The light of a few far-off torches flickered occasionally across the two lines of dancers who, linked closely together, man and maid alternately, moved slowly and rhythmically up and down. Sometimes the lines met and, joining, came down the centre two and two, till they swung apart in a slowly swaying circle. Some of the men beat together clicking white bones, and all drummed monotonously with their feet. It was silent, restrained, and sinister—kin to the windless night, the dull booming of the surf on the reef, and the sickly sweet scent of oil and flowers. Sometimes a torch flared up

and disclosed the fantastic head-dresses, whole skins of beasts, rows of waving birds of paradise, or grinning masks of painted wood and clay as well as long chains of seeds and plaited grasses, rings and anklets of white bones, ropes of shells, necklaces of dogs' teeth wrenched from the living animal that they may retain their lustre. There was no shouting, no laughter.

The drum was like the earth's pulse beating, the thrumming of the feet was her coursing blood. There was something relentless, cruel, passionate about that dance, yet it was slow, quiet, and almost sleepy! One felt an undercurrent that one could not understand, and my vision of strange, deathless rites, age-old as the earth, came back to me there in the darkness!

CHAPTER VIII

NEW GUINEA CUSTOMS

WHEN kangaroo meat and mangoes began to pall on us and we had learned to distinguish from his harmless brethren the vicious malaria mosquito who bites one standing on his head and waving his hind-legs in the air; when we'd innocently attempted to rescue the latest victim of the razor monomania, under the impression that he was having a fit; when we'd grown grey hairs in the heads of the powers that be with our thirst for information, we decided to go inland.

With the temperature that of a hot bath we started cheerfully off on a buckboard, which, as the initiated well know, is harder than the hearts of the Huns, or than the rocks on which one falls from one's pet Parnassian heights! It was drawn by two world-worn and weary horses, who fell over the trace-chains and their own noses at every second step. I nearly upset the whole thing driving it down the main street of Port Moresby, as I could not find the brake, so we went down the hill at a hand gallop, missing the only tree and several heaps of stones by a hair-

breadth, and plunging round the corner on one wheel and an eyelash !

From ten till three we bumped perilously through sand-drifts and creeks, over rock-strewn rutted roads, between desolate blue gum-trees athirst for their native Australia and huge white ant-hills. Then, when we began to feel that our aching bones were indissolubly part of that rattling, jolting buckboard, we saw a big tobacco plantation dipping down to a muddy river, so we turned into an even worse road and jerked up to a wide verandahed bungalow with wicked, spotted orchids climbing up the pillars. The planter was, as usual, extraordinarily kind and devoted to us his last tin of Marie biscuits and a young omelet which two fuzzy-headed creatures cooked with breathless interest. Then he showed us a short cut between neat rows of tiny tobacco plants under sheltering straw mats, over a bridge which might have shaken the nerve of the youngest and maddest aviator, for it was only a few strands of wire plaited with willow thongs, slung from two sagging cables sixty feet above a grey river where snouts of greedy alligators poked out of the water.

Then came more jolting down a long bush road, and towards dusk we came to a Government rest-house made of galvanized iron and straw, from whence the most energetic woman I've ever met rushed forth to meet us. Between snatches of ribald song and violent bursts of abuse of things

EAST AND WEST

CARRYING HEMP IN PAPUA

in general, she conjured hot baths out of the river, roast pork out of the primitive oven, and horses out of the bush, so that we stumbled over the creek in darkness, and, as the Southern Cross swung up into a sapphire sky, we started up the Bluff. It was a wonderful ride in the starlight, with the great crag looming above our heads, and long tentacles of hanging creeper clutching at us as we passed, but my most vivid memory is of the tin hut perched among rows of pineapple just over the ridge, where a mighty native, attired in a magnificent feather crown and a piece of string, produced coco and eggs and bacon under the direction of the sleepy manager.

We woke to a world of drifting violet shadows on the soaring Owen Stanley range, whose snow-clad summits pierce the clouds, and whose northern slopes guard the untrodden country, happy hunting-ground of cannibals and head hunters. The last intrepid planter who penetrated to an inhospitable village was eaten with his clothes and everything else. The punitive expedition recovered his boots after they had been cooked for many days to make them tender. I gather, however, that the Papuans are careful to kill their dinner before they cook it, and it is generally a swift end beneath battle-axes and spears. Not so in some districts, as in Northern Rhodesia and along the "great green greasy" Zambesi river, where every bone of the victim is broken to relax the muscles and make the flesh

tender, and he is hung in cool, running water to keep down the inflammation until the chief *chef* is ready for him.

Curiously enough, there is no actual law against cannibalism in New Guinea. I mean if A commits a murder and B devours the corpse, the latter has committed no legal offence. This worried intensely the lawyers of the coast until they decided that the act could justifiably be punished under the heading of "Indecent behaviour to a corpse." In some of the inland villages all the warriors live together in a high straw house, perhaps one hundred feet long. It is divided into cubicles, and over the door of his own particular compartment each warrior hangs the skulls of his defeated enemies. Up the Fly river, you see occasionally a kind of Totem Pole strung with skulls from top to bottom. No woman is allowed to enter such houses, and in certain districts all boys of sixteen are taken from their homes, and kept shut up in one of these "dongas" for several weeks or even months. The missionaries have tried hard to break this custom, as the boys are supposed to undergo certain rites of initiation during this period of rigorous seclusion.

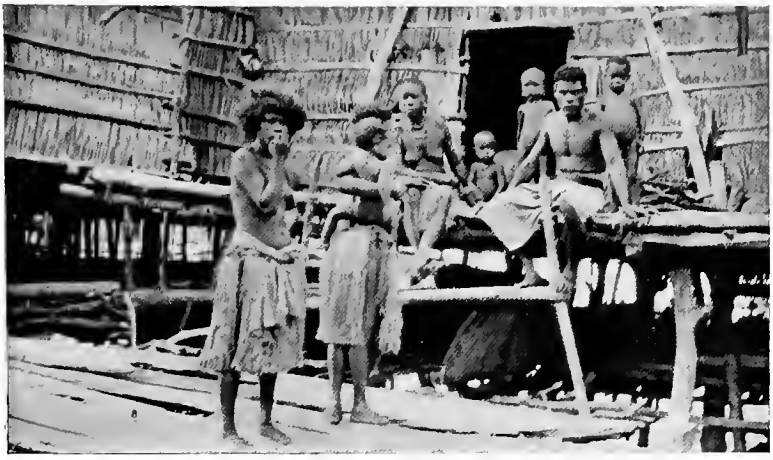
However, I should imagine the sullen, suspicious Papuan of the interior is difficult to convert to new ideas, as witness this delicious story told me by a Roman Catholic priest. A would-be Christian arrived at his house one day and said

he wished to be baptized. As he had attended a mission school for some time the priest consented, but finding that he answered to the name of "Snowball," he decided to re-christen him Patrick. The boy was duly immersed in the nearest pool and told that his name was now Pat, and that it behoved him most particularly not to eat meat on Fridays. Unfortunately, the very next Friday the priest discovered his latest convert devouring a large piece of kangaroo. "Oh, Pat, don't you know that this is Friday, and I told you only to eat fish on that day?" he reproved sternly. "Me no eat meat. Me eat fish," said the erstwhile "Snowball" eagerly. "But I can see it is meat. It is very wrong to tell me lies," was the indignant answer. "But this no meat," insisted Patrick. "I put him in the water and I christen him fish!"

Very little is really known about the strange folk who inhabit the wild forest country of the interior. Some of the villages are entirely built in the trees, and their only approach from the solid earth is a long ladder that can be pulled up at the approach of an enemy tribe. These glorified dovecotes are often of two stories with an admirably constructed platform in front of the door, on which all cooking is done. It was once officially reported that the natives of a certain district north of the Owen Stanley range had tails! This was because the long ends of their *tapa* cloth belts flew out behind them as

they ran. The *tapa* cloth is made out of inner bark fibre and painted with juices brown and red.

It was a day of dreaming peace and curly snowflake clouds when we left our tin hut, and rode along the ridge, our destination a big rubber plantation beyond the dry belt. We rode some time through exquisite long grass country in which tall feathery fronds reached above our waists, then we dropped into gloomy mangrove swamps haunted by swarms of mosquitoes, which literally blackened our clothes as we scuttled through them. There were alligators, which the natives like to eat, in the rivers, and orange and white orchids hanging in clumps from dripping tree branches. Occasionally a hornbill with a jarring screech flew clumsily across the trail. They are the ugliest birds I've ever seen in spite of their gorgeous tawny orange and black plumage, for their quaint, curved, razor-edged bills are literally a third of their length. There were flights of sulphur-crested cockatoos in the blue gum country, but we didn't see our first bird of paradise till we left the dry belt behind us and plunged into luxurious forest, steamy and dark beneath the tangled wealth of creeper. These gorgeous flame-red birds with exquisite panoply of shimmering tails are of the crow species and are as common as the homely rook in England. The pale yellow variety comes from German New Guinea and is rarely found in Papua, but the red ones do much damage to the crops, and



A FAMILY GROUP AT ELEVARA

A NEW GUINEA COAST-LINE

every planter regrets the Government fine for shooting them.

It is a severely punishable offence to export them, but rare specimens find their way out of the country hidden in hat linings, or folded between the pages of local newspapers, or forming part of the stuffing of innocent travelling cushions. I knew one ingenious woman who marched on to the ship with a complete petticoat of the precious birds under her fashionably voluminous skirt, and she confided to me afterwards that she had suffered agonies of terror, it being a windy day, lest a fluttering orange frond should detach itself and float gently down to the inspector's feet. On the self-same occasion one of the male passengers was seen jauntily walking up the gangway with a delicate swaying feather protruding from his coat collar. We left it to the harassed customs official to discover where the rest of the bird was!

Goura pigeons are other lovely inhabitants of Papua. They are deep smoke-blue in colour, and carry most exquisite upstanding crests on their heads. I remember I once bought thirteen for two bottles of whisky from a blear-eyed settler who assured me he badly needed the spirit for his neuralgia! The natives kill, with their bows and arrows, the glorious goura pigeons for food, and use quantities of birds of paradise to make the enormous head-dresses used in their dances, though really I should have thought their immense

shocks of hair would be sufficiently exotic ornamentation. The only reason they mind going to prison is because their hair is cut off there, and they are not allowed to join in the dances unless they are shock-headed.

Long before we reached our destination we fell in with a heated and damp surveyor jogging along on an old brown pony and suitably attired in open-work grey flannel trousers and an ancient pyjama coat from which most of the buttons were missing. His boys almost fled at our approach. They evidently considered us a new specimen of mankind, and we heard them asking: "Are these a new kind of Sinabada?"[1] We joined forces with the surveyor for a time, and he took us through trackless blue gum country to the edge of a mighty ravine, where a torrent thundered down over a great precipice, and a strange bird village clung to the top of the opposite cliff. I don't think we ever reached that particular township, but we came to one cluster of rough straw huts in a clearing of the primeval jungle where we saw a most interesting bird dance.

The broad-featured women, darkly tattooed, huddled round a charcoal pan and giggled, while the old men inhaled smoke from long hollow bamboo pipes, burnt with intricate black designs. The young men fetched long tapering spears and their mightiest head-dresses, and squabbled for some time over their most precious decora-

[1] Sinabada = chieftainess, great lady.

tion—a long and very old woollen stocking! With infinite pride the winner drew on the coveted prize, and it reefed itself half-way down his leg and considerably impeded his movements.

It is difficult to describe the bird dance, but it is exactly like the alternately grotesque and dignified posturings of Great Bustards on a Scotch moor in the mating season. Then it changed and the performers used the springing, swaying steps of the dancing cranes, hopping, gesticulating with such grace and agility that one could almost see fluttering wings spreading out from their ebony bodies, and imagine their whistling calls really proceeded from the throats of a love-sick bird piping to its mate in the spring-time!

I imagine that the Papuans are a very low and degraded type of native, as they have scarcely any tribal law; they acknowledge no hereditary chief, and certainly age receives no veneration, as it merely provides meals for the younger generation! In many districts one comes across a clearly Jewish type with a very hooked nose. In fact, substitute a white skin and you would not hesitate to claim the result as of Hebrew parentage! They are nomads who rarely live in one place for more than a few months. One week there is a prosperous straw village deep in the shade of some scarlet flame-trees, the next, most of the houses are destroyed, and the whole tribe has migrated many miles away. This is

one of the difficulties the missionaries have to contend with—their scholars and their congregation may vanish in a night.

We went one long expedition down the coast in the Governor's delightful yacht. We started very early and slipped along inside the reef for many sunlit, lazy hours, the only unfortunate episode being when the native butler, contented in the knowledge that his fluffy hair stood out almost as wide as the cabin door, reflectively combed back the woolly mass with a loaf of bread, which he afterwards calmly placed on the table. I looked with horror at the immaculate private secretary who was doing host to see if he had noticed the contretemps, but he was contentedly immersed in salmon mayonnaise, so I left him to the old adage, "What the eye does not see, the mind does not trouble about!"

It reminded me of the way the Hindoos catch prawns. Any Indian morning you may see little brown figures, armed with long hooks, fishing in the muddy rivers. Presently they pull out the decayed corpse of a native who has probably died of plague, and on it prawns are clinging thick and fast. Eagerly they are pulled off—the more corpse that adheres to them the tastier the curry—and flung into a basket to be sold to the burra hotels! *N.B.*—This story should be told to the newly arrived European at the crucial moment when he is revelling in his first acquaintance with the famous prawn curry at Colombo.

THE AUDIENCE

THE PERFORMERS

If he is too much worried, it should be pointed out to him—considerably later on—that the burning-ghats of the Ganges are one of the sights of the world! If he does not understand the sequence of thought, let him simmer in his disappointed greed!

The destination of His Excellency's white yacht was the village of Gailœ built nearly a quarter of a mile out on the coral reef. We got into the dinghy and rowed through the main street, followed by a train of hollow log canoes, poled by slim, laughing girls, for Gailœ is far-famed for the beauty of its maidens. Indeed, they were weirdly and wonderfully tattooed: we saw one symmetrical goddess attired in an intricate design of black snakes painted on her own firm brown skin. We climbed laboriously up one of the rickety wooden ladders, stooped through a low entrance, and found ourselves in an immaculately clean and unexpectedly large interior, the floor made of smooth wood beams and the walls of elaborately plaited reeds. In the centre was a blackened circle in which smouldered a few charcoal embers. Of furniture or even mats there was not a trace. A large calabash full of water stood in one corner, and some strings of certain bright-coloured seeds and shells, amulets against witchcraft, hung from the roof beams, while rows of turtle skulls were ranged along the walls. Otherwise it was utterly empty.

That was almost our last day in New Guinea,

and always I shall have a memory of steaming into the beautiful harbour with the crowded hills purple against a blazing sunset, and seeing the customs house flag flying at half-mast. A man with whom we had dined the night before was dead. Life and death go hand in hand in the ruthless islands of the southern seas.

CHAPTER IX

JAVA

ONE of the gymnastic Papuan mosquitoes must have accomplished his nefarious design, for the instant we arrived at Cairns—a desolate, galvanized iron township surrounded by blue gums and banana trees—I collapsed with dengue fever. However, Undine nursed me so strenuously that, in self-defence, I found it necessary to recover in spite of a delightful toy which she borrowed from the only chemist one hot, dry day when I was babbling cheerfully of cannibals and caterpillars! It was called a Home Thermometer, and one's temperature either ran out altogether at one end past a scarlet notice which said, "Call a doctor at once," or sank despairingly to about 60, where "No danger" was written in sulphur yellow.

A dilatory steamer finally picked us up in the middle of a cyclone, carried us for three peaceful days north to Thursday Island, ringed with its fleet of pearl fishers, and forthwith plunged headlong with us into the North-West monsoon. For unnumbered days we lay in wet deck-chairs,

lashed to any convenient rail, while the fo'c'sle plunged down into great breakers which broke right over the deck, covering the bridge in spray, and the propeller sailed triumphantly out of the water, and pretended it was an aeroplane. When I wasn't falling downstairs to the hermetically sealed saloon to have soup upset in my lap, and potatoes dribbled in my hair, I remember I chased elusive but very strong smells through cockroach-haunted passages, with a tin of Keating's powder, to the infinite fury of the chief steward, who generally followed with a broom.

How glad we were to reach Java, in spite of some delightful Australians, wounded in the war, who cheered our dripping hours on the unsteady decks with stories of Gallipoli as seen through the rose-coloured spectacles of the cheerful Anzacs! One, who had contributed a hand to the tragedy and the glory of Suvla Bay, reduced us to helpless mirth with his description of the kindly soul who visited him in hospital, and exclaimed in impulsive pity, "Oh, my dear man, have you lost your hand for good?" One wonders what would be the correct answer—"Oh no, I left it in the bathroom by mistake," or, "Well, the doctor says it will grow again in a few months!"

Certainly the joys of civilization are great! We arrived at fascinating Batavia early in the morning, having motored up from the wharf ten miles away, alongside a big canal full of odd-shaped barges and house-boats. We were de-

A GURI BARI BOY

A TRAVELLING PARTY OFF PORT MORESBY

posited by various friends at an immense and ruinously expensive hotel, and instructed to follow the Dutch custom of sleeping all the afternoon. But, of course, we didn't. The town was much too attractive. We set forth on foot, and trotted over round uneven cobble-stones to the native bazaars, where we meant to buy silk stockings and Java straw hats, but the wily Hindu was too clever for us, and we soon found ourselves the unwilling possessors of so much ancient and extremely heavy brassware that we were obliged to return in haste. The betel-nut sets are rather attractive, as they consist of great beaten brass bowls containing a jar for the leaves, two boxes for the nuts, a couple of bowls for the mixture when made, and a cup to hold the requisite chalk. The juice of the nut is squeezed out and mixed with chalk into a rose-pink paste, which is then sucked to the great detriment of the appearance.

We drank the most wonderful coffee in the world in the sitting-room veranda of our palatial rooms, and, having turned our backs carefully on the printed tariff—as we considered it discouraging — we watched very fat Dutchmen attired in violet-hued pyjamas and much adipose tissue asleep in deck-chairs, their bare feet tilted heavenwards, and sonorous grunts issuing from their unshaven faces. Afterwards we drove round the white well-ordered town in the smallest cart I've ever been in. It resembled the Indian

ecca, or a hencoop with a tasselled awning over it, and was drawn by a nine-hand pony almost hidden by his jingling, silver-decorated harness. The whole turn-out can be bought for a few shillings, and to hire it costs threepence an hour! Canals run down the centre of the main streets, and all the red-tiled paths are bordered with trees, under which sit brown Sudanese coolies in cartwheel hats and scarlet loin cloths, selling great bunches of furry-red lechees—which, stripped of their outer bark, taste like juicy grape-plums—and piles of pink, sticky "bullocks' hearts"—a shiny pear-like fruit.

We ended our day in an open-air café, where we sat in immense basket-chairs, drinking a fiery liqueur called a "paheit," which is guaranteed to remove all sense of discretion after three seconds, listening to the band and watching the population flow past, bare-headed, in toy victorias drawn by gaily decorated pairs of tiny ponies. They don't dine in Java till 9 or 10 p.m., and then they wade through an eleven-course meal, eating roast veal and apricots together, black bread and cheese with their fish, and finishing with very rich cream cakes. It is a distressing fact that almost the first sentence we learned in Malay was, "Give me some more."

Next morning we had to drag ourselves out of bed at 5 a.m., and eat German sausage and black bread and cheese in darkness, in order to catch an early train. All Javanese trains seem to

start about 6 a.m., and they stop at nightfall, so travelling is tedious. When we left Batavia the streets were flooded a couple of feet deep after the heavy rain, and we almost swam over the delicate bridges, and through wide, shady avenues where each shop, with its white-columned veranda, stands back in its own spacious garden. We were going up to Soebang to stay with the assistant manager of a great block of British plantations, a kingdom within a kingdom, for it consists of 500,000 acres with a population of 250,000 natives who are taxed by the Tuan—king of the lands—one-fifth of their rice crop and one free day's work per week from every man between the age of fourteen and forty-five. The Company have their own police, their own harbour and forty miles of coast-line, and about one hundred white men superintending the work. Tea, sugar, rice, rubber, coffee, coco-nuts—you can see them all grown within a twenty-mile radius.

We left the crawling train at Pegadon Baru and finished our journey on a tiny one-cylinder trolley, which ran jerkily along narrow rails through endless rice-fields—where water buffaloes dragged primitive wooden ploughs—to the head-quarters of the plantations, a white, old-fashioned Dutch building with wide, cool verandas wreathed in climbing orchids and yellow trumpet vines. Everything was *too* comfortable after the tin shacks of New Guinea. The beds were like small

rooms, with a square mosquito frame ten or twelve feet above one's head, shutting one in completely, no sheet or coverlet of any kind, just a pillow lying forlornly on the immense stretch of white mattress and a "Dutch Wife," a sort of short bolster which I believe you are supposed to place across your shivering form so that the middle bit of you at least is warm! The house was run by soft-eyed Malays, who said to themselves, "The Tuan has bought two new wives; they must have been very expensive ones!"

For some days we scoured the country in a Hudson super-six, which I drove to the imminent danger of goats and dreamy water buffalo, but I could not rival the performance of the native chauffeur, who killed eleven and a half hens in quite a short run! The country was very green under the incessant rain, and thickly cultivated; blue, volcanic hills rise towards the centre of the island; herds of water buffalo wallow in the muddy rivers; tall cranes stand dejectedly in the rice fields; a few scarlet flame-trees blaze forth from a sheltered corner, but on the whole there are very few flowers.

Swarms of Malayans—imported labour—Sudanese from the north of the island, Javanese from the south, vie with each other in the vivid colours of their sarongs and the unwieldy vastness of their Chinese hats. Closed bullock-carts creak along the deeply rutted roads, looking like moving temples; while the small reed and lath houses

HAT STALL IN A JAVA BAZAAR

THE SULTAN'S FIGHTING COCKS

look exactly like match-boxes. All this in a cloudy rain-swept setting of intense green, with skittish goats driven by small brown imps dressed in a golden straw hat and a smile, and yellow flying-foxes hanging head downward on the mango-trees as thick as gooseberries.

CHAPTER X

JAVA AND SUMATRA

ONE night we all packed ourselves into the trolley and rattled down through the rice to Pegadon Baru to see a Malay harvest feast. We were met by scores of coolies with flaring torches, and carried across the deep mud, shoulder high, in huge chairs mounted on a dozen poles. Our arrival, in the brilliantly lit and gorgeously decorated hall, reminded me of the carefully timed entrance of the fairy queen and the principal boy in a Drury Lane pantomime.

I felt our muddy brogues and short tweed skirts were hardly equal to the occasion, especially as singing girls insisted on crouching at our feet, and wailing forth songs about our great grandeur. An amiable Dutchman, unskilled in the intricacies of the English tongue, translated one oft-repeated sentence as, "You are a very large English lady," which I thought unconsciously descriptive.

We ate many strange foods to the music of zithers and brass gongs, and watched graceful olive-skinned girls, with smooth black hair above

their brooding Eastern eyes, posturing slowly and stiffly, with sinuous, thin arms and long double-jointed fingers, henna-stained at the tips. They wore short velvet jackets, gold embroidered, with orange floating scarves and heavy silken sarongs to their small jewelled feet. Alas, their singing voices are like fairy mice, squeaking monotonously in shrill, nerve-jarring tones. It is a most singular thread of sound, frail, attenuous, yet infinitely sharp. It never changes a semitone, and the singer is as immobile as the sphinx, scarcely even moving her lips.

The superlative Hudson took us right across the blue mountains to Bandoeng, where once again we fell in love with Dutch colonization, Dutch manners, and Dutch coffee. It is delightful to drive through the streets at night when all the population is drinking its pre-prandial paheits in the cafés, or on the brilliantly illuminated verandas of the stately white houses. I have come to the conclusion that the Dutch build the best colonial houses in the world. In Java and Sumatra, or in South Africa, it is always the same model—solid and white, with big, cool courts and lofty, columned *stoeps*, wreathed with orchids or vines according to the country. Inside, the floors are marble-tiled or of dark polished wood, and the great brass-bound oak chests and gleaming marqueterie bureaux fill my soul with envy!

We saw rubber trees dripping their white sap

into little tin cups, and the sheets of evil-smelling gelatinous substance hanging out to dry. We saw pale Sudanese girls stamping far-famed Orange Pekoe into square cases for export—these girls are lotus flowers abloom at thirteen, and ancient, haggard grandmothers at thirty. We saw whole hillsides white with the coffee in bloom, and we made pigs of ourselves over ripe brown mangosteens, king of all tropical fruit. Then we spent a long hot day in a "schnell-trein"—obviously a corruption of snail-train—which chugged through exquisite hilly country in its own serpentine fashion, and finally dropped us at Djokjakarta among scarlet hibiscus and white, drooping Datura blossom—the Hindu death-flower.

Of course we made a pilgrimage to the world-famed Borobadoer, driving out there in a toy cart drawn by four amazingly small and swift ponies. Suddenly, out of the pale green sugar-cane of the exquisite Kedoe valley, rises the great grey temple against a background of feathery coco-nut palms with transparent lilac shadows on the jagged mountain range beyond. Legend tells that the colossal work was undertaken by an ancient king as a penance for marrying his own daughter. Seven great carved terraces rise one above the other, enclosing the summit of a hill, and at the top a contemplative Buddha, enthroned on a sacred lotus, sits within a cupola above a bottomless well, possibly used as a burial

THE BOROBADOER

BUDDHIST MONASTERY AT PENANG

place for priests and kings of old. The seven terraces are supposed to represent the seven planes of man's existence, as he ascends from the material to the spiritual, and the walls of each terrace are elaborately carved with scenes from the Buddhist and Brahminic legends.

R. Friederich says :

" The mixture of Buddhism and Brahminism is best seen in the three upper and inner galleries of Boro Budur. In the first we see the history of Sakyamuni, from the annunciation of his descent from the heaven of Indra till his transformation into Buddha, with some scenes of his life. The first thirteen scenes in the second gallery likewise represent Buddha as a teacher with some of his pupils ; after that it would seem as if a concordat had been formed between the different cults ; we have first in three separate scenes Buddha, Vishnu (Batara Guru), and Siva all together, and other groups follow Buddhistic and Sivaite without distinction. It is only in the fourth gallery that we again find Buddha dominant."

It is very interesting the way in which many famous temples in the East have been used as worshipping places for different cults, apparently, at the same time. In the largest temple at Angkor in Cambodia there are statues of Buddha, of Siva the Destroyer, and of Krishna in the same court. In the Kutab Minar at Delhi there are relics of Hindu worship under the shadow of the

Mohammedan Pillar of Victory. Even at ruined Saranath, one of the earliest Buddhist monasteries, where there is still a Jain temple, there are some small statues of Hindu deities. Curiously enough, though Brahminism ousted Buddhism, and became the ruling religion of India, the latter was the basis on which the former developed from " the creed of a caste to the religion of a nation."

As a matter of fact, the Hindu temples at Prambanan appealed to me more than the solid mass of the Borobadoer, which is dwarfed by the glorious peaks of Kedoe, purple above the fields of grain. There are three principal buildings, and half a dozen smaller ones, all standing together in a grassy field. They are cuneiform, and open at the top to show great statues of Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, and the elephant-headed Ganesh, before whom fresh marigolds are laid. Hanumau, the monkey god, is provided with daily rice, and huge sacred cows are the carved guardians of his shrine. It reminded me of India and the sweet scent of crushed marigolds and ghee in the Golden Temple at Benares beside the holy Ganges.

The Djokjakarta also possesses a wondrous bazaar, where in close, crowded alleys, between wooden booths, you may buy anything, from a pair of Birmingham boot-laces to a battered silver cow-bell, or from a basket of strange, sticky sweetmeats to a colossal brass elephant or the admirably wrought model of an ancient

village. Undine couldn't resist the elephant, and it broke all our boxes one after another with its unwieldy weight, and, I think, when we finally arrived in England, two of its legs stuck stiffly out of the shattered hat-box. As we progressed round the world, we gradually threw away all our clothes to make room for odd curios, till ivory, china, bronze and brass were mixed up inextricably with a few dilapidated silks and muslins !

One morning, early, we went to see the Sultan's palace, and I felt we had really stepped into *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. First, we passed a guard of slaves with curly, black pigtails, sugar-loaf hats, and tall scarlet spears. Then we saw the red-splashed wall against which all suspected traitors are beheaded, I gather without being given much time to prove their innocence. Next, after crossing several court-yards, we came upon a guard of nobles, mostly asleep on fat, yellow bolsters ; they had wonderful jewelled ivory swords stuck in their scarlet sashes, and blue cloth coats above embroidered sarongs with long trains. Into the inner courts no native may penetrate unless he is excessively *décolleté*— as our guide explained triumphantly in French —the men to the coloured sash, which marks their waists and their rank, and the women to a slightly higher line !

Farther on, we found the harem guard of old, grey-haired women, also with exquisite krisses

stuck through the folds of their embroidered belts. We saw the Sultan's clothes being brought from the bath in a scarlet lacquer chest carried on the shoulders of old women under gorgeous gold umbrellas. Outside the marble and gold audience hall, we found a circle of Ministers, smoking very long, thin pipes and sitting on beautiful Persian rugs, round an old carved well out of which every moment I expected to see arise the genii of the enchanted palace. The Sultan has sixty fighting cocks, each one with a separate attendant. Except when they are taken out for exercise, these cocks sit in cages on the top of poles thirty to fifty feet high, as it is supposed to give them bold hearts and great courage to live high up in the air.

Our last effort in Java was not very successful, for we motored endless miles from Sourabaya to Tosari to see the Bromo Crater, which erupts regularly every twenty minutes. We spent two very cold nights in a little wooden hotel shivering under all the blankets, coats, and hearth-rugs we could collect, and came down from the inhospitable mountains having seen nothing at all, as thick mist had enshrouded us the whole time. After that we went to Sumatra, where there are more delightful white towns with dainty gardens and excellent hotels, but, unlike Java, civilization is confined to within a fifty-mile radius of the coast. In the interior are endless forests and high mountain ranges with blue Toba Lake hanging

A TAMAL WOMAN IN SUMATRA

A MALAYAN DANCING GIRL

dizzily between earth and heaven. When they have nothing better to do, the fierce Achenese come down from the north of the island and harry the peaceful Dutch settlers.

We motored whole days through tobacco and tapioca plantations and through the grey teak forests, where lurk a small species of tiger and crowds of chattering monkeys, and we inspected Battok villages, where all the houses have steep, thatched roofs with immense eaves and are decorated with clay oxen heads with real horns. All the labour in Sumatra is Tamal or Malayan, for the native Battok will not work; he prefers to live in comfort in the hills. When Medan, with its absurd new mosque and its blindly racing eccas, each pony trying to out-trot or out-gallop its neighbour, palled upon us, we went aboard a Dutch tramp steamer and amused ourselves all the evening, as it was a neutral boat, trying to signal to the cautious British steamers, slinking swiftly through the straits with all lights veiled, but they scornfully ignored our efforts at conversation.

CHAPTER XI

MALAY STATES

PENANG is a fairy island, almost *too* lovely in the flaming sunset, when its tall palms bend down over shadowy bougainvillæa to a hundred rock-girt bays. A wonderful Buddhist monastery hangs like a pendent jewel on the mountain-side above a sea of coco-nut fronds. All one afternoon Undine and I wandered through its quiet courts, where strong-scented musk ran riot over emerald dragons, and latticed turrets hung with turquoise bells were reflected in pools, full of sacred tortoises—signs of longevity.

We drank green tea from fragile cups with pale, shaven priests, ascetic wearers of the Triple Cord, vowed to Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and we came down the myriad steps into the twilight woods feeling we had taken with us some of the cold peace of those remote shrines, some of the aloofness of those grave lives. I have felt the same thing in the cloistered monasteries of Japan, where, on some high mountain, often shut out from the sun by immense walls of rocks, boys of twelve and fourteen renounce the world they have never known and grown old and

grey in endless study. Forty years of learning make a Buddhist priest on far-off Koyo-san !

My next vivid recollection is of a little wooden rest-house at Padang Besar lost in the folds of the Malay hills, with a sheet of water and dried-up marsh in front and all around thick bush of Durien trees laden with their evil-smelling fruit, betel-nut palms and coarse brown grass stretching away to the queerly shaped hills, which shoot up suddenly out of the plain like monoliths and pyramids. In the distance a few Sikhs and Tamals were working on a railway, which will eventually join the Siamese line from Singora to Bangkok. At that moment it had only materialized in stray bits, but, nothing daunted, we had set out two days earlier from Penang to travel overland.

It was not one of our most successful efforts, as we had roused ourselves with difficulty at 5 a.m. to catch an early train that did not exist. We sat for a hungry hour in the native station-master's office while he kept repeating, " There is no train. There is no line. You cannot go." And, in truth, that day we only managed to get across to the mainland and about fifteen miles through rice and palms, after which the irritated train dropped us in the middle of a sandy waste and departed. I was just urging on Undine the immediate necessity of transporting ourselves to a Chinese joss-house—the only building within sight—as being at least preferable to spending

twenty-four hours on an unsheltered platform, when the District Commissioner rode by.

Of course he ought to have seen, by all the laws of romance, two fair-haired English girls in fresh white muslins and pink and white complexions sitting on gold-fitted, crocodile leather dressing-cases—how do such heroines avoid having their priceless belongings stolen, I wonder? Various natives in Hawaii and Samoa relieved us of most of our possessions quite indiscriminately, starting with a kodak and a Cartier watch and ending up with some tooth-powder in a scarlet box, which evidently appealed to their sense of colour. Well, the picture presented to the astonished eyes of the D.C. was not very alluring. Instead of two figures from an Anglo-Indian novel, he merely perceived two heated, haggard young women clutching sun umbrellas, which had long ago been broken on the backs of recalcitrant ponies, and shepherding bulging boxes tied up with frayed rope. Their hats were slipping off the backs of their heads; one had a cold in her "dose" and had transferred most of the dust from a singularly grimy carriage on to her face; the other was stained with much betel-nut juice, and the soles of her shoes flopped as she walked!

Nevertheless, he nobly came to the rescue and marched us up the hill to his bachelor eyrie, and fed us on such *divine* curry made of prawns and coco-nut and pine-apple and nuts and all

the odd sort of things you don't expect to find in curry. That evening we motored twelve miles through lovely jungle country to a Planters' Club, where we sat for three solid hours on the veranda swapping rubber tales, which were certainly as elastic as the raw product they dealt with, and eating curry puffs, while a tailor-bird sat placidly on his nest above our heads, and winked one beady eye at us. At 10 p.m., by which time we were completely comatose, we were swept off to dine with the fattest planter, who seemed to specialize in blue Persian cats and old brass boxes. We went home drowsily at midnight with one or two specimens of each article packed away in the car, and rose next morning while the dew was still shining on the purple bougainvillæa, to spend many hours on a tortoise-slow train and many more on a construction car, which bumped and banged us over uneven rails to desolate Padang Besar and the lonely rest-house run by a squinting Chinese cook.

Next day an excited railway engineer came down the line on a trolley and told us that all the bridges were broken and we must retrace our steps to Alor Star and motor across the peninsula. This we did all through one long dark night. It was nearly a hundred miles over rough jungle tracks, and about 2 a.m. we struck the Siamese Customs, apparently in the middle of a primæval forest. They insisted on untying every box from their perilous resting-places on

the foot-boards and mudguards, and opening them all. We both promptly lost our worn-out tempers and demanded what they were looking for. "I don't know, but must look," they replied and went on fumbling while Undine almost woke up to listen to my unrivalled flow of abuse!

We reached Singora about 4 a.m. and, failing to wake any one at the very dirty rest-house, we simply broke our way in and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion on bare trestle-beds. After that we wandered slowly north on a crawling train which stopped every night at a Siamese rest-house. Sometimes it was too exhausted to continue its journey next day, so we spent a day at Tong-Sung and explored the country round, which is very interesting as nearly all the sudden monolith mountains are crowned with the white spire of a temple and there is one huge, dim cave, where a gigantic, recumbent Buddha, all dull gold and carmine, sleeps in colossal splendour beneath the granite roof. This is one of the largest statues I've ever seen and would even bear comparison with the Sleeping Buddha at Kyoto, or the same divinity in the Wat at Bangkok.

One night we found ourselves stranded in a particularly dreary rest-house with two railway engineers, so, having nothing better to do, we attempted to smoke opium. We borrowed a long bamboo pipe and bought several tubes of the black, sticky paste, but we couldn't even

A WAT AT BANGKOK

THE COSTUME OF SIAM

roll the pellets ourselves, and had to enlist the services of a Chinese drug fiend. An opium pipe has at the end a large closed bowl with one small hole, on top of which the smoker sticks a tiny round ball of opium, piercing it, as he rolls it, with a thin skewer. He then holds the pipe over a lamp and the pellet begins to sizzle, and a really experienced smoker can inhale the whole thing in one long draft of the sickly sweet smoke. I have heard of Chinamen smoking anything up to one hundred pipes a night, but a dozen would be too many for the average European. We were not very successful. Undine felt a little dizzy, the men spluttered and choked, and certainly I never achieved that blissful state of exhilaration, clarity of mind and mental independence so well described in *La Bataille* and *Fumée d'Opium*.

Bangkok is an intoxicating city. It reminds me of Dulac's illustrations to Omar Khayyám, or the setting of " Chu Chin Chow." I am sure both artists must have visited, at least in their dreams, the languorous golden city on the Menam river! The town is intersected by scores of canals, crowded with queer-shaped barges laden with grain and fruit and, moored under vermilion flame-trees or pink-flowered paunceanas, you see quaint house-boats on which whole families live, year in, year out. Most of the traffic goes by water, so the streets are comparatively empty, except for flying rickshaws, a procession of the royal white elephants, the motors of the legations,

and an endless variety of uniforms. All the commerce of the country is carried on by the Chinese, for the Siamese do not condescend to trade. With the exception of the peasants they are all in the army or the civil service.

The King's chief amusement is designing new wonderful uniforms, so, when one glides through the brilliantly lit streets at night in a swift-flowing rickshaw, with gaudy Chinese signs, scarlet lanterns and glaring theatre posters making an artistic background for fantastic uniforms of every hue, one feels one has wandered on to the stage at Daly's by mistake. There are stalls outside the theatres laden with lotus-leaf cigarettes, the black tobacco rolled up in pink petals. Women sit on the paving-stones frying crisp flat cakes, over a few cinders, to provide very necessary refreshment for the theatre-goers. The performance sometimes lasts several days. In Malay there are companies of travelling players, who give a performance in any conveniently open spot and whole villages appear with food and bedding and camp round the temporary theatre during the three or four days that one play will take to perform.

One night, in Bangkok, we went to see a Chinese play, which was terribly noisy and was conducted to the continuous accompaniment of an ear-splitting band of crashing cymbals, gongs, and drums, played by a group of half-naked men who sat well in the front of the stage.

Though it was supposed to be a serious drama, all the actors were attired in gargoyle masks with much false hair and flowing mandarin robes, and they leaped and whirled round the stage to the accompaniment of great flag-waving and brandishing of ornate weapons.

A Siamese play is much more interesting, as one can follow the story a little, though it is generally very long drawn-out. I remember seeing one, which concerned the love affairs of a princess whose parents promised her hand in marriage to any suitor who could lift a certain heavy weight, with the easy-to-be-foreseen result that all the exquisite young princes strained their muscles in vain and a brawny peasant achieved the prize. At the point when the princess was wailing at the feet of her future bridgeroom, after endless discussion *with* her parents, and *between* her parents, our patience gave out and we left her to her fate. The costumes were most wonderful, for they were all made of that gorgeous Eastern tissue, shot gold and sapphire or silver and royal purple, laden with tinsel embroidery and stage gems.

The Siamese have a special version of the one-piece garment which starts as an attenuated lava-lava in Samoa, changes its name to sula-sula and lap-lap in Fiji and Papua respectively, elongates itself into the graceful sarong of Malaya, and, finally, loses itself in the long, winding drapery of the Hindus. In Siam men and women

wear the same garment, and I think it is very ugly, for the end of the sarong is passed between the knees and fastened up behind, thus making a pair of baggy bloomers, and leaving the legs bare to the knee. The Court ladies wear European stockings and shoes, the back view of which is really ludicrous.

At the theatre all the performers had chalk-white faces under their tall spiral crowns, and the women's parts were taken by men, who talked in shrill, high-pitched voices. The most interesting point is the way in which they express emotion with their hands. Their fingers are like india-rubber and extraordinarily long and flexible. They can double them back to the wrist and wave them all separately in subtle undulations like playful eels. Their joints and muscles are trained from their earliest youth, and sometimes, in far country villages, you see children practising intricate hand exercises to acquire the necessary sinuous flexibility. Except for their wrists and fingers the performers hardly move.

Bangkok is almost as topsy-turvy in some ways as Tonga. The King drives about in a 60 h.p. Napier limousine, and was educated at Oxford, but, by ancient law, he has to marry, as his first wife, his own sister. Luckily he has fifty or sixty to choose from! His brother, the heir-apparent, married a Russian *grande dame*, but she wears the Siamese bloomers and crawls about on hands and knees when in the presence of the

King! The ordinary Siamese girls are stumpy in figure, with close-cropped hair like a man, and their mouths and teeth are distorted with sucking betel-nut. "One cannot distinguish between boys and girls at first," said a witty Gaul, "and later one pretends one cannot!" I saw one of the princesses, and she was quite lovely, pale as an Italian girl, slender, with sad, dark eyes, wavy black hair, which would have done credit to Marcel, and delicate patrician features.

The temples at Bangkok are as wonderful as Amritsar's golden shrine or the great Iyéyasu at Nikko. They are exquisite structures of white marble, encrusted with gold and crystals and roofed with wonderful mellow orange tiles that gleam like molten sunshine. They stand in vast marble courts, lonely and quiet, where long rows of serene-faced Buddhas sit throned above the heads of rare pilgrims. The gates are guarded by curly Chinese lions carved in grey stone, or by colossal giants and dragons fantastically gilt and studded with intricate mosaic. The doors are gorgeous works of art—burnished steel, damascened in ivory and mother of pearl. I cannot describe the effect of Eastern sunshine on this glory of marble, bronze, and rococo splendour.

Of course it is tawdry when you look into it closely and see that the flashing, scintillating pagodas are only inlaid with myriad fragments of coloured glass and china; but, when you pass between rows of giant golden birds under the

shadow of carved roofs hung with a thousand silver bells that make music for every drifting breeze, when you watch yellow-robed, shaven priests reading their tasselled breviaries beside some slender, jewelled minaret, with a solemn gong beating from a jasmine-wreathed turret, when you drive down an avenue as wide as the Rue de la Paix and see the shimmering glory of the golden palace roofs surmounted by the cupolas and stupas of the Royal Wat, when you walk through long frescoed halls to the glittering temple where the famous Emerald Buddha, carved out of a solid block of jade, is throned under a seven-tiered golden umbrella above guardian rows of life-size Buddhas and Kwanons, you can only forget the tawdriness and lose yourself in sheer delight of colour and fantastic shape.

The form of Buddha changes a little in each different country in which he is worshipped. In Japan the great Kamakura Buddha is a very solid figure, voluminously draped, with close curly hair on a round head. In China, he is taller and thinner, with much more expression on his face and less drapery. In Cambodia, he is very slight, with a small waist and longish neck. Generally he has a high top-knot on his head, and often in the big standing statues his figure is slender, exaggeratedly curved, and rounded like a woman's. The typical Siamese Buddha has a flame on his head, or a many-tiered, spiral crown, and wears elaborate robes which, wind-

THE BEETEL-NUT EXPRESSION

A BANGKOK CANAL

swept, fly out from the figure almost like those of the headless Victory of the Louvre. There are seven positions for the hands of Buddha, of which the most usual are folded in meditation or raised in blessing, but nearly always in Siam one hand drops down over the pedestal with a finger pointed earthwards—an attitude suggesting human sympathy.

In Bangkok, there is a large Chinese town by the river—a city of teeming half-clad humans, redolent of every spice under the sun, with swaying orange lanterns and gilded, curly sign-boards. The narrow, winding paths are roofed with fluttering strips of gaudy cottons and lined with open-fronted shops, whose mixture of fruit, flowers, cigarettes, beaten silver, brass, china, and cheapest European rubbish flow down on to the uneven cobbles in a riot of colour and scent. Beggars drift slowly along with wooden begging-bowls, Buddhas gaze calmly from unexpected niches, curved half-moon bridges span crowded canals, and every conceivable trade, from painting to shoemaking, is carried on in the six-foot wide alleys under cages full of song-birds.

We rushed down to the Chinese bazaar the very first day, and the fierce delight of bargaining took possession of us, so that we hardly noticed that we'd been joined by an elderly, benevolent stranger till we'd spent all our own money and most of his! Then we ruefully awoke to the fact that it was already 2 p.m. and breakfast was a dim memory of the far-away past. The

benevolent stranger turned out to belong to the Ministry of the Interior, and we dined with him one night at a Chinese restaurant, on sharks' fins, decayed birds' eggs which had been buried in black mud, fungus, and much pale green tea. The table-cloth looked like a battlefield after four pairs of chopsticks had been wielded for nearly two hours. Chinese dinners are infinitely long!

Always we were lured back to the bazaars by the river. I remember spending a wasteful afternoon there with an amiable secretary to our Legation. We bargained cheerfully for bundles of aigrettes and rusty silver daggers, for gorgeous red and green porcelain bowls stamped with the royal "Garuda" bird, a mythical creature with several human arms and legs in addition to his wings and hooked beak, and for rice spoons decorated with dancing gods. We peered into opium dens, but the smokers only looked stupid and the sleepers as if they suffered from nasal catarrh! We tried to suck betel-nut, and we burnt long pink tapers to Hoti, the god of good luck. We visited the sacred crocodiles in a temple garden, and we had our fortunes told by a priest who shook long sticks, printed with characters, out of a bowl which stood on a high altar. What a mixed-up afternoon!

After we'd surfeited ourselves with Oriental glories we went to see the new audience hall, which cost about three million tickals—a tickal is worth one and sixpence—to build, and is con-

siderably finer than any European public building I've seen. It is just like a glorified Guildhall—all marble and red plush and gilding and mural paintings done by some Italian artist, only, where in England there would be a fresco of Queen Philippa pleading for the burghers of Calais, or some such scene of patriotic history, there is a giant Buddha with a gallery over his head, from which tourists used to be allowed to look down at the throne under its many-tiered umbrella, till the Queen-Mother, horrified at the idea that a woman might be standing above the head of Buddha, forbade the practice.

We were very anxious to possess some genuine old images, but we were distinctly amused at the result of that wish expressed to a kindly Frenchman. He met us, beaming, at the top of his white veranda stairs, when we came to dine one night, with the joyous exclamation :

" Mesdames, quelle chance ! Hier j'ai envoyé mon voleur officiel vous chiper deux Bouddhas d'un temple quelconque—et les voilà ! "

And there indeed they were, as large as life and twice as heavy !—two great golden idols, raped from their age-old altars. We were wildly delighted, but the combined efforts of the muscular dinner-party could hardly lift these massive blocks of bronze into the car, and, so far, the combined efforts of various French consulates and suspicious steamship companies have not been able to get our treasures to England.

CHAPTER XII

SIAM

WE went by train to Ayuthia, the ancient ruined capital of Siam. Four hundred years ago it was destroyed by the conquering Burmese, but some of the old city still stands in the midst of wild jungle, with a vast, forgotten Buddha throned above a tangle of trumpet-vine, and tall, grey stupas towering out of thickets of quivering Durien trees. It is an exquisite sight in the sunset when the fallen walls are dyed red and each battered cupola and temple, for a few minutes, is gilded anew.

The Amiable Secretary wrenched two days' leave from a reluctant Minister and came with us, which was lucky, as not one single soul in Ayuthia could speak any English. As the native governor had been warned that we were coming, he sent to meet us at the station a launch and a stiff little wooden officer who disapproved of us intensely because we refused to spend a burning hot afternoon inspecting the barracks and museum. There are no roads, so we floated down the river to the rest-house, which is a quaint, thatched,

two-roomed, wooden matchbox built on a floating platform in mid-stream. When there was a wind, the whole place rocked so violently that my sea-sick soul shivered.

We had to bring our own bedding and food, and a spirit lamp to boil our own tea and eggs; and I remember we forgot the tinned milk, which reduced the Amiable Secretary to morbid gloom! All the afternoon we chugged down the river in the launch, landing occasionally to look at broken monasteries, half-lost in tangled creepers, but when it got cool, in the evening, we found an open sampan, and drifted lazily through a network of canals, between rows of gabled houses, all floating on wooden platforms, jostling a hundred tiny canoes paddled by old women in vast Chinese hats and piled up with fish and fruit under a single paper umbrella. Large house-boats were moored at intervals down the stream, and savoury smells denoted that the evening meal was being cooked behind the reed cabins. All the wares of an Eastern bazaar were displayed on drifting rafts.

There were opium dens and gambling houses open to the river-street, and here and there one looked into a floating temple where young priests swung heavy censers before the golden images, while from the shadows came the deep tones of a slowly beaten gong. It was an enchanted evening, and we hardly even minded a hard plank, a rug, and a grimy travelling-cushion as a bed.

We entrusted the only watch to Undine, and, by dint of not sleeping at all herself, she managed to rouse us before the dawn. We dressed and breakfasted in darkness and then, as the sun rose, we stood marooned on our swaying raft, shouting for an itinerant sampan—the taxi of Siam—while the morning procession of yellow-robed Buddhist priests began to drift past, each one paddling a tiny canoe with a big, begging-bowl in front of him. They solicit no alms, they look neither to right nor to left; but, as they float through the water streets, the women who are waiting ready with their offerings stop them, and fill up the bowls with rice and fruit.

We should never have caught the train back to Bangkok if Undine had not slyly put on the minute hand of the only watch, so that in spite of the dilatory languor of the Amiable Secretary we flung ourselves on to the platform just one minute before the engine started, and at least nine minutes after we thought it had departed. How wise is Undine—the water-maid!

Our departure for Chantaboon, from where we proposed to ride right across Cambodia to Angkor, was not unmixed with humour, for our kindly friends insisted on presenting us at the last moment with such curious parting gifts. The Amiable Secretary pressed upon us a large bronze Buddha seated on a scarlet throne, which subsequently considerably delayed us, as whenever we were particularly pressed for time our coolies

A DESERTED TEMPLE

"AYUTHIA'S LONELY STUPAS"

insisted on repeating long orations to our image; besides which, it always required a special horse to itself, and it had to be smuggled through the customs department of various countries in a hold-all.

"Oh, merely a bundle of rugs!" I would hear Undine airily remarking. "Rather heavy!" as two porters nearly broke their backs under the unyielding weight. "Oh, yes, that is the life-saving waistcoats—a new kind, you know. The situation is very serious on the Atlantic just now"; and instantly public sympathy veered in favour of the intrepid patriots who *would* return to their country in spite of such risks, and dejected porters were curtly ordered to look sharp and not waste all day over a piece of paltry hand-baggage.

The Benevolent Stranger was with difficulty prevented from giving us many gallons of filtered water to drink among the mountains and forests east of Chantaboon, but at long last we were off and steaming down the broad river, past tall, golden spires and fantastic pagodas to the unpleasantly wobbly sea, with a young French Vice-Consul who entertained us with humorous accounts of his *affaires de cœur et de corps*—past, present, and hoped for, till the long roll of the very unsteady boat sent us all hastily below.

When we first decided to trek to Angkor, we politely went to our Consulate and asked for advice, but they merely waved their heads and hands in the air and said:

"Quite impossible. You can not go. We do not permit it. You might meet a tiger or a wild elephant."

So we went to the French Consulate, which bowed with Gallic charm and said sweetly:

"All France is at your service. Under her wing you can travel anywhere."

The last advice that England condescended to give us was to take our coffins with us, as wood was expensive in Cambodia!

Twenty-four hours of tossing brought us to the river, up which a launch took us in two hours to Chantaboon, where we established ourselves in the French Consulate, a great, bare wooden building with a few odd bits of rickety furniture in it and one decrepit Chinese boy, who varied the menu between poached eggs and carrot mash, supplemented by red wine. The night we arrived there was nothing to eat in the house, so we rowed a mile up the river, through a long water-street, with the bazaar houses creeping down the banks on either side, and a tall white temple cupola rising at the further end, to dine with the legal adviser to the Siamese Government. He and his attractive wife were the only Europeans within some sixty miles of pathless forest and barren plain, yet Madame appeared in dainty, embroidered frocks, crisp and trim, with beautifully *ondúlé* hair, and she gave us a delicious little meal on a flower-decked table in a pretty bungalow as charmingly arranged as any English dwelling

in a fashionable Indian station. Truly the French are a wonderful nation !

Next day we discovered that our plan of travelling comfortably, if slowly, to Pai-lin in a bullock-cart was quite unfeasible, as there was no road, scarcely even a buffalo trail. However, we unearthed a charming Siamese who had acted on occasions as interpreter to the courts—how he achieved this dignity I cannot imagine as he never succeeded in saying more than two sentences to us, " Arriver bientôt," and " Pas moyen de faire." These and a few fragmentary questions were his stock-in-trade. However, he had a sweet smile and a persuasive manner with the eight sullen coolies who carried our luggage, food, blankets, water, so we were delighted to have him as guide. We started early one hot morning to trek first through rice-fields and then across a sparsely cultivated plain, where scattered water buffaloes cropped the short grass. Our first halt was at a primitive wooden temple in a grove of palms, where the priests gave us coco-nuts to drink, and probably learned a complete, if somewhat imaginative, history of our lives from our garrulous guide. At midday we halted for some hours in a bamboo sala in a tiny village, and while we boiled rice and made green tea our coolies sliced up large trunks of sugar-cane and ate the sweet, white plup, sitting round us and watching our cooking with interest. A sala is a sort of very simple rest-house with a

wooden floor raised a few inches above the earth, on piles, and a roof supported on four poles. Sometimes there are walls on three sides, when it becomes an open shed. Often the whole structure is made of plaited bamboo, so that one lives in fear of falling through the open-work floor on to the half-starved mongrels who lurk beneath. Occasionally there is merely a roof supported on sticks and one sleeps uncomfortably on the ground, and every time a horse moves the sound reverberates in one's ears as if the earth were a gong. To begin with, I used to jump up under the impression that there was a stampede, but soon I got used to the fact that Mother Earth is a sounding board.

We used to go to bed with the sun, as we had no lamps with us. We took care to halt for the night half an hour before dusk fell, so that we had time to cook our eggs and rice before discarding boots and gaiters and rolling ourselves into our rugs in the farthest corner of the sala, with our guide, who doffed his khaki uniform in favour of a white vest and sarong, snoring beside us, and a circle of dusky coolies curled up between us and any stray travellers who might be spending a night on the way. We had to carry with us all the water necessary for drinking, and even water for washing was scarce. The morning allowance was one kerosene tin full, and we all washed in that water in turn, first Undine and I, then the guide, who invariably asked, " Are you

clean now?" and who afterwards carefully covered his face with white powder, which generally only stuck on in patches, and lastly, the coolies.

While the sun was still a rim of fire above the mountains, we were up and away, travelling through gradually thickening forest country, with a few reed and bamboo villages—built on piles—where one could get coco-nuts and sometimes small loquats. We passed a few travelling priests who held black cotton umbrellas over their trailing sulphur robes and crimson stoles, but when we plunged into the thick gloom of the real forest we had the trail to ourselves. We climbed slowly up a mountain spur, rested on the top, and dropped down into endless bush, supposed to be full of small tigers and elephants, but we only heard one large beast crash into the bushes; and once I saw a swift fawn shape slink across a small clearing, but I couldn't see its head. The worst bit is the tangle of undergrowth and creepers, all of which have long, sharp thorns, which are amazingly strong. I tore the sleeve of a thick smock completely off my arm once. To make up for these pointed trials, there were yellow orchids and a wonderful mauve flowering tree, and nearly always a strong, sweet scent; also, it was almost cool in those shaded solitudes.

We spent one night on the floor of the native school-house in a village on the edge of the forest, where a deer had been killed that very day, so

they brought us chunks of raw venison, and we tried to cook it on our spirit lamp and failed miserably. Next day we started even earlier than usual and cheered up by our guide's reiterated assurance, "Arriver bientôt," we rode for what seemed unending hours through monotonous forest. After about five hours the perpetual smile faded in the intense heat, and the sentence changed to, "Pas moyen de faire." However, as he made us understand, by counting on his fingers, that Pai-lin was only five miles farther, we insisted on pushing on.

It got hotter and hotter, hour followed hour, but it was always five miles farther, till literally our tongues were black with thirst, for we had left our train of coolies and the precious water miles behind, and our eyes were bloodshot and half-blind with the sun. Exasperation overflowed when I fell off my eleven-hand rat from sheer crossness. It stumbled feebly, and I pitched swiftly over its amazed head into a thorn bush, and utterly refused to move until the guide pitifully explained that it was only "five small miles" now. Luckily, shortly afterwards, we came upon a few houses and a grove of palms by a river, and I don't think anything in my life has ever tasted so good as that coco-nut. It was an enormous green one, rather unripe, and I drank it all—I should think it held about a quart —and asked for a second!

Thereafter we grew almost cheerful in spite

SHAN CHILDREN AT PAI-LIN

OUR CARRIERS IN CAMBODIA

of the blazing sun, and actually hurried our guide into the one, long street of illusive Pai-lin before he had time to say " Pas moyen d'arriver " and settle to sleep under a tree. We loudly demanded the French *administrateur*, and were taken to his cool, white house, resplendent with the Republican flag, by an astonished clerk who looked upon us as if we had suddenly descended from celestial regions. As we stumbled up the veranda steps, we heard a sudden exclamation :

" Mon Dieu ! Une voix de femme ! "

Next moment, a delicate silhouette, with a gleam of pale silks and tinkle of glass bangles, fled through the pink oleanders, and a portly form in silk pyjama coat and orange sarong peeped out between the jalousies and ejaculated :

" Pardon, mesdames ! Quelle surprise ! "

He disappeared, to return a few minutes later in conventional attire. We were housed and fed with true Gallic hospitality in spite of our inopportune arrival in the midst of the usual siesta hours—I am sure we had the only bed in the house—and next day we were taken through the quaint village, which is quite unlike any other place in Cambodia, for the inhabitants are Shans from the northern state of Laos. They are of Burmese extraction, and they only marry among themselves, so they have kept their unusual type pure. The women are perfectly lovely, and *très bien soignées*! They wear scores of fine yellow glass bangles on their slim wrists, and short silk

double-breasted jackets over their gay sarongs. They powder their faces very white and shave their fine, black hair in rings under a high tiara of small white and gold orchids. They have exquisite, fine hands, adorned with many sapphires, which they mine in the neighbourhood, and they smoke long white cigars. I think the Burmese and the Korean women are among the loveliest in the world, but I myself would give the apple of Venus to the latter.

Pai-lin is famous for its sapphires, and in every open-fronted house one can see trays of tiny blue stones or watch them being cut and polished on primitive machines. I tried to buy some, but as the silver piastre of Indo-China has doubled in value lately, while the English sovereign is at a discount, I came to the conclusion that the good blue stones were as expensive as in London, though the white ones could be picked up for a few shillings.

CHAPTER XIII

SIAM AND CAMBODIA

WE left Pai-lin astride even smaller ponies, so that we had to sit crouched up to avoid trailing our feet on the ground. This time we had four or five ponies to carry our possessions, and the parting gift of the kindly *administrateur* was some real bread, so we were excessively cheerful. This state of mind, however, did not last long, for it turned out to be a day of disasters.

We had scarcely proceeded a mile beyond Pai-lin when we fell into a marsh and emerged dripping and covered with slime and mud from head to foot. An ordinary horse could have waded through perhaps, but the minute, thin ponies we were riding sank to their withers and were unable to move. I rolled off on my face and crept to solid land, looking like a conger-eel. Undine, in spite of this tragic warning, subsided slowly and gracefully into the deepest mud. Unfortunately she laid the kodak down first and wallowed on top of it, inextricably mixed up with a floundering pony and a large sun umbrella,

which latter instantly took on the appearance of a solid brown toadstool.

The natives in charge of the baggage ponies did not attempt to come to the rescue: they merely stood on the edge and gaped foolishly. When we had half dragged, half-lifted the ponies out, we set to work on the kodak. The spirit level had disappeared altogether, slime oozed from the bellows, the shutter was immovable, and the view finder was full of mud. The last defect we never managed to remedy; so, in the case of the few photographs we did manage to take in Cambodia and Cochin-China, we just pointed the camera in the direction of the object, snapped wildly and trusted to luck. As the shutter usually stuck open, we did not achieve anything very successful!

Even after we had got the baggage ponies across the awful marsh, our adventures were not ended, for an hour or so later, as I rode slowly ahead, driving before me the lazy coolies like a flock of sheep, I heard a stifled shriek, and turning round, saw just one boot waving wildly in the air, while Undine and the pony lay mixed up in a wet ditch, the saddle having turned completely round; a breath of wind is sufficient to upset the balance of those Cinderella mice! I rescued the water-maiden, and we continued our way; the hot sun had baked the slime with which we were coated into a complete suit of neatly fitting hard clay which cracked as we moved. Worse

was to come, for while we were indulging in our midday siesta, after a pleasant meal of tinned tongue, bread, and sugar-cane, with lots of coconut milk, one of our coolies vanished into space with our best horse !

This incident was never satisfactorily explained. It considerably delayed us, for, instead of proceeding at a funny, little " triple " reminiscent of the Basuto and Zulu pony, Undine and I had to walk turn and turn about. At first it was delightful swinging through the scented dusk, with a red sky behind us, and trailing mauve creepers brushing our shoulders as we passed. A breeze came down from the hills, and I took off my battered panama, and thanked whatever gods there be for the wild country and the open trail. However, night came on and found us still ten miles from our proposed halting-village. There were no stars and no moon, only ominous rain drops and certain unpleasant, rustling sounds in the jungle, so, when we saw a dilapidated, thatched sala looming out of the blackness, we and the coolies and the horses all camped in it together during a very unpleasant night. It was pitch dark when we arrived and rather cold. We had only a few matches, and one small tallow candle, which guttered and went out in the chill rising wind.

The strange presences in the jungle rustled nearer, so the natives refused to let the horses stay outside unprotected. Consequently we

searched for bread and hard-boiled eggs between heel-ropes and frightened kicking shapes, and we slept on a creaking lumpy cane floor with our heads on dirty saddles and anything we could lay hold of rolled on top of us, for it was very cold in the dawn. I don't think we really slept at all, as each time any one moved the whole floor shook like an earthquake. We got up while the mist lay in white wreaths along the ground and wasted some time packing the imp-like ponies who took a wicked pleasure in rolling on the ground, all their legs in the air, as soon as the first article was strapped on to the flat wooden pack-saddles. When we started that journey I remember we longed for the tall crossed bars which stick up like a double figure of X above the admirable pack-saddles used in the Canadian Rockies, but after seeing our steeds roll once or twice we no longer regretted anything breakable!

Luckily for us fortune changed her mind, and after a few hours' riding, while yet fifty kilometres lay between us and Battambang—or Prat-tam-ban as it is sometimes printed on maps—we struck the beginning of a forest road and a little farther on we came across two French engineers prospecting in a battered car, which had brought them two hundred miles from Phom-Penh and civilization, as Battambang, in spite of its sixteen *fonctionnaires* and its few thousand natives, does not yet possess a motor. How gladly we packed our mud-sheathed forms into the tonneau and,

ANGKOR WAT

DANCING-GIRLS IN ANGKOR WAT

leaving Buddha and most of our belongings to their fate, how we bumped and jolted along the grass track. I think it must have been a remarkably solid motor, for not once did it hesitate at the chasms in the road, and we arrived at the Bureau de Travaux Publics about midday. I wonder if that stately white building is often required to provide baths and food for two wandering foreigners of the irresponsible sex! In any case it rose to the occasion nobly, and I believe it was on that day that I first began to wonder why we English consider ourselves the finest colonists in the world. Certainly the great cities of South Africa, Australia, Canada, and India are triumphant momuments to the Empire's power, but compare the small corrugated iron townships, desolate and untidy, full of saloons and bars in which most of the white population nightly get drunk, of Northern Queensland, Papua, Malaya, Cape Colony, etc., to the clean white towns of Cambodia, with well-kept gardens and broad avenues, with bright cafés under striped awnings where light red and white wine and coffee are dispensed, and the comparison will be entirely in favour of French Indo-China. I remember talking the question over with the Resident at Kampong-Chnang after admiring the way the natives looked upon him as some cross between a deity and a parent!

"You rule your natives by fear," he replied. "Whereas we treat ours as friends."

I wonder if that is true. Certainly before the War in India the Sahiblog learned only the *imperative* tense in Urdu and Pushtu. And I remember being very much shocked after my life as a soldier's wife in the United Provinces, when I went to a certain Crown Colony and I saw the Governor solemnly shake hands with all the native boatmen before going on board his yacht! The French in Cochin-China seem to strike a happy mean between the two extremes. Of course the Dutch are very successful in Java, but they intermarry so enormously with the natives that most of their officials are half-castes.

At Battambang there was an excellent *bangalow*, reminiscent of the dak bungalows provided by a paternal government in India. There we rested for a day or two and waited for our luggage, which did not arrive till we'd almost given it up in despair, and pictured it at the bottom of some morass. The Resident took us round the spacious, beautifully planned town, built high above the great river, which at that season was so low that one could wade across it in a neat victoria drawn by two mice-like ponies, decorated with tricolour cockades. The chief exhibit of the place seemed to be the long, white native prison, where we were shown various very pretty young girls sitting on piles of mats on the floor.

"But that one is so young," I said, pointing to a dark-eyed houri of perhaps fourteen. "What is she imprisoned for?"

" Assassinat de son mari," replied the gaoler imperturbably.

" Good heavens! How deceptive are appearances! " exclaimed Undine. " And what has she done? " indicating a toothless crone in a corner.

" Mais—assassinat de son mari," answered our guide without the least emotion.

How very trying Cambodian husbands must be!

We wheedled the pirogue of the *douane* from a smiling, bearded individual, who merely expressed the hope that there would be no smuggling while his only boat was absent. Then, after inspecting a Chum Chum factory, where they make the potent liquor—which tastes a little like Japan's fiery *saké*—out of rice, crushed, fomented, and distilled by native labour, we started off for the Great Lake. For two days and nights six sturdy oarsmen rowed us, or poled us, down narrow curling rivers from whose high banks grey monkeys peered down with crinkled, wise faces. In places the water was so shallow that all our crew had to get out and push the boat off low sand-banks. We cooked eggs, rice and tea in a perilously balanced saucepan on a spirit lamp, and at night slept peacefully on a couple of narrow mats.

The boat was about twenty-four feet long and five or six feet wide, and there was a ten-foot canvas awning over the middle of it. It was a tedious, cramped existence, but the river traffic was very interesting. Every sort of boat from

the priest's scarlet-painted dhow, with high carved prow, to the eighteen-inch wide Tonkinese canoe, propelled by an ancient wrinkled dame under a red paper umbrella, struggled up and down the shallow stream. There were myriads of birds, great black and white storks with red bills, unwieldy vultures, grey cranes, herons, and dainty white egrets. I'd never seen so many before; and they were all so tame one could almost catch them.

Late the second evening the river widened into the huge, shallow lake, and the third morning we woke in pouring rain to find ourselves anchored amidst swarms of mosquitoes at Siemrath. We waded ashore between rows and rows of large house-boats, each one of which is the permanent home of a family that spends its life touring about on the lake fishing. There were also streets of smaller craft, with reed screens curved over their forward decks making primitive roofs. We collected two bullock-carts, put Buddha and the luggage into one and ourselves into the other, and jolted off through two feet of mud across a wide plain. We seemed to spend most of our time plunging through endless small rivers, where wallowed water buffalo attended by their usual followers, the little white egrets. Wherever you see a single buffalo, there also you see one of these birds, often sitting on the beast's back. A grazing herd is accompanied by quite a flock of feathered satellites.

After six hours wading through marshland, when all our bones felt like a badly-made *soufflé*, we arrived at Siemrath proper, and firmly descended at the door of the *administrateur*, who, like the hero of any correct *roman de jeune fille*, had "*une belle barbe blonde*" in addition to an unusual sense of humour. He gave us an excellent meal, and some Quincona wine. We then wearily continued our journey, jogging along behind our two little fawn bullocks to the Government rest-house at Angkor. Of course the sensible way to come to the famous ruins is in the high-water season by river steamer from Saigon to Kampong-Chnang, and cross the lake in a launch. At the rest-house we were met by a startled Annamite cook, who hastily removed swarms of white maggots from the only bath, large families of ants from the beds, and told us we could have rice, chicken and eggs, but no trimmings.

However, let me say at once that Angkor is worth any journey by land or sea or elephant! It is a great grey city, dating from about the ninth century, mentioned by a Chinese traveller as flourishing under a powerful king in the thirteenth century, and now towering out of untrodden forest like Hercules struggling in the grip of the seven-headed snake. Legend ascribes its origin to Alexander the Great;[1] but, were

[1] With complete disregard of, perhaps, a thousand years and as many miles.

the geographical situation correct, it might almost be the fabulous city described by Mendez Pinto. There are two great blocks of buildings several miles apart. Each one is enclosed by a quadrangle of grey stone walls. Angkor Thom —originally the old Qutha Pataburi—is a city of mighty palaces, exquisite artificial lakes, and stupendous terraces all richly carved and decorated. Strangely enough, the half-human Siamese bird, the royal "Garuda," constantly appears in the sculptured bas-reliefs. The Nakhon Wat, five miles south of the dead city, is a colossal temple and monastery with sculptures, galleries, and towers rising to nearly two hundred feet.

There are statues of Buddha and Brahmanic gods in the vast cloisters, but I have heard that the original temple was dedicated to serpent worship, and, contradictorily, that the main building only dates from the great Siamese invasion in the thirteenth century. Whatever its origin, Angkor reigns supreme among the perished cities of the old world. Ayuthia's lonely stupas pierce the turquoise sky; Futehpur Sikri gleams red amidst the surrounding maidan; Amber looks down from her high citadel across a silver lake; fierce Zimbabwe rears her mighty circles of unhewn masonry above tangled Rhodesian thorns and broad-leaved M'pane trees, but pride of place must be given to the great grey city of Cambodia.

Some day the enterprising French Government

A GATE OF ANGKOR-THOM

OUR ELEPHANT AND OUR PIROGUE

will develop the surrounding country. There will be red sandy roads, vistas of pale towers through the carefully clipped trees, and smooth lawns round the vast terraces, elaborately carved with giants and gorgons by forgotten hands; but, at the moment, one wanders through silent forest tracks, perched high on elephants under a swaying bamboo covering. They do not understand the art of the howdah or the pad in Siemrath, so one balances perilously on a flat platform, and hopes for the best. Nakhon Wat raises its many-towered courts and gorgeous central pavilion above a huge mere, full of lilies, crossed by an immense stone causeway. Through rows of guardian elephants one passes into great cloisters fantastically carved, and then down a grey marble road to a maze of columned courts, in the centre of which, up a score of extravagantly steep flights of steps, one climbs sky-high to the enormous temple, where endless Buddhas sit serene under fretted porticoes, and the only disturbers of their meditative peace are perfect armies of flying foxes.

We arrived on a Cambodian feast-day, so met a pilgrimage of sulphur-robed priests wandering through the endless cloisters, and saw some little dancing girls, with chalk-white faces, and spiky gold crowns, posturing stiffly before a solemn image with a crowd of appreciative pilgrims watching their movements.

CHAPTER XIV

CAMBODIA AND COCHIN-CHINA

WE spent several days exploring Angkor Thom and the outlying palaces and temples. Then we set out for the shores of the lake on our amiable elephants. All one day we plodded through scrub and marsh under a blazing sun, rolling wearily from side to side on our giddy perches, but I think it was one degree better than the back-breaking bullock-carts. At sunset we embarked on a real, native sampan, about fourteen feet long and five feet wide, with three skinny Annamites to row us when there was no wind to fill the big brown sail.

Oh, the unpleasantness of that long journey in great heat! One could not sit upright as the half-moon, straw roof was only three feet from the deck in the middle, and curved lower at the sides, so for three days and nights we lay in that rabbit-hole reading French novels, attired in thin silk kimonos, with our hair hanging down our backs in plaits, as we nearly upset the boat when we tried to dress.

I remember we read with interest and dismay

Claude Farrère's brilliant, but horrible, description of life in Saigon in *Les Civilises*. We could only crawl out of our long burrow when we anchored at night, and the rowers ceased to occupy the whole of the four feet of open deck space. The blond *administrateur* had presented us with several tins of beans and bacon; and these, with some sour liches, provided our meals.

The only exciting episode was one dark night when Undine insisted on having a mosquito hunt in the net which we had managed with infinite difficulty to hang under the low roof. I held the candle while she chased the elusive pest, and, of course, in the excitement caused by finding at least a dozen mosquitoes in a secluded corner, we set the whole net on fire. It blazed up over us and round us with terrifying swiftness, and I think this tale would have ended here had not one of the Annamites flung himself on the flaring mass and gallantly crushed it out. I believe we spent the rest of the night arguing as to whose fault it was, and searching for Undine's broken pearls, till I pointed out that her impulsive flight to her water home would have saved her from destruction—she can swim—but that it left me to choose between burning and drowning!

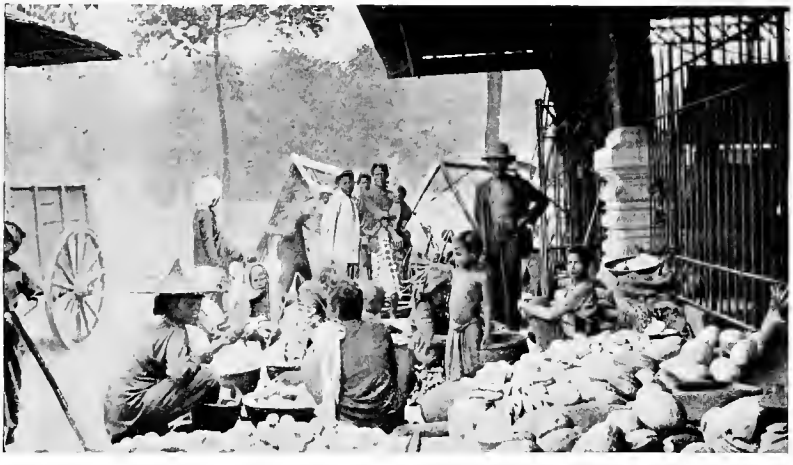
Next morning we arrived at Kampong-Chnang, dressed clumsily, leaped from the boat, squeezed ourselves into a "Malabar"—a match-box on wheels drawn by a rat—and boldly deposited ourselves on the door step of Government House,

where the Resident, being French and amused, promptly offered us two large marble-floored rooms, with lovely big bathrooms and huge carved beds, so, for a few days, we lived in clover and came to the blasé conclusion that the chief joy of the wilderness is the subsequent return to civilization !

We motored round the country-side and saw small pagodas tucked away between great stone boulders, or perched high on far-off hill-tops ; and we fed not wisely but too well on the fat of the land in a yellow brocade dining-room under softly moving punkahs. The third day we borrowed the car, which dated from the year one, and, in company with the Annamite cook's Annamite wife, a little thin creature, pale-skinned and wistful-eyed, with long coils of fine black hair, dressed in a long brown silk brocaded coat over Chinese trousers, with lots of jade and crystal ornaments, we motored one hundred miles south through a great dusty plain, dotted with clumps of sugar-palms, to Pnom-Penh, the capital of Cambodia, which possesses an indescribably dirty hotel, where you dine amazingly well and drink red and white wine over a coarse, check tablecloth, imagining you are in Toulouse or Montauban. Only the little white grapes are missing. Instead you have bananas and pine-apple, tangerines and loquots.

There is a very fascinating fruit-market run by slender Annamite women, delicate and re-

UNDINE IN A MALABAR



THE FRUIT-MARKET AT PNOM-PENH

fined-looking, in black satin trousers girt with vivid green sashes under their black brocade coats. There is a wide river, at least four times as broad as the Thames, bearing every sort of craft and merchandise down to Saigon. There is a white and gold pagoda, throned among flowering shrubs on a high little hill in the middle of the town, approached by a steep staircase carved into lions, dragons and seven-headed snakes. There is also the King's palace, to which we were escorted, in a minute carriage and pair, by the son of the Cambodian *ministre du palais*. He wore a diamond bigger than a hazel-nut on one brown finger, and talked fluent French. He made our mouths water by showing us the crown jewels: great hunks of emerald and sapphire barbarically set in rings of pearls, lots of exquisite French watches and clocks, presented by visiting European royalties, and a marvellous inlaid sword, supposed to be eight hundred years old, which only the King may draw from its sacred, scarlet scabbard.

That night all the temples were illuminated, in honour of the Cambodian New Year, and all travelling priests were entertained freely in their courts. It was an interesting sight to watch the crowds of pilgrims bowing before the richly-decorated and brilliantly-lighted altars, which had been erected in the open air. Before these altars were many tables, where dusty-robed priests, who had travelled down from far-off mountain

hermitages and monasteries, drank green tea while their feet were bathed by young boys.

By river-steamer and mail-motor, wedged in with a crowd of natives for six weary hours, we came to Saigon, a proud city of broad boulevards, large cafés, glaring cinemas, big hotels, and hundreds of little victorias full of trim, bearded officers. We meant to stay there some time before going back to Singapore, and across to Borneo, but we thought the town was gloomy, and there were no temples, and the value of the piastre was climbing steadily every day, so we set out in two rubber-tyred, sky-blue rickshaws to look for a Malay-bound boat. Of course there was none for a week, so I gave one glance at the sombre quays, and asked:

"Well, is there a boat going anywhere to-day?"

"There's a cargo-tramp clearing for Hong Kong in two hours," they replied with a superior smile. "But she doesn't take passengers, and, in any case, you can't catch her, as you'd have to get your passports stamped, and see the police, and get a permission from the French authorities."

"Oh, can't I?" said I. "You just wait and see."

After that came two hours' panic. Undine fled to the bank and tore money from a harassed Liverpudlian in her most fluent French, while I rushed to the impressionable British consul with *both* passports.

"No, you can't see my friend. It's quite

impossible—she's busy. Yes, she does exist! *Visez* them both quickly, as I'm in a hurry. What is the name of our boat? I don't know. What line? I haven't the vaguest idea. Leave that out. Now, please, you must wire for my luggage to Penang and Singapore. Yes, I left some at both places. And, oh, you must guarantee the bill for freight, or I am sure they won't send it to China to me!"

The consul was just remarking plaintively that apparently His Majesty's Consular Authorities never had a dull moment after our arrival in any port, when—enter an apoplectic Frenchman.

"Madame cannot possibly go to-day. She must interview the *chef de police*. He would take one hour—two hours."—"Madame *is* going to-day. Where is the *chef de police*? Oh, Mr Consul, you'd better come with me!"

More panic, but ten minutes firmness produced from the French authorities a document with a beautiful red seal. Then I packed a bundle of rugs, two suit-cases and a hat-box—which Undine says will never recover—all in fifteen minutes, and rushed to join the Water-maiden at the shipping office, to find she had firmly refused to pay the fare asked, as being too extortionate, and had cut it down by several pounds, to the distress and covert amusement of the young Gaul, who was too overcome with amazement at anyone desiring to travel on a Chinese rice-boat to do more than expostulate feebly.

Thus it was that we dawdled slowly up to Hong Kong in company with one other passenger, an "undesirable," wanted by the police of both countries, who neatly evaded arrest at Hong Kong by slipping overboard the instant the old tub anchored at her buoy.

CHAPTER XV

SOUTHERN CHINA

CANTON, strangest city in all the world, held us with her lure of wealth and pain, mystery and colour. Once across the canal, which separates the foreign concession, with its neat green lawns and white square houses, from the teeming, age-old native town crushed in between grey crumbling walls, one leaves behind the matter-of-fact atmosphere of the twentieth century, and plunges into scenes that can have changed very little since the days of the Tartar siege.

Down from the wide arcades one steps through a tall gateway into a maze of narrow cobbled streets lined with silent shuttered houses. A Chinese house always has an air of aloof reserve, because it has no windows, and generally a little wall is built across the door, a few feet away from it, to keep out the evil spirits, which can only move in a straight line, and are unable, therefore, to twist round behind the protecting wall!

Canton streets are so narrow that only one sedan-chair can pass through at a time, and even then, in the busy markets, one's elbows brush

bundles of embroidered shoes or strings of fat roasted duck. Above one's head the dark eaves of the houses almost meet, strips of gay-coloured silk shut out the sun. Carved and gilded dragons adorn the projecting beams of the houses. Scarlet lacquer vies with golden scrolls in profuse adornment of the shops, which are all open to the mellow gloom, and hung with great orange lanterns.

Every shop looks like a richly-carved temple, and when one does come suddenly upon a great shrine, guarded by rows of great stone beasts, one is almost disappointed because art can do no more. All the wealth of colour and design has been lavished in the long streets of the silk stores and the jade-merchants, in the market of the singing birds, and even in that dim alley, where the coffin-makers hammer all day at the vast ungainly tree-trunks that the Chinamen buy long before their deaths, and guard jealously in their houses.

Within the great walls of the old city several millions lead their crowded lives, every type of human being jostles his way through the maze of streets : rich merchants sway giddily in cushioned chairs above a pulsating, shouting sea of humanity ; fragile pink and white dolls totter on tiny feet leaning on the arm of a silk-clad amah ; the golden-robed lama from Thibet pushes aside the beggar, whose sores gleam through indescribable tatters ; the pale scholar lifts his long silk coat-

IN CANTON

TRAVELLING DE LUXE !
(THE LUGGAGE-VAN OF A KWANTUNG TROOP-TRAIN)

tails out of the mire, and the neat black-robed housewife, with dangling jade ear-rings, is elbowed by clamorous coolies monotonously calling, " Hoya, hoya ! " as they trot through the dense crowds swinging their burdens from stout poles.

All the spices of the world mingle with the smell of oil and hot humanity ; all the colour of the world flows down from the open shop fronts in store of oranges and golden shaddock, in wealth of gorgeous embroidery, in fantastic shapes of jade and crystal, even in massed scarlet cakes and saffron macaroni ; all the disease and suffering of the world looks out from under the matted hair of lepers, or from the kohl-darkened eyes of child-women.

It is strange how one can sometimes see the spirits of cities. Bangkok is a dancing girl, shaking a chime of golden bells from her fluttering skirts, dropping perfume from her henna-stained finger-tips ; Macao is haunted by the click of high heels, the gleam of dark eyes and a tortoise-shell comb under a dark mantilla, a wistful spirit dragging tired feet through silent deserted streets ; but the genius of Canton is something primæval, fierce and grasping, hiding raw wounds under gorgeous silk, clutching at knowledge and wealth behind a veil that is never lifted.

There are temples, of course, amazingly dirty and quite uncared for ; there are flower-boats heaped with scented trophies from the country ;

there is a broad river bearing the traffic of a nation towards the sea; there are canals crowded with heavy junks and painted house-boats; there are tall pagodas on lonely hills, but these things are not Canton. Only in long, footsore pilgrimages through the teeming bazaars can one come in touch even for a minute with the spirit of the walled city, changeless—because for the celestial race time exists not and fate is unalterable.

When we had worn out the soles of our shoes on the cobbles, and when our rooms were overflowing with tapestry and ivory, bronze animals with fatuous smiles and serene, but exceedingly heavy, Buddhas, we decided to go up country and try to get overland to Hankow and the beginning of the Pekin railway. Undine cheerfully pointed out to me that we should have to circumvent several armies and a great many brigands. I replied by reading to her delightful extracts from various local newspapers, which gave hair-raising accounts of atrocities committed in most of the villages through which we intended to pass. Then we interviewed the consul, who firmly refused us a passport, after which we extracted promises from various people to rescue or ransom us, and then with a very little, very necessary luggage, chiefly filled with the weighty silver coinage of the interior, we slipped away to the station to find that all trains had been commandeered by the troops.

However, a goods train full of ammunition

ARMY BOATS AT SHUI-CHOW

TRAFFIC ON THE NORTH RIVER

was about to make its slow progress north, so we piled ourselves uncomfortably into the most solid-looking van, in company with forty bare-limbed coolies and some toy soldiers in charge of a much roped-up prisoner, who looked miserably uncertain as to his fate. For ten hours we crouched on the floor with rain dripping through the roof down our backs, and then, when dusk was producing eerie shadows in the corners and the coolies were gulping their evening rice, there was a sudden commotion. The train roared and rattled to a standstill, the soldiers grasped their rifles and flung themselves to the doors, a Chinese girl threw herself shrieking on to the floor, the coolies huddled in a frightened heap, and Undine remarked sleepily :

" What ! Brigands so soon ! How very trying ! "

I expected shots to fly through the wall in a minute, and was looking for the cleanest place on the floor—a Chinese soldier always shoots from his hip, and the bullets fly skyward, so as long as one lies flat, one is moderately safe—when it turned out that the cause of all the turmoil was the escape of the prisoner, who had quietly slipped off the van while his guards were eating. I am glad to say he was not recaptured in spite of a prolonged search, as he would certainly have been shot to pieces before our eyes.

At Shui-Chow, the rail-head, we emerged stiff and grimy, and a hospitable wolfram-buyer took

us to his Chinese house, which was adorned with an enormous Union Jack nailed on the wall. The town was full of little grey soldiers who were billeted in all the temples, overflowed into the narrow streets, and even camped on the broad city wall, overlooking the river. A few wounded were straggling in with tales of defeat. All the men were being forcibly recruited by order of the magistrate, and one saw them drilling in sullen-looking squads in every available corner. Blue-bloused countrywomen were tottering along carrying great boxes of ammunition. Maxim guns were being trained across the river, but the two high hills which entirely commanded the town were left utterly unguarded. I believe the magistrate had actually asked for suggestions for the defence of the town from the wolfram-buyer, and had been told that the army ought to go out and fight in the open.

"But surely it would get hurt!" gasped the astounded magistrate.

At the time I thought that was the general point of view of the Southern army, but later on I changed my mind. The Chinese soldier goes to the front in a large, floppy straw hat, with a fan, an umbrella, and very often a woman coolie to carry his luggage, but apparently he fights when he gets there!

We spent two days in the grey house with a little decorated courtyard in its centre, on to which opened all the rooms, sleeping on polished

FISHING CORMORANTS AT LOK-CHEUNG

INTERESTED SPECTATORS

wooden couches, and eating river fish and rice, while we tried to get a boat to go up the North River. The troops had commandeered everything, but by dint of much bribery we induced the owner of a long, low salt-boat to attempt the journey. We crept away through the empty streets at night, avoiding the brilliantly-lit gambling houses, where all the soldiers were playing fan-tan, and, feeling like conspirators in a Drury Lane melodrama, we reached our boat, which was moored beyond the city wall. We paddled away in the darkness and picked up our carefully selected crew some miles out in the country. Thereafter, for three days, we were poled and towed up the very rapid stream by a mob of howling, yelling coolies, who gurgled and gasped like souls in torment as they flung themselves on the bending poles. When asked to restrain their vocal efforts, they replied that they must let the breath out somehow or they would burst!

I shall always remember waking up the first morning under the low, curved roof of the boat —behind me was a little painted shrine, in front of which were burning some joss-sticks, and in front I had an uninterrupted view of Undine's golden hair spread over a bag of rice and an enormous bundle of red blankets which I took to be the wolfram-buyer! A screen of plaited reed shut off the front bit of the boat, so, in search of our retinue, which consisted of one thin and

hollow cook-boy, and one fat, jelly-like interpreter, I cautiously crept out on hands and knees and crawled along the foot-board outside the boat. To my amazement, when I reached the front I discovered endless bundles of grimy rags, from which protruded various unkempt heads, and, of course, in the most comfortable corner the fat interpreter, with my only cushion under his head. Indignantly demanding the reason for the crowd, I was told that they were refugees whose only hope of getting back to their homes in the country was under our protection. As it appeared that, in addition to this, their only means of living was on *our* rice, I made a bargain that they must work their passage—consequently strange beings appeared at the poles for short periods, and then dropped off into mid-river and waded home.

At Lok Cheung, loveliest of Kwantung towns, with towering pagodas and carved belfries leaning right over the swirling brown river, we made our first halt to renew provisions. We bought chickens and oranges and lots of funny little sponge-cakes like Japanese castera, and wherever we went we were followed by a wondering crowd of women and children, who were extremely interested in our skirts and gloves—they lifted up the former and shouted with mirth at the size of our feet, while pointing to their own tiny crushed stumps. Certainly our heavy brogues were a ludicrous contrast to the dainty embroidered slippers under the swathed bands that

LOK CHEUNG

OUR HOUSEBOAT NEAR PING-SHEK

support the swollen ankles. Mrs 4-inch foot can run pathetically on her heels, while Mrs 3-inch can only totter uncertainly. Luckily, the young girls have almost given up the habit, and, of course, the ruddy-cheeked peasant women who labour in the rice-fields go barefoot.

There were very few soldiers at Lok Cheung, so we easily got a small boat to continue up the river—cramped quarters these, for the roof was very low and not solid enough for one to perch bamboo-chairs on top, so we had to sit tailor-wise all day long, and at night there was always much dispute for the outside edge where a little air penetrated the reed screens! As we went on, the river narrowed till it became a brawling, mountain stream, with dangerous rapids through which even our large crew had great difficulty in poling us. Sometimes we had a dozen coolies on the tow ropes and nearly as many punting—yet a hundred times destruction on a sharp projecting rock was only saved by a hair's breadth. Once we passed the shattered remnants of two large boats, which could only just have upset, as their disconsolate crew were still drying themthemselves on the bank.

As the river narrowed, the great cliffs towered above us on either side, and the only traffic consisted of small fishing-boats full of cormorants. It is interesting to see them working at night with torch flames throwing weird shadows over rock and water—the light attracts a shoal of

fish—the big black birds plunge down regardless of the strings which attach them to the boat, and each comes up with a flash of silver in his beak, unable however to swallow the dinner for which he has dived as a tight rubber ring is fixed round his throat.

We spent most of our time on board making a wonderful Union Jack, but, unfortunately, we could not remember where the white went, so we had to leave it out altogether, and personally I thought it looked remarkably like the battle flag of the Southern army! However, it inspired the retinue with much courage and pride, and we flew it from the mast till we reached Ping-Shek, where such crowds welcomed and followed us that it was almost impossible to move. Gaily dressed babies were held up to look at us, their solemn little faces framed in embroidered skull-caps with dangling amulets. Women who were the proud possessors of sons followed us into the outhouse behind a grain merchant's shop, where we proposed to spend the night, but the despised mothers of girls were ruthlessly refused admittance. I remember in another village, when I admired a girl-baby, the sullen-looking mother pushed her into my arms and said, "Keep her, keep her, I don't want her." In the big towns, superfluous girls are sold to become dancing and singing girls. The desire of every Chinese woman's life is to bear a son—thus she may hope one day to attain the honoured position of mother-in-law.

A HALT IN THE RAIN

SUNSHINE AGAIN

That was an awful night at Ping-Shek. We tried to get a bath, but the largest receptacle the merchant could produce was a shallow tub which leaked badly. However, Undine boldly dragged it on to the balcony above the river, but, while she was still struggling to find a moderately clean place to stand on, a dozen coolies insisted on coming into the outhouse to cook their rice. The jelly-fish interpreter, scenting trouble, disappeared from view, and the cook-boy argued only half-heartedly with the angry mob, so the vision of baths had to fade into the dim and distant future. We slept on narrow boards raised on trestles, but, as John Chinaman retires to rest noisily at midnight and rises with equal clamour at 4 a.m., sleep is reduced to a minimum. Besides, all the perfumes of Araby would not have sweetened the atmosphere of that shed. We traced three different odours to a dead and decaying cat in one corner, to several barrels of ancient, putrid fish in another, and to various completely open drains, but many other elusive smells wandered around at their own sweet will.

Morning brought torrents of rain. Nevertheless, after a couple of hours wasted in bargaining and weighing loads, we started off across country in Sedan chairs borne shoulder-high by ferocious-looking coolies, who put one down with a thump whenever they got tired or cross, flatly refusing to progress another step. For three days we meandered slowly across country in this fashion,

chiefly through a desolate hilly region with a few grey, gloomy villages, stone built, slate-roofed, curly-eaved, generally adorned with some strips of scarlet paper exorcising the spirits of evil. We lived entirely on eggs and rice, and slept on the floor of any peasant's hovel that we came across. Sometimes one could get a bundle of straw or some trestles and boards, sometimes a charcoal fire, whose smoke nearly blinded one, as there was no chimney, and every door and window was firmly barricaded, as the country was full of deserters and small bands of brigands who lived by looting. A few weeks previously they had captured an American engineer and two missionaries and were still holding them up to ransom. I don't know which the country people feared most—the brigands or the army. They are the same thing really, for when a particularly savage band of robbers defies authority the magistrate bribes them to enlist as soldiers.

CHAPTER XVI

CHIN-CHOW

CHIN-CHOW, our destination on the Sian river, was in a panic. We came one morning into deserted shuttered streets, and had difficulty in finding an inn at all. Finally we turned two horn-spectacled scholars out of an upper room, looking over the river to a nine-storied pagoda throned high above the town, and modestly furnished with two beds made of boards and covered with thin straw mats. There we fed gorgeously on strange green soup in which floated all sorts of edibles, from macaroni to snails and fishes' fins, while we watched the hospital boats poling up the river, flying lots of small white flags.

The streets were full of wounded, who lay even upon the temple steps. Flags of the various generals hung in front of the biggest houses. The town had been looted for food and all the shops were shut. Tales of disaster were in the air and rumours of a battle three miles off. Every boat and every chair had been seized for the troops. The last magistrate had fled, because the Southern General had sent in a sudden demand

for 30,000 dollars to pay his troops, and his successor of three days was preparing to follow his example, after having beheaded five men in the main street and forgotten to remove the debris.

Some very gallant American missionaries had turned their school, just outside the town, into a hospital, and were struggling with a couple of hundred wounded where they had beds for fifty. They worked in peril of their lives, for the Southerners had massacred the Northern wounded after a recent success, and the North had vowed revenge on the first hospital it captured. The doctor took us all over the hospital where the toy soldiers lay with their rifles under their heads and looks of sullen, mute endurance. Some of them had walked in miles with appalling abdominal wounds, and yet there were very few deaths. The instant a patient was *in extremis* the orderlies hustled him out into the veranda for fear of his spirit haunting the house. Nearly always, a Chinese is put in the coffin before he is dead, and the instant the last breath is gone the lid is shut down, so that the spirit may not escape and haunt the family.

Sometimes, when this precaution is not taken, search has to be made for the spirit with wailing and calling. I've heard these cries at night by the river bank after a battle, and it is the most weird, unearthly sound—a long, rising " Kii-ii-rie," that makes one shiver and forget one lives in an

THE AMERICAN MISSION HOSPITAL AT CHIN-CHOW

THE RETINUE REFRESH THEMSELVES

electric-lighted, steam-heated age! Often they take the clothes of the dead person and go out searching for his spirit; if they see a little gust of wind whirling some dust into the air, or a dead leaf blown suddenly against a wall, they fling the clothes on top of it and believe they have caught the wandering ghost. One day in Chin-Chow we watched the funeral of a soldier. The immense coffin—a complete tree trunk, painted scarlet at the ends—was borne by some thirty mourners, who danced and shouted, jerked and bumped their burden, waved rattles, and let off fireworks—all this noise to frighten away evil spirits. Theirs is a religion of fear, it seems.

The Confucian code of ethics is little known among the peasants and only a very degraded form of Buddhism is practised. The propitiation of a multitude of spirits and the veneration of their ancestors alone occupies their minds. I was reading an old book of Chinese law once, and I discovered that the penalty for striking an elder brother was strangling; for a woman who struck her husband it was beheading; for killing a husband or father it was "slow death," which I presume means the death by a thousand cuts. A story that illustrates the extent to which the Chinese carry their veneration of their parents is told in the life of the Emperor Li'. He succeeded to the throne as a child, and his mother, the Empress-Regent, during her son's absence from the capital, killed his half-brother, the child of

the former Emperor's favourite, and had the woman herself so tortured and maimed that she resembled nothing human, and could only drag herself on the ground. The boy Emperor, returning to his palace, saw the pitiful spectacle, and exclaimed impulsively, " My mother has done wrong ! " All the contemporary historians recount this episode, and *all* of them blame, *not* the Empress for her cruelty, but the Emperor for criticizing his mother.

We utterly failed to get a boat at Chin-Chow, and, as our cook seemed to be in great danger of being beheaded—he was a native of Kwantung, a rival province—we decided to walk down the river bank to some smaller village, so set out accordingly with large stores of rice, some chickens, a few bandages borrowed from the kindly Samaritans, a beautiful Red Cross flag, hastily pinned together in the mission veranda, and a very frightened retinue. The cook-boy was green and livid in patches, for which he could hardly be blamed, as we'd all seen several of his countryfolk tied to convenient posts awaiting the advent of the great red sword which would end all their fears. The interpreter, who always reminded me of a plump penguin with his tight white trousers tied with ribbons round his slim ankles and his long grey silk coat with flapping tails, refused to stir out of a curtained chair. Undine was feeling extraordinarily ill, as we'd had to drink river water all the way up country, and

one might meet anything in that river from a humped cow to a soldier's corpse, or from a dead mule to a mountain gun. I myself was feeling far from courageous—I don't think one can be brave on bad eggs and hard rice!

However, we finally discovered a decrepit boat hidden away in a cave and, after long arguing in the burning sun, we prevailed upon an ancient, toothless crew to pole us slowly down the stream towards the Southern lines. Peace at last! We rigged up a shelter, as this was an open boat, and drifted down with the current through wonderful purple gorges, where precipice upon precipice towered high on either side, shutting out the sun, and the river flowed still and deep in perpetual shadow. Strange rock houses were hewn out of the solid face of the cliffs, and perilous temples, dragon-guarded, leaned sheer over the perpendicular mountain-side—a wild and rugged country, but exquisite in the dawn, when the first pale light broke through the sapphire mists and the mighty rocks looked like columns in dim palace aisles.

At Wai-ya-ping we came upon the ambulance fleet moored in serried ranks under the shadow of a vast cliff. They challenged us, but we floated swiftly past, and our two amazing flags probably saved us from a volley. Several times we landed to try to get fruit or firewood, but always the villages were deserted, save for some ancient crone who insisted that the fighting was very

near. This so terrified the cook that he forgot even to feed the chickens, and food became scarce. However, at Yum-Shing our progress was very effectively stopped by an admirably workmanlike barrier of boats and rafts drawn right across the river and manned with many soldiers with modern rifles and large stores of ammunition. We applied bribery, threats, persuasion; all in vain. There was no way to pass that barrier.

Nothing daunted, Undine insisted on seeing the officer in charge, who supplied her with much green tea, but listened unmoved to her most subtle arguments. She assured him we were so used to war in Europe that we felt lost without the sound of guns. I gather she left him under the impression that there was daily battle in Hyde Park, and that one dodged every kind of projectile as one shopped in Bond Street. All he replied was:

"You get killed in Europe—no trouble. Perhaps you get shot here—very much money cost!"

She returned gloomily to the boat, where the wolfram-buyer and I were distributing excellent Egyptian cigarettes to the puzzled soldiery. The subsequent council of war was interrupted by a commotion on the bridge of boats, where stretcher-bearers could be seen hurrying to and fro.

"Of course they're evacuating their wounded," I said, and watched with interest the procession of the halt and the lame.

"I believe they're coming here," said Undine in a small awed voice.

We looked at each other in mute horror.

"The flag! That Red Cross flag!

I turned to tear it down, but too late—the vanguard was upon us. With much bowing, smiling, and chin-chinning a limping figure was hoisted on to the deck, who cheerfully pointed to a most horribly swollen foot, smeared over with some black oily substance, which seems to be the only dressing they use. We did our best. We struggled with sores and broken bones, and inflamed, fortnight-old wounds. The only things we firmly refused to touch were the awful skin diseases. Our stock in trade consisted of Pear's soap, cold cream, and the precious bandages that we were treasuring for our own need. Bullets we had to leave in their hidden resting-places, as the warriors had a great dislike of being hurt: the smaller the wound the more noise they made.

"I wonder now how much damage we've done with the best intentions!" I said ruefully as the last sufferer was dragged away.

"I only hope we shall get away from here before any of them die," added Undine.

They have no idea of cleanliness. They wanted us to wash our hands every two minutes—vague memory of some sojourn in a mission hospital, I suppose—but they didn't like having the wound cleaned at all.

The oddest episode happened at night when,

just as we thought of curling into our rugs for a few hours' sleep, a little procession of soldiers arrived with swinging scarlet lanterns. By signs they made us understand that there were wounded in the town who needed our assistance. The wolfram-buyer and the interpreter were interviewing some reluctant general, so, while I guarded our few belongings, Undine was carried ashore by two sturdy warriors and disappeared with a flutter of torches up the high steps leading into the single narrow street. There, apparently, a guard of honour awaited her with several hospital flags, and more musical comedy lanterns. The whole company marched briskly along to a dilapidated court, where she and her two original guides plunged into one of those labyrinthine Chinese houses that go back and back in a series of filthy passages and squalid smoke-filled, airless rooms, with here and there a small court piled with rubbish.

On an amazingly dirty bed were lying two badly wounded soldiers, whose tattered dressings had never been removed since they were first put on on the battlefield. Undine's description of the reeking atmosphere, the circle of bayonets behind her, the suspicious, sullen faces of the family, and the appalling state of the wounded, made me glad that I had elected to stay in mid-river with only a mourner's wail, or some clashing dispute on the bridge of boats, where the guards were gambling, to break the silence of the night.

DISCOVERY OF A BOAT ON THE SIAN RIVER

THE AMBULANCE FLEET AT WAI-YA-PING

We got up with the dawn next day, and tried to get an interview with the officer Undine had seen the previous day, but were told that he had gone "to look at the battle" and, as we also learned that there were two more barricades of boats farther down the river, we decided to try our fortunes on land. We managed to impress some trembling coolies with such a magnified sense of our importance that they consented to carry our modest luggage, and once more we set forth through trampled rice-fields and woods full of pale dog-roses. We passed a telegraph section putting up a field telegraph, a couple of mountain batteries with trains of sturdy mules and some officers returning from the front in Sedan chairs, with orderlies carrying their huge swords in embroidered scarlet scabbards behind them. Our idea was to get through both the Northern and Southern armies and strike the river farther north, if possible beyond Heng-Sha, which unfortunate town was captured almost every week by a different army, while, between whiles, brigands pillaged it and held up fat merchants to ransom.

We were challenged at the first outpost, but swept through, waving English passports, French motor licenses with large red seals—any document that looked official and important! The guard started after us, and even the prisoners tied to the posts of a cattle-shed evinced a mild interest, but the attempt to stop us was only half-hearted.

Our triumph, however, was short-lived, for, after traversing a peaceful, sunlit stretch of country, we turned into a wood and almost fell over a line of little grey soldiers kneeling with rifles ready to fire across the low-lying fields in front, while several machine-guns protruded wicked-looking nozzles from the undergrowth close by. For one moment the army did nothing but gape, and Undine and I had actually passed through the line before they recovered their senses. Then they rushed after us and arrested us, and I imagine the officers argued as to what was to be done with us while we stood forlornly by our chairs, Undine firmly clutching the Red Cross Flag, and the coolies huddled into little heaps round our luggage. Finally, we were sent back to headquarters surrounded by an armed guard, in company with a batch of prisoners who had to be dragged along, howling.

It was a most unpleasant march. I know *I* felt every moment that a bullet would find a resting-place in my back. The wolfram-buyer stormed in fluent Kwantungese, but as the soldiers were Hunan men nobody understood him. Undine read a novel, chiefly upside down, and the interpreter looked as if he were dying of heart disease. We were taken to a sort of barracks square, where the prisoners were instantly pushed into a very dark shed—then there was a pause, and our guard looked at us doubtfully, so we very firmly stalked out in the direction of

the general's quarters. Various excited officers tried to stop us; but, feeling desperate, hungry, dirty, and extraordinarily tired, we didn't much care what happened to us, so we went on rapidly. The general had rather a nice house, with a garden full of mulberry-trees. We all sat on the veranda and drank strong green tea till our brains reeled, while we tried to persuade blandly impassive Orientals that it was essential for us to get through to Chang-Sha.

They repeatedly urged us to stay in the village till the war was over, and it was only with great difficulty that we persuaded the general to give us a pass, even to go back! The North is supported by the foreign powers, so the South is extremely anti-foreign; perhaps they looked upon us as spies. Late that night, having had nothing to eat since dawn, we regained the river to find that soldiers were occupying all the boats. However, for once the jellyfish interpreter bestirred himself, and about 4 a.m. we found ourselves poling slowly up-stream, the crew consisting of an old woman, a toothless septuagenarian, and a small boy tastefully attired in a blue sash and one straw sandal.

Then began our 300-miles retreat. The South had had several successes, so the country was clear of Northern troops, but there was a steady stream of refugees hurrying like ants in all directions. Delicately painted girls in pale silk coats, clutching most of their house-

hold possessions on their knees, looked timorously from Sedan chairs; portly merchants in purple silk waded through rain and mud; strings of wounded ambled along on small, shaggy ponies—and always it rained as if the skies had burst. For a week we struggled on with little rest, fearing to find the north river impassable. When we did arrive back at Ping-Shek, only one boatman would face the torrent, and he did it only because his wife's greed exceeded his own fears. I cannot imagine why we got down safely. The rapids were roaring whirlpools through which we dashed, swirling right across the river, sometimes turning completely round, the water pouring in torrents right over us, four men clinging for dear life to the rudder, the rest hammering equally feverishly at boards which continually broke loose under the strain. It was impossible to keep one's feet. One lay in the bottom of the boat, while every timber shuddered and cracked, and the wild howls of the boatmen rose piercingly above the crash of the turbulent water.

Ours was the only boat on the river—gone were fishermen and cormorants, slow-moving salt boats and family junks. Sometimes amazed peasants shouted to us from the banks as we whirled past, but the next jutting rock, the next sharp corner engaged our whole attention. In the smooth stream between the rapids the whole crew crouched down chin-chinning to the spirits. It took us six days and nights to go up that river.

THE BARRIER OF BOATS AT YUM-SHING

SOUTHERN SOLDIERS OFF TO THE BATTLE

We came down in less than twelve hours, and were inside the grey walls of Shui-Chow before nightfall. Great masses of troops had moved in since our departure, and we watched them drilling briskly across the river. The cavalry ride ponies scarcely larger than Shetlands, and they look like little brown mice scampering about. A first-class ambulance station had been erected at the railroad, and all the horses were decorated with half a dozen red crosses all over them. Our train journey provided us with no excitement, which was lucky, as two days later the mail between Canton and Kowloon—the British Concession on the mainland opposite Hong Kong—was attacked by several hundred brigands, and every carriage was ransacked. There were nearly two hundred fully-armed soldiers on the train, but it never occurred to them to fight!

Hong Kong appeared to us a sort of Nirvana of shower baths and French cooking. We had not had our clothes off for three weeks, we had not met a hot bath for so long that we'd almost forgotten the existence of such things; the number of eggs—mostly bad—that we'd eaten would horrify the food controller, and Undine's golden hair was like mouldy hay! We spent a cheerful week discussing what we were going to eat at every meal, and were further enlivened by the news that the stern consul who had refused us a Chinese passport for the Interior had grown

several new grey hairs and wasted a good deal of Government money trying to trace us. His gratitude for our safe return not being unmixed with wrath, he had sent the minions of the law to arrest us on the Canton platform.

Now the up-country train generally arrives any time between five p.m. and midnight, but that particular day it chose to pant into the surprised station about four o'clock, so we were both eating buttered toast on board a big white river steamer when the representatives of law and order arrived on the platform. However, I believe they spent a very pleasant evening searching all the hotels in Canton, no doubt under the impression that they were looking for dangerous spies instead of too adventurous, travel-worn tourists !

Rumours afterwards reached us that we'd been arrested as we stepped on board an American liner, that we were found hiding in the Portuguese settlement of Macao, and that we were disguised as men ! It seems easy to attain notoriety in China !

CHAPTER XVII

NORTHERN CHINA

WE spent a few peaceful days at Macao, which it is impossible to believe is really in China. It is just like any other yellow-washed arcaded town in the South of France, with shady cobbled streets and many white convents, with green jalousies, perched on its half-dozen hills. It is the oldest of all European settlements in China, and entirely Portuguese, having been founded one hundred years before the first Englishman discovered the " Middle Empire."

Macao lives for two things only, its gambling and its opium smuggling. Therefore it is a sleepy deserted town, grey and so quiet that one feels one must tread softly for fear of waking ghosts of the dead ages. By the way, there is a statue of Marco Polo[1] in the hall of the five hundred Genii at Canton. He is the only individual in a hat, and he sits next to the only man who has borne a child. I forget the exact story of the latter, but the statue is painfully realistic, and, though the father died, the son lived to become a very famous mandarin!

[1] An Italian traveller to whom the foundation of Macao is often erroneously ascribed.

Hong Kong is rather an attractive place when the great peak is not entirely swathed in mist. There is a street of the flower-sellers which climbs steeply up the mountain, and is lined on both sides with basket stalls covered with red and tawny orange lilies, scented carnations, pale heavy-headed hydrangeas, waxen magnolias and lovely English roses. The Chinese quarter is interesting at night when every great five-storied house is a restaurant or gambling hall, blazing and glaring with a myriad electric lights, while the crash of cymbals and banging of mighty brass gongs deafens one as one passes. We went to a Chinese theatre one night with a fat Kwantung merchant and his wife.

"She is my newest wife," he said placidly. "I have three, you know, and this one has no son, so I do not let her live with the others."

We sat on long benches, eating oranges and liches, and gazed at a bare stage on to which the audience had overflowed, so that there was barely room for the half-dozen performers and the somewhat unclothed and very heated bandsmen with their noisy drums and gongs. There was no scenery. A chair was carried in labelled in Chinese, "This is a precipice," and a table marked, "An altar." The actors wore marvellous embroidered garments and hats somewhat after the style of Gaby Deslys. The speeches were interminable, and at the most pathetic moment of the melodrama the graceful heroine would

A RED-CROSS HOSPITAL NEAR MACAO

A FUNERAL IN PEKIN

contemplatively expectorate on the carpet. The man who took the chief woman's part was a famous actor who earned a salary of about 18,000 dollars a year!

After a day in Shanghai, which is an uninteresting commercial city redeemed by a dark tortuous bazaar, containing the temple garden that is supposed to have provided the original design for all the blue-and-white willow-pattern china, we went north, in a train crowded with Northern soldiers in grey and red, to Nankin. The ancient capital has seen, I suppose, more wars, rebellions, massacres and fires than any other city in the world. At the present day it is chiefly in ruins, since a large portion of the town was rased to the ground in the last rebellion, and has never been rebuilt. There are few relics now of any of the royal dynasties which made it their home. The Tai Pings revived its glories for a time between 1852 and 1864, when it fell into the hands of the Imperialists, who deserted it shortly afterwards for the more conveniently situated Pekin. We drove out beyond the immense grey walls, through rice-fields and bare plains to the Ming tombs asleep on a low hillside, guarded by an avenue of delicious beasts —grey stone elephants, camels, dogs and odd creatures between dragons and wolves. There were a few mighty statues of giants standing in patches of long grass, but the whole place was deserted and unkempt.

We fell in with a little police officer, astride a ragged pony, who insisted on having his photograph taken under the shadow of the great tortoise of longevity. Afterwards he took us to the police-station, where with much bowing and unending ceremonies of politeness, we were given strong green tea to drink. Chinese ceremonial of hospitality is infinitely complicated. Visiting the house of a mandarin, the guest will be met by his host on the doorstep, and begged to enter first. I believe he should refuse three times, and then scuttle across to get on the left-hand side, while his host will politely attempt to foil the manœuvre. Next the mandarin says, " Walk slowly, I implore you." To which the right answer is, " Not at all, I shall walk very quickly." This, I suppose, is because a slow gait is the privilege of age and dignity.

When, after nerve-wracking repetition, you finally reach the bare room where you are to sit, your host requests you to indicate the exact position on the floor on which you would like your mats placed. You reply with a few choice eulogies of the honourable floor, at the same time expressing your complete consciousness of your abject unworthiness to sit on it at all ! Finally, when the serving boy is placing a pile of mats beside an opium stool, you make a feint of removing several, with the remark that one is *quite* sufficient for your indescribably insignificant self. The only other point I can remember is

A CAB RANK IN PEKIN

IN THE SUMMER PALACE NEAR PEKIN

that you are not supposed to ask your host any questions, which makes conversation exceedingly difficult, and you may not leave until you are requested to do so!

We once went to dinner with a Chinese family, and it was one of the most trying efforts of our journey. The men, who were chiefly students, could talk English, but their embarrassed sisters understood no word of our language. The girls wore pale blue silk trousers and long brocaded coats fastened high up under the chin with jade buttons. They had bracelets, ear-rings and hair slides of pearls, roughly set in gold, and they all wore pink flowers in their well-oiled hair. The youngest was extremely pretty, in spite of her chalk-white powder, and she had the loveliest curly mouth I have ever seen. The table was banked high with masses of flowers, though only the bright coloured heads were used. We started with green tea and soup, but after that, during thirty-two courses, we had nothing to drink at all. Napkins soaked with hot scent were handed round at intervals for us to mop our flushed faces, and, at the end, when human endurance had been rudely strained by shark's fins, pulpy bird's-nest jelly, grey fungus, black eggs, oily roast duck skin, and indescribably sticky sweets, five more courses were suddenly placed upon the table at the same time, but, luckily, green tea came with them.

The whole time during dinner a noisy band

clashed and clanged in an adjoining room, and a few painted singing girls wailed in nasal, high-pitched tones behind our chairs. I have never understood the social position of these girls, for every householder seems to possess several in addition to one or more wives. I remember a lovely Chinese lady, who looked like a piece of Dresden China in fancy dress, remarking placidly one day :

" You see, my mother used always to choose my father's concubines for him, as he was so very lazy ! "

I shall never forget the train journey up to Tientsin and Pekin. All the traffic was disorganized to allow troop-trains to be rushed south. The returning soldiers, wounded, on leave or deserters, crowded the long narrow carriages, irrespective of class. The only seats we could get at all were in a straw-benched second-class compartment crowded with grey warriors. The Northern troops are of much larger and stronger physique than the little Kwantungese, and many of them are Mongols with parchment skins and slit eyes. The pigtail, which was imposed on the Chinese at the point of the Tartar sword, still flourishes in the North, whereas the Southerners have shaved their heads since the institution of the Republic. For thirty-two hours we sat, cramped on the top of our suit-cases, with Buddha falling over our feet and a hat-box as a pillow ! In the middle of the night the train jerked to

THE MANDARIN'S NEW WIFE

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, PEKIN

a sudden standstill, and a party of fully-armed officers sprang on board while a guard appeared at the door of every carriage. Each travelling soldier produced a card, which was rapidly inspected, and several hastily hid under any available covering. Most of these were dragged forth protesting, and there were violent disputes before the deserters could be removed forcibly.

This scene of course delayed us, but I don't think we arrived more than four or five hours late, which is very good for a Chinese train! As we came north, the country changed in character. Gone were the purple hills and grey stone villages of the South. An arid plain, sparsely cultivated at rare intervals, stretched away on either side, brown and bare, while the few villages consisted of square mud houses very similar to the adobe huts of the Arizona Indians. We saw trains of tiny toy donkeys, their riders sitting sideways on large square pillows, ambling across the sandy waste, and occasionally there appeared a line of shaggy camels led by blue-bloused boys, in wide sailor straw hats lined with blue, and tied under the chin with pale blue ribbons.

Pekin struck me as a city of immemorial tragedy, bowed down by the weight of its too spendid past, oppressed by its long heritage of bloodshed and cruelty. Its temples and palaces are, for the most part, crumbling and ill-kept, with grass-grown courtyards, and its wide dusty streets are badly paved, and bordered by decrepit,

uneven houses with attractive corner beams, carved with fantastic dragon heads, sticking far out across the side-paths. The Temple of Heaven is lovely and lonely, with lapis lazuli roofs raised above circular white stone terraces, elaborately carved, in the middle of a great green park full of English cow-parsley and sweet-scented mimosa trees. There is a wonderful pagoda in the Winter Palace, which stands on a hill above three lotus-covered lakes. From its grey carved arches you can look right across Pekin and the brown burned-up plain to a semicircle of blue hills.

In the foreground are the gleaming yellow roofs of the "Purple Forbidden City," enclosed in its quadrangle of dull red walls, and circled by a wide moat thick with pink lotus-flowers. The maze of courts and palaces, which once were sacred to the "Sons of Heaven" and their courtiers, are now open to the wandering tourist. Republican soldiers lean idly over the marble parapets, and look down upon tiny green gardens and toy canals winding under fantastic half-moon bridges between carved white pillared railings. In one golden fortress-palace, high built on a massive wall, the boy who reigned for the few brief weeks of a Midsummer Night's madness spends his imprisoned life, and plays with goldfish instead of with the destinies of subject millions.

It was not so much the buildings of Pekin that interested me as the thronged busy streets of the Chinese city, which exists within its separate

THE CHINESE CITY IN PEKIN

PIGTAILS IN PEKIN

walls, distinct from the quadrangles of the three other cities, the Tartar, the Imperial and the Forbidden. It is such a strange mixed crowd, conglomerate of every race and every nation. Tartars, Mongols, Manchus, Lamas from Thibetan mountains in golden flowing robes and fringed orange velvet hats like Britannia's helmet, slim Chinese from the South—pigtails, shaven crowns, and shock-headed Peters all jostle in noisy confusion. There are mandarin ladies tottering on wooden stilts, with fat amahs holding umbrellas over their heads. There are Manchu women with painted carmine cheeks, and their hair screwed back round square black cardboard, shaped like a student's mortar-board, and adorned with a perfect garden of artificial flowers. There are slit-eyed Mongolians riding splendid white horses reminiscent of giant Arabs, and fat Tartars in their many wadded coats and broad sailor hats, astride sturdy hill ponies with red fringed bridles. There are peasants on pillows on minute donkeys, which look as if they would disappear altogether beneath their rider's bulk. There are shuttered carriages, between the slits of whose jalousies you can glimpse frail silk-clad girls painted and jewelled, and there are splendid Japanese cavalry spick and span on well-bred Australian walers, or a troop of khaki-clad Americans swinging along in slouched hats with a drifting chorus of "Stonewall Jackson" or "Land of Hope and Glory." East and West

apparently mixed, but really separated by a chasm of knowledge and custom, religion, and point of view " till earth and sky stand presently at God's great judgment seat."

Undine and I visited our Legation in a state of some trepidation, as we supposed the erratic consul of the South had sent flying wires to Pekin to have us stopped should we actually manage to get through overland. However, we were welcomed with great kindness and much amusement, and treated with that deference, not unmixed with awe, which should always be paid to lunatics, heroines and desperate criminals. Once more we unwound our tattered evening frocks from brass censers and ivory gods and, urged at a series of dinner parties to repeat our tale of adventure, I promptly said I should write a book.

" And call it *Tall Stories of Two Truthful Travellers*," added Undine cheerfully.

" You'd much better sell a description of your invasion of Hunan under a faked flag, without a passport, to the local newspaper. You'd make much more than that fifty dollars the consul got out of you," suggested an amazed guest.

However, before our heads were entirely turned, we deserted Kublai Khan's tragic capital, and made a pilgrimage to the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs.[1] The latter necessitated a seven

[1] The last Ming Emperor drowned himself in the Yang-tsze-Kiang in 1644 when the victorious Tartars captured Nankin. In

ON THE WAY TO THE MING TOMBS

GUARDIAN BEASTS AT THE MING TOMBS

hours' ride on ridiculously small donkeys across a hot sandy desert, and, let me confess at once, we thought the red and yellow pagoda tombs scattered round a wide deserted valley desperately uninteresting, except for the long avenue of long leggity beasties which were even finer than those at Nankin. We were so hot and cross and thirsty by the time we arrived at the biggest tomb that I remember we quarrelled violently with the Chinese guardian of the gate over a ten cent piece —about 3d.—which he insisted was a bad one! I think he would probably have murdered us had it been a little less hot!

It is queer that China always gave us a sinister impression, even though on no single occasion did anyone do anything deliberately to frighten, annoy or hurt us, and this in spite of the fact that we always went about alone in the slums of Pekin, that we travelled night and day in troop-trains, and that we got mixed up with several armies in Hunan. Nevertheless, the whole country is like a volcano. I have a feeling that it might erupt at any moment, but I am sure it would erupt *silently*. My own impression of John Chinaman is that he is an arrant coward when alone or in small numbers, but that he is also simple-minded and amiable when not hustled or worried. Of course he is frightfully cruel in

olden days, when the Emperors went to the tombs of their ancestors, wooden villages were erected at intervals all along the way from Pekin, as it would not be pleasant for imperial eyes to look out from the palanquin upon nothing but a desert.

odd ways. In the smaller villages I have often seen a living rat hanging in a butcher's shop by a great hook thrust through the skin of its back. If nobody happens to buy the creature before nightfall, a popular amusement is to pour a little inflammable spirit over it, set it alight, and watch its blazing contortions.

The punishments are appalling. Torture is still recognized as a form of justice, and strangulation is considered an easy death. It is generally reserved for persons of high rank, and when a noble is condemned to die a scarlet silk cord is sent to his prison, and he is left to be his own executioner. I remember, in Canton, one of the police officials was condemned to death by authority in Pekin. He was therefore invited to a large dinner-party in the native city, and after he had eaten and drunk himself into a state of happy placidity he was taken out into a back court and killed. Not so very long ago, in the streets of Canton, you could see wooden cages in which malefactors hung by their necks, their toes just touching the ground, and were either strangled or starved slowly. Beheading is a most unwelcome form of death among the Chinese, because if the head is not buried at once with the body the spirit enters the next world headless, and the gods can see at once that it has been a malefactor on earth.

Reading the history of China one notices how few emperors died a natural death. They fell

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

A KOREAN FUNERAL

in battle, they died by poison or by a treacherous sword, they were murdered in exile, put out of the way by their wives and mothers, or committed suicide before the advance of conquering enemies. Death is a thing of no account in the East, and the way he comes troubles his victims not at all, but a funeral is a matter of enormous importance.

I think we must have been in Pekin during an auspicious week for burials. Of course no such event as a marriage or a funeral takes place without first consulting the fortunetellers. In Canton there is a Hall of the Sleeping Dead, where the great polished coffins lie, each in a separate chamber, waiting an auspicious moment for burial. There is generally a picture of the deceased hanging above an altar covered with food and flowers. If the body is that of a woman, models of her jewels are placed on the altar, so that she may have them with her in the next life. Only once have I heard of a mourning cage, and that was in honour of a woman. The light bamboo structure, about seven feet square, was erected in the largest room in the house under a big portrait of the dead woman, and the bereaved husband shut himself up in it for many days of rigid, secluded mourning, eating, sleeping and living entirely in the cramped space.

We saw several processions in Pekin, and luckily managed to photograph one. First came very disreputable-looking coolies in tattered red and green garments carrying flags and lanterns

covered with Chinese characters. They were followed by small boys in embroidered garments, bearing paper effigies, which are afterwards burned. Then came an empty palanquin and an empty chair—sometimes these are only models made of suitably coloured paper—and after these walked men in long white robes, while immediately behind them came the heavy coffin in a gorgeous scarlet, green, and gold palanquin, mounted on half a dozen scarlet poles, borne aloft by a score at least of porters in red and green with pointed vermilion hats, who jumped about and shook their burden as much as they could. Lastly came the women of the family all dressed in white, with wide white bands round their foreheads. They sat crouched on mattresses on the floor of the hansom-cab of Pekin, which is like a yellow wooden dog kennel on big wheels, drawn by a mule with a tasselled bridle. They kept up a perpetual wailing as they drove slowly through the streets, which seemed ridiculously out of keeping with the dancing palanquin in front.

UMBRELLA AND HAT COMBINED

A LADY OF SEOUL

CHAPTER XVIII

NORTHERN CHINA AND KOREA

THE Great Wall of China is one of the most wonderful sights of the world. Somehow it always ranks in my mind with the Victoria Falls as a miracle of nature! That is because it looks so immovably, so indissolubly part of the country-side. From time immemorial it has existed, and through all time it shall stay, a monument to one of the greatest Chinese sovereigns, Che Hwang-te—known as the first universal Emperor—who constructed roads and canals, splendid public buildings and a marvellous palace. He defeated the Heung-Noo Tartars, and, in order to protect the border of his northern states from their incursions he started building a gigantic wall which was to stretch from the sea right across the vast empire to the furthest western corner.

It is interesting to note that the boundaries of his empire in 214 B.C. almost coincided with those of modern China to-day. This amazing Emperor had all books of history and literature relating to ancient China burnt at one fell swoop. The only explanation of this holocaust is that he wished

to break the power of custom and tradition. Unfortunately some of the books of Confucius and of the sage Mencius shared the doom of other less distinguished philosophers! The Great Wall crawls up and down high mountains and deep gorges like a colossal serpent. Two carriages could drive abreast along the top, and a number of the old square watch towers are still standing. We went a day's journey into the mountains to see it at its best, and stood on a great peak and watched the monster wall winding away for miles on either side, sometimes mighty against the skyline, sometimes doubling back in a hairpin curve and dipping suddenly into a valley. It is an awe-inspiring sight.

North we went, past Shan-hai-Kuan, where the Great Wall creeps out of the sea like a monster leviathan, past Mukden, where one platform is Chinese and the other Japanese, and so on to Seoul, a delicious city huddled into a pretty valley between exquisite mountains half covered with cedar forests. There are many tiered gates and tall pagodas hung with bells; there are old brass-bound, vermilion chests for sale by the side of narrow canals; there is the gay light-hearted butterfly atmosphere of Japan, just as there are kimonos in the streets and cherry-blossom on the hill-sides. But far and away the greatest fascination of Korea is found in the people themselves.

You look down the wide main street of Seoul,

THE CHARM OF AGE IN SEOUL

BEAUTY VEILED IN SEOUL

between the Japanese houses and modern telegraph poles, and yet you imagine yourself at a summer party given by Fragonard or Watteau. Only those two masters could paint the fragile delicacy of Korean garments. They are all fairylike, transparent white. The men wear long frock-coats of filmy white silk gauze over wide white Turkish trousers; these are tied round the chest with a sash of the same material tied in a large bow. On their heads are perched absurd little Welsh tall hats of transparent black gauze, and these are worn over a sort of skull-cap made of black canvas—it looks like a closely-fitting meat-safe. The hats are often tied under the chin with long tortoise-shell chains; and heavily wadded white linen stockings and straw shoes are worn.

The women are even more picturesque. Mix a chorus girl in a Dutch revue with a picture of an early Victorian maiden with smoothly brushed back hair and a fichu, add a portrait of Manet's and perhaps, bearing in mind always that the lady in question is of the East, Eastern, you may have a slight, if somewhat muddled, conception of what a Korean girl looks like! In case you haven't, let me explain that she is pale and powdered, with shining black hair coiled low on the nape of the neck in an elaborate chignon, and pierced with great jade pins. From well above the waist hangs the daintiest of wide filmy skirts of the same ethereal gauze in snowy white

or palest blue or delicate *eau-de-nil*, through which one catches glimpses of equally diaphanous baggy trousers held up by a gay folded sash of purple or powder blue, with gold embroidered purses dangling. The colour of the sash generally matches the delicious curly-tipped satin shoes, like Moorish slippers, only with straw soles. The short-sleeved bodice is merely a folded kerchief tied with a big white bow, and they go bare-headed save when, to escape chill breezes from the hills, one of them would throw over her head a voluminous green linen coat with magenta strings, so that she looked like a vivid-coloured nun peering out from the enveloping folds.

We spent most of our time stalking unsuspecting peasants and bourgeois with a kodak, and I still have visions of Undine's pink-frocked form chasing a particularly attractive costume and secreting herself in a convenient doorway to snap suddenly as her victim passed. The Chinese dislike being photographed, as they consider it brings a curse. Chair-bearers in Hong Kong drop their unfortunate fares at once in the middle of a street. We were told they had a superstition that if photographed [illegible] air on their shoulders they were doom[ed] bearers all their lives. The Japanese, [illegible], hails with delight the opportunity of perpetuating his cheerful and enlightened smile; but, as a nation, how infinitely we preferred the Celestial race!

When we came to Fusan and the sea we looked

CAUTIOUS COSTUMES ON THE ATLANTIC, AUGUST, 1918

at each other doubtfully, and asked simultaneously, "Where shall we go now?" Undine was all for exploring Harbin, chiefly, I think, with a view to wrapping herself in sables and ermines for the rest of her natural life, but I hankered after the land of wistaria and azaleas. Fujiyama is a witch-woman, and wherever one wanders the spell of her snowy crown and her encircling girdle of lakes draws one back. So we went across to Shimonoseki, and, full of memories of a golden summer walking from end to end of Butterfly-land, we dreamed through the long night journey of grey, sombre Kyoto, Amano-Hashidate, where the Bridge of Heaven spans a turquoise gulf, and of Nikko, the wonder of all ages amidst her cyprus avenues. Bustling Kobe woke us with the dawn, and we dragged Buddha from two very surprised porters, and dumped him into a rickshaw for the last time.

Coffee and grape-fruit and fat little fishes were served us by painted maidens in gay kimonos and stiff-bowed obis. We sat on a wide veranda and looked right across the great harbour to the open sea. Just in front of us the *Fushimi Maru* was taking on cargo for Victoria and Seattle. We had come east on her from Marseilles three years before. In the distance there was a thick line of smoke. Many ships were evidently getting up steam to slip out on the midday tide. The smoke hung low across the wide roadstead. A little wind blew it into strange shapes. For

a moment it wavered into steel blue and earth brown figures, then it drifted back into a solid bank across the harbour—like smoke above a battlefield. I turned away sharply.

"Where shall we go first?" I asked, and began talking hurriedly of Yokaichiba and steep Icao, till I noticed that Undine was not listening at all.

She was gazing out across the water, and her blue eyes were full of visions. A playful wind was blowing up the smoke in grey, feathery puffs —almost I could hear the booming of the guns. All my plans seemed suddenly dull and senseless. Undine, with an impatient shrug, turned back to the golden grape-fruit—and there was silence.

"So our holiday is ended," I said suddenly.

Our eyes met.

"Shall we go down to the office and see if we can get passages on the old *Fushimi*?" smiled Undine happily.

THE END

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