

system, which is the medium of new engagements, so that a black sheep is effectually kept from readmission into good houses, and a slip once made from the path of rectitude generally leads to final downfall.

Business once over, all thoughts of it may be put away; of responsibility and care assistants know little beyond the proper keeping and prompt disposal of the stock in their charge. In most houses there are libraries, often pianos, and other amusements; while concerts, excursions, debating or dramatic societies, and cricket or boating clubs are frequently organised, and as frequently supported by the principal. Drapery houses are not situated in the Elysian fields; to keep a place in them, constant progress must be made and ready attention to business paid; but when all is said against them that can be said they are, as a rule, by no means undesirable residences.

Naturally every person in the trade looks to something beyond assistancy. Marriage is the obvious outlet for the ladies, and into this province we, of course, cannot follow them. It need only be said that no man will find his wife the worse for the business training and self-denial she may have experienced behind the counter. It may be that, in spite of bye-laws, fines, and other things to the contrary, many young ladies find partners for life amongst their colleagues.

Young men generally look out for businesses for themselves, or enter the wholesale houses. In either case there is more scope for energy. To start in business some capital necessarily is needed, but so keen is competition in trade that with a sum of £200 to start with a beginner can generally obtain credit to three or four times that sum, while at all times he will have, if he has obtained any footing at all, only too many opportunities of extending credit. Into this new venture we may not follow. Success means competency, perhaps wealth; failure implies assistancy over again. It too frequently happens that, on the strength of having obtained a business, marriage is undertaken before the stability of the concern is tested. This may be wise, or the very height of folly. If failure follows, the unfortunate man finds it doubly hard—almost impossible—to obtain a situation when he has a wife dependent upon him. Drapery houses seldom hold married men. They want to live out, at their own homes; but it is cheaper by far to have employés who live with the rest. The cost of keeping one more than a certain number is far less considerable than giving a proper equivalent to one person's subsistence, and in a struggle between sentiment and economy in business it is not difficult to predict which will win.

## A BATH AT PENANG.



HE mail-steamer, according to its contract, gives the inhabitants of Penang only a six hours' visit, which, judging from the size of the place, was, one would think, quite sufficient. On arriving here, there is only one thing to be done, and that is to rush on shore, and spend

these six hours—in a bath! After the incessant stickiness of the morning salt-water bath on board ship, one looks forward with supreme delight to getting a dip in these pools at Penang; at all events, the traveller is quite prepared for hoping to enjoy a bathe, the like of which he never even contemplated before; for thus, in his prospectus, the proprietor "trusts that the purity of the water, the seclusion of the situation, the murmuring flow of the crystal streams, and the green enamel of mosses and flowering plants to which the refreshing virtues of the streams give birth, are sufficient recommendation to parties visiting this celebrated fall."

Approaching Penang, or Prince of Wales' Island, the aspect is intensely tropical, and the sloping hills of the numerous islets are richly green with the foliage of the dense woods which reach to the shore.

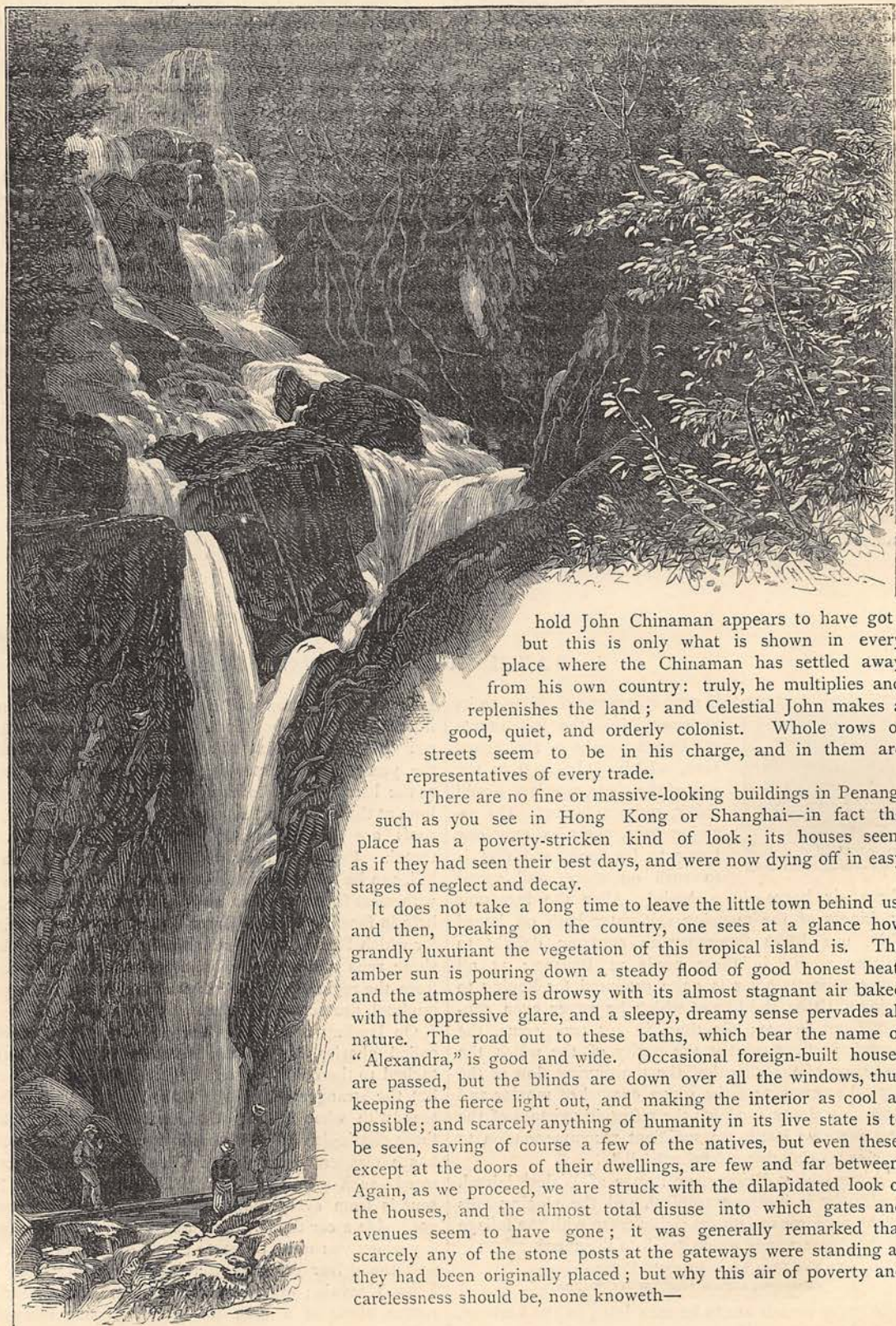
"Now Morn, her rosy steps in th' Eastern clime  
Advancing, sow'd the earth with Orient pearl."

Not many vessels are to be seen lying in the harbour, and the town itself appears so flat and small as to

give it the appearance of not being even so large as it really is. Nearly all the houses are covered with red tiles, which, with the scorching sun which all the year round blesses Penang, look most inviting to the heat, and make such a contrast to the bungalows at the sister settlement at Singapore, where the roofs are for the greater part composed of thick thatch. From the harbour, high up on a wood-clad hill, can be seen the waterfall which supplies the town with most fragrant water, and the tributaries of which help in forming these natural baths on the mountain, for which Penang has become so famous. Along the shore runs a fort, and a company of soldiers taken from the regiment stationed at Singapore, aided by a gunboat, protects the colony.

On landing at the jetty, several cabs or carriages, called gharries, are waiting, with minute ponies attached to the comparatively huge lumbering vehicles; but the stranger will evince strong surprise when he sees with what rapidity these ponies can go. All these gharrie-drivers are assailing you at once. Each has a cleaner carriage than the other, each a fleetier steed—such a babel of tongues. "Look here, sar!" sounds from every mouth, and you have no sooner got inside a car than it is off and away. No need to say where you want to go to; only open your mouth, and the driver grins at you instantly with, "Yas, I know, I savais; my go bath—all right." The gharrie rattles along at a high pace, and, passing through the town, one is struck with the intensely firm





hold John Chinaman appears to have got ; but this is only what is shown in every place where the Chinaman has settled away from his own country: truly, he multiplies and replenishes the land ; and Celestial John makes a good, quiet, and orderly colonist. Whole rows of streets seem to be in his charge, and in them are representatives of every trade.

There are no fine or massive-looking buildings in Penang, such as you see in Hong Kong or Shanghai—in fact the place has a poverty-stricken kind of look ; its houses seem as if they had seen their best days, and were now dying off in easy stages of neglect and decay.

It does not take a long time to leave the little town behind us, and then, breaking on the country, one sees at a glance how grandly luxuriant the vegetation of this tropical island is. The amber sun is pouring down a steady flood of good honest heat, and the atmosphere is drowsy with its almost stagnant air baked with the oppressive glare, and a sleepy, dreamy sense pervades all nature. The road out to these baths, which bear the name of "Alexandra," is good and wide. Occasional foreign-built houses are passed, but the blinds are down over all the windows, thus keeping the fierce light out, and making the interior as cool as possible ; and scarcely anything of humanity in its live state is to be seen, saving of course a few of the natives, but even these, except at the doors of their dwellings, are few and far between. Again, as we proceed, we are struck with the dilapidated look of the houses, and the almost total disuse into which gates and avenues seem to have gone ; it was generally remarked that scarcely any of the stone posts at the gateways were standing as they had been originally placed ; but why this air of poverty and carelessness should be, none knoweth—



“ ‘A jolly place,’ said he, ‘in times of old !  
But something ails it now.’ ”

The shelter-giving cocoanut-tree lines the road on either side, and wild flowers and creepers light up with varied colour the passing scene. Past a few native houses, rudely and poorly built, with plump, naked children, brown as any chocolate, running in and out of the doors, and showing rows of teeth of rarest whiteness as they laugh in their play-time glee ; past the heavy native cart, drawn by a pair of oxen, and with a sleepy driver, almost devoid of clothes also, lying listlessly on his waggon ; past a lithe-limbed Malay woman, with baby slung upon her back and jar of water balanced on her head ; but though black little children are pleasing and attractive, one does not admire them when grown into womanhood. Past patches of wildest jungle, falling off in darkness in the wood, while peeps of majestic hills rise up in front.

At length the road ends, and we have to get out and walk to the waterfall. We are now at the base of a wooded hill, and the green plain we are walking on is all alive with the scattered creepers of the sensitive plant, so that at every step the green leaves close quickly up, as if they wondered and felt aggrieved at our breaking the solemn silence in their lives, as they lay panting under the hot rays of their regal life-giver. Flowers of all hues bloom also, and the hum of the insects strikes with a marked cadence on the ear. A fine flow of clear, cool, rushing water comes dashing and tumbling in headlong fury down the rocks ; and standing near it, under the shelter of Pemi Keller's “everlasting hills,” the shade gives such a kindly relief from the bold rays of Father Sol !

Retracing our steps for about a quarter of a mile, we come to the way-side hotel to which the baths

are attached. These are natural basins formed in the rock on the mountain-side, and into which continual flows of fresh water are pouring and outpouring. They are covered in, both at the top and the sides, so that the water, escaping the boiling by the sun, is ever cool. The dimensions of the baths are as follow :— the ladies' baths measure 8 feet by 5 feet, with a depth of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  feet ; the gentlemen's baths, 15, 20, and 60 feet long, by 10, 20, and 30 feet wide respectively, and  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , 4, and 7 feet deep. Every attention is paid to cleanliness. At the house, too, refreshments can be purchased, and an excellent curry can be made. Instead, however, of following the ordinary dictates of will and wish, and ordering a brandy-and-soda to drink, nothing is more enjoyable than the milk from the fresh green cocoa-nut, which fruit is growing in wildest luxury all around. And wonderful are the blossoms of the English roses, which are blooming with a combination of richest, rarest colour and perfume.

Of course, photographs of Penang and its environs can be purchased here, and ladies may revel in purchases of stuffed specimens of the bright-plumaged humming-birds, which are sold at a dollar each, and which adorn a hat so well.

The gharries wait here, and take us back again ; and one never leaves Penang without a half-wish that a longer delay had been allowed ; for a couple of days could easily be idled away, basking in the tropical beauties of the island.

