

particularly: he is fair, with blue eyes; but there was something about his smile and in his voice that made me feel as though he were quite an old acquaintance. Really, it's rather curious."

"What is his name, John?"

"The same as your humble servant's—John," returned the curate. "But here comes Charlie. Good-bye, my dear fellow. You don't feel uneasy in regard to poor Winstanley's return, do you?"

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND.



IN A HAYFIELD.

BEFORE the mower's sweeping scythe
The dewy grasses bend and fall;
A group of children, gay and blithe,
Amid the hay keep carnival:
While rising high, in azure sky,
The morning sun shines lovingly.

The flowers and grasses slowly fade,
And o'er their wreaths the children sigh;
A maiden sees in ev'ry blade
Emblems of hopes but born to die:
Yet in the sky, still rising high,
The golden sun shines lovingly.

The mower works with haggard eyes,
For bitter grief is in his breast;
A lark flies up with startled cries—
The scythe has swept away her nest:
Yet, risen high in deep blue sky,
The sun still shines on lovingly.

From ivied church the mourners go
(The sun is sinking in the west);
The mower Death has laid one low,
With fading flowers to be at rest:
Yet in the sky, 'mid smile and sigh,
The sun shines ever lovingly.

G. W.

THE RAILWAY TO CANDAHAR.



untrodden highway, along which the commerce of Astrakan and the Siberian frontier will flow into the bazaars of Sindh and the Punjab, and thence by way of Bombay and Calcutta into European channels. It will be the means of tapping the vast granaries of the Pisheen Valley, and thus diminishing the possibilities of Indian famines, and of enabling the caravans which wend their slow course from the

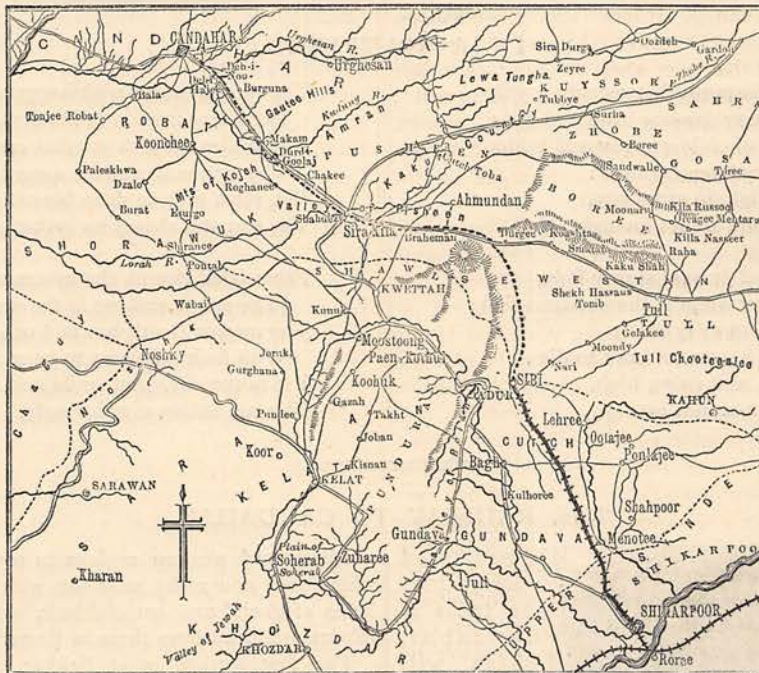
HE projected railway from the Indus to Candahar, which will bring that central city of Afghanistan within five days' journey of India, will not only open up a wonderfully picturesque and romantic country, but a fresh and hitherto

northern and western regions to make two journeys where they now make only one, with cargoes of fruit, bales of goats' and camels' hair, and the wondrous fabrics produced from them in Eastern looms.

The first station is at Sakkar, a curious town which will thus become the threshold of Western civilisation. The country round about it is thickly wooded to the water's edge by a jungle of Euphrates poplar, tamarisk, and mimosa, with here and there great belts of tall reeds eighteen to twenty feet high. In mid-stream rises the island fortress of Bakkar; on one side of the river are the many-storied houses, palm-groves, and sacred haunts of Roree, and on the other the lofty rocks and sun-burnt buildings of Sakkar itself. Thence the rails are laid to Shikárpoor, through a flat country crossed by many irrigation-canals and covered with patches of jungle, which gradually give way to cultivated land and forest trees. The tangled undergrowth of brushwood is mainly composed of the Mzarrai or tiger-grass, a kind of dwarf palm very valuable to the natives, the entire leaves of which they use as fans, cut them into strips for plaiting mats, make ropes from their coarser fibres, and the sandals called "chapli" from the finer ones. These shoes are admirably adapted for walking over rocky ground, and are consequently used by all the hill-

tribes of Afghanistan. The downy hair found in the axil of the leaf-stalk serves as tinder, and the delicate white embryo leaves are an efficacious domestic remedy for diarrhoea and dysentery, and when further developed are an invaluable horse and cattle medicine. The town of Shikárpoor is cleaner than most Eastern ones, and wears, as well it may, an air of quiet prosperity. The merchants who dwell in the carved houses of its tortuous streets are men whose commercial reputation stands high, and who hold in their grasp all the threads of commerce within a wide radius. The bazaar has a pent-house roof, thatched with palm-leaves, and offers a welcome shelter from the blazing sun. Men and women of many tribes—the latter for

sandy spot near the obscure hamlet of Khangarh, on the very edge of the desert. It was laid out, planted, and watered by the gallant officer whose name it bears, and is now in all the vigour and luxuriance of youth; and between this place and Shikárpoor the land is fertile, well watered, and shaded. About three miles beyond Jacobabad the old British frontier line is reached, and the dominions of the Khan of Khelat, or Beloochistan, entered. This region is one almost uninterrupted desert of hard dry clay, said by one who knew it well to be as "level as a billiard-table and as bare as a board." Not a pebble or blade of grass is visible for miles, and the ordinary caravan track lies right across this "pat," which is rendered impassable



MAP SHOWING PROPOSED ROUTE FROM THE INDUS TO CANDAHAR.

the most part unveiled and dressed in bright-coloured garments—go to and fro under its shadow with a pre-occupied air, and a great deal of business is transacted in its dim recesses. The poor are not altogether neglected, for there is a charitable dispensary; and the majesty of the law is declared by the existence of a prison containing 500 convicts, all of whom are clad in fur jackets, with which luxuries but few of them can have had any previous acquaintance. The suburbs of Shikárpoor boast of many large trees, and the roads are covered with a thick layer of reeds or rushes to keep down as much as possible the blinding and all-permeating dust; and there are fine public gardens, called Shákí Bágh, containing a menagerie and a pavilion built in English style and taste. The next station on the route is Jacobabad, the headquarters of the Sindh Irregular Force, a flourishing frontier place which twenty years ago was a bare

for either camels or wheels by a very little bad weather. The iron road, however, skirts the dead level towards Barshori, a large village round which a good deal of corn is cultivated, and whence the ordinary routes diverge northward to the Bolan Pass by way of Bágh and Dádur, and westward by Gundáva to the Miloh Pass. Dádur, at the entrance of the Bolan, is the point at which the first projected portion of the line was expected to come to an end. It is a town above which the hills rise at once to a considerable height, and among them is the source of the Nari river, a stream that annually overflows its banks and floods the plain from Gundáva to Jacobabad, giving good reason to hope that most of the soil may be brought into cultivation by proper irrigation and husbanding of the precious fluid. It has been thought that only an ordinary road would have to be constructed through the Bolan, and the rails resumed at its further end at

Darwasa, whence they could easily run across the tracts that in the picturesque language of the Orient are designated "the Valley of Want," past the graves of ancient bandits, and over plains that in summer are flowery carpets, and in winter wildernesses blasted by winds so bitterly cold as to quench animal life if left exposed to them. But a closer and more intimate knowledge of the country now shows that it is possible to avoid the Bolan altogether, by making a circuit and striking north from Dádur to Sibi; and to this latter spot the line has now advanced. Turning again westward, Kwettah will be reached—so long, by permission of the Khan of Khelat, a British outpost, and a thorn in the side of the Ameer. Its curious citadel, built on far higher mounds of *débris* than have been found at ancient Troy, its workshops, and other sharp contrasts between the past and present, will be more vivid than ever when brought face to face with the grim locomotive, bright boiler, and unearthly screech of invading science. But, nothing daunted, the line may run by way of the fertile Pisheen Valley, and skirt more mountains, till it emerges on the upland plain surrounding Candahar.

This city is a fortified parallelogram, flanked on the west by rows of tall dark cypresses, and on the south by gardens, fields, and hamlets stretching down to the banks of the river Tarnac; while it is shut in on the north by the rocky heights of Baba Wali and Husen Shahr. Its patron saint is Ahmad Shah, the first and greatest of the Durrani kings, whose mausoleum, though situated amid unsavoury surroundings, and falling into decay, is adorned with exquisite windows, and decorated with fine arabesques. At the foot of the hills to the north is a gold-mine, worked in a very primitive and scarcely remunerative fashion; and, from the character of the soil around, it is probable that the gold-yielding stratum may extend for some distance under the alluvium of the plain. Under the old *régime* Candahar was ruled by three separate governors, each independent of the others, though all were answerable to the Ameer. Fully a third part of it was deserted or in ruins, and the people in such a state of despair, caused by the rapacity of the trio and the large body of troops quartered on them, that they joyfully welcomed any prospect of change, and are now full of hope for better days. In the accompanying sketch-map it has been found impossible to mark every station on the suggested route.

It is perhaps not generally known how much more fruit is consumed in Hindostan than is grown there, nor how large a proportion of it is brought from Cabul, Persia, and through these countries from other parts of Central Asia. By the present mode of carriage on the backs of camels a vast amount of it is spoiled on its journey; and the railway, carrying such perishable commodities in a few days from the orchards and gardens of Afghanistan to the Indus, will be an inestimable boon both to growers and consumers. Apricots and grapes are among the staple crops of the Logar district. The vines are planted in rows, and trained like bushes by much pruning and clipping; they are of the kinds known in the vernacular as

"Hussaini" and "Shaikh-khali." The fruit is gathered before it is quite ripe, and packed in drums of poplar-wood, between layers of cotton-wool, for exportation. So great is the trade, that poplar-trees are cultivated for the express purpose of furnishing the soft yielding strips of wood required for making these drums. No less than nineteen varieties of grape are grown near Candahar for making wine and for drying as raisins, the latter being the largest business, as only a few wealthy Mahommedans indulge in the use of wine, which is a luxury wisely forbidden to faithful followers of "the Prophet." The apricots are of eleven sorts, and are eaten in great quantities fresh, besides being dried for the Hindostani market. For the latter purpose the fruit is cut open, the stone removed and cracked, the kernel being taken out and replaced in the fleshy part of the fruit, which is then laid in the sun to dry. Peaches attain perhaps their highest perfection in the species called "Tirmäh," a splendid, large, luscious fruit, pronounced by those who have eaten it to be superior to any other in the world. Quinces are of three sorts—sweet, sour, and medium—the first being usually eaten raw, and the others made into candies and conserves, the seeds being added to sherbets, and also dried for export.

Panjwai pomegranates are celebrated throughout the country for their size, beauty, and sweetness. The rind is valuable to tanners and dyers, both abroad and at home; and the bark taken from the roots is a vermifuge and remedy for diarrhoea. Figs are exceedingly valuable, and mostly grow wild; a small, sweet, black variety are strung on thin cords for export, and a white and equally palatable one eaten fresh. Another wild fruit of great value is the "Zut," or mulberry, of which there are as many as nine or ten sorts. In the north of Afghanistan they are dried, ground into a species of flour, and then made into bread which is said to be sweet, wholesome, and fattening. Great quantities are also dried and eaten with almonds and raisins, or with walnuts and parched maize or lentils.

All the vegetables known in Europe grow in profusion, with the exception of the potato, which is not cultivated. A very great favourite is a species of leek called "Gandanna," the leaves of which are used by the natives as spinach is with us. A field of this once planted is a sure possession, as it is perfectly hardy and never wants renewing, twenty-five or thirty years being a very ordinary age for a gandanna-bed, while in the neighbourhood of Cabul one is shown which was sown a century ago. Rhubarb grows wild on the hills and in the stony soil at their feet, and is collected in these localities by the peasants, who carry it into the more populous districts for sale. They have even a rude method of blanching it by covering the sprouting leaves in spring with heaps of loose gravel, so as to shut out the light. Plums and cherries are cultivated in large orchards, though not to so great an extent as other fruits. Clover and lucerne are the principal fodder crops, and when cut and dried are stored in thick cables for future use.

All the resources of this goodly land are now about to be thrown open, and for once in a way it seems as if the supply of comestibles both for man and beast must almost exceed the demand. Ripe fruit in hot climates is not so much a luxury as an important

article of food; but though, in consequence of this, the plains of India will absorb the great bulk of the consignments, a few tons will travel through from time to time, and supply English tables with dessert novelties from Afghanistan.

ELIZA CLARKE.

OUR HAPPY VALLEY: A VISIT TO DOLGELLEY.



THE Dale of Hazels is not unknown to tourists, many of whom spend a few days or hours, as the case may be, in ascending its grand mountain, visiting its noted waterfalls, and perhaps taking one or two of its chief walks. Then, satisfied that they have thoroughly "done" the place, they hurry on to the next spot recommended by the guide-book as an "eligible centre for excursions."

So that for a few weeks, in the height of the season, our quaint little town will often be quite gay with an ever-varying tide of visitors, and the old church thronged for two or three successive Sundays, the strangers generally lingering in the churchyard after service is over, to enjoy the view down the valley—"deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns and bowery hollows;" while above the clustering roofs and chimneys of the town, and overtopping the nearer verdant slopes, a glimpse is caught of rugged purple peaks—the outworks of that giant citadel which is the pride and glory of our small community.

Not to these casual passers-by, however, does our valley reveal itself. Some of its loveliest scenes are unknown and undiscovered by them, and weeks and months may easily be spent in exploring the neighbourhood, fresh beauty being found at every turn in each of the numerous glens and valleys which "run amongst the hills." We have passed many months in this manner, and (good walkers though we be) have found the time all too short for the purpose; recalling even now, with fond regret, many a charming spot only once visited, or remoter nook never reached.

Let us suppose that the reader, acting upon our advice, has arrived by the late train last evening, and driven through the narrow irregular streets, which break out unexpectedly here and there into odd little squares, and then seem to end, till a sudden turning brings you out again into an open space where the houses have apparently quarrelled and refused to face each other; some standing with their backs to the company, some edgewise, some endways, one retreating shyly behind its neighbours, another standing boldly forth alone. The older dwellings have high-pitched roofs, with great rickety-looking stone chimneys, equally primitive and picturesque in their construction; casement windows, and sometimes flights of outer stairs leading to the attics. A few

years ago there were several "timbered" houses, but with one conspicuous exception (the so-called Parliament House of Owen Glendwr) these, alas! have disappeared, and comfortable but commonplace modern habitations are fast displacing the queer old cottages. Perhaps you have elected to put up at one of the two principal hotels in our town, but if you intend to follow our example and make a prolonged stay, you will probably have secured private lodgings, which can always be heard of through the Postmaster. I know if you have the good luck to get into our quarters you will be indeed fortunate; and supposing such to be the case, you will very likely have been wakened from your slumbers this morning by the church-bells ringing for 8 o'clock prayers, and with a sense of bewilderment, consequent on yesterday's journey and the unfamiliar surroundings, will have listened vaguely to the murmur of the river close by, mingling with the sweet tinkle of the chimes. Come out when you have breakfasted in that pretty room whose windows look over the smooth, rippling water to the green uplands of its further bank; a few steps will bring you to the river-side, and there, seated on a bench in the long pleasant meadow, where eternal games of cricket are played, you can take your ease and have a look about you. Facing you, the little town and church nestle close at the foot of Cader Idris, a chain of mountains which are all included under the name of the central and loftiest peak, that being invisible from your present position. A fine group it is, bare and rugged, with purple rifts and deep hollows, wherein lie hidden tarns; but the nearer ridges and lower wooded hills conceal much of its sterner features, and disguise its height, so that many persons are disappointed at the first view from hence. It is when you come to closer quarters that its true grandeur is disclosed, and from any of the hills around you gain a juster idea of its proportions, rising with you as it seems to do, at every step, and gradually dwarfing into insignificance all rivals.

A long toilsome walk up a steep lane and across boggy moorland, where stag's-horn moss alone seems to flourish, brings you to the tarn, which in itself scarcely repays the ascent, but the overhanging cliffs of Mynydd Moel are fine. Far larger and better worth the climb are the two lakes lying more to the westward, and nearly below the central peak of Cader, under a grand semi-circular precipice; but they must be reached by quite another route. Look over those pretty houses, the lawns and woods of which adorn the slopes