

A DAY OF MY LIFE IN INDIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "INDIAN HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT," ETC.



"MEM-SAHIB! Mem-sahib! Mem-s-a-h-i-b!" with a prolonged howl on the final "sahib," breaks in on my slumbers. At first I am really too sleepy to do more than give an irritable grunt and doze off again; but Indian servants are persistent, and as over-

night I had expressed a wish to be called at four o'clock a.m., at that hour my trusty ayah insisted on waking me. Again her voice rose from the first whispered call to the prolonged final howl, and as this was followed by a gentle but decided pressure of my feet—an excellent method, by the way, of waking persons without alarming them—I ordained to wake.

I demand, "*Kya baja hai?*" (What o'clock is it?), and receive for answer, "*Mem-sahib, char baja ab baj-gya*" (Four o'clock has struck).

Once up, a refreshing splash in a very primitive tub—a beer-barrel sawn across lengthwise—a hurried scramble into a white riding-habit, a cup of tea swallowed while the ayah is brushing and coiling up my hair into a tight knot, and I am ready for my usual morning canter. "Kis-waste," my golden-chestnut country-bred, is resenting the tight clutch his *syce* has on the bridle while leading him round the compound, and showing his displeasure by shaking his head violently, and trying to mouth the native in charge of him. His injured feelings are soon pacified when I appear in the verandah and call him for his accustomed bit of bread, and he stands perfectly quiet for me to mount.

And here a word of advice. Never while in India neglect a morning outing of some sort. Either ride, drive, or walk every morning before the sun is up, for then is the only time you will be able to breathe really fresh air—or, as the natives express it, "eat the wind" (*hawà khàna*).

It is hard work to get up early at any time, doubly hard in India, when you have probably endured an almost sleepless night, when the heat has been stifling, and the punkah-coolie, more than usually drowsy, has let the rope drop from his hand, or at all events rest inertly between his fingers—when you have, from his neglect, awoken frequently feeling as if you were

about to have a touch of heat-apoplexy; or possibly the insects, the sand-flies, mosquitoes, and ants of various sorts have been having what our American friends call "a good time"—then, I repeat, you do feel disinclined to stir, especially as with the morning light Mr. "Laloo," the punkah-coolie, has awoken to a sense of his mission in this world, and the punkah, instead of scarcely moving, is flapping away briskly and fanning you into a heavy morning doze. Yes, it is hard enough to call up sufficient energy to leave your bed and mount your *tat* (pony); but, believe me, the reward is in the doing, and I attribute the way in which I kept my health in India as due entirely to my never neglecting my morning ride or drive.

On this particular morning I went off into the country, towards an old tomb I wished to make a sketch of, and the way led through fields of waving grain. In some places, in rice-land more particularly, you cannot ride through the crops, as the bridle-path is too often merely a narrow ridge of ground, dug out on each side, and the difficulty of preventing your horse from slipping first on one side and then on the other is such that it does away with the pleasure of the ride. Round Mooltan (our station), however, are to be found charming paths leading through the fields in every direction.

Date-palms (*Phoenix dactylifera*) are a great feature in the landscape. They grow and flourish in great quantities in this part of the Punjab. I have ridden for the last half-mile or so through a splendid field of Indian corn (*Zea maize*); it is one of the handsomest of all the Indian cereals, and looks equally beautiful in its green state or in its yellow maturity. Just as we emerge from the field and come out on the open *maidan* (plain), a jackal breaks cover, and for a wonder goes straight away; and I wish inwardly that it was the cold season, and that the little "bobberie" pack belonging to the regiment was at hand. "Kis-waste" shakes his head as if he would like to chase the animal on his own account, and as "Solongee Puppyee Sahib," my faithful but mongrel terrier, is in attendance, we do have a gallop until pulled up by a deep nullah, which has to be negotiated with care. The tomb I have come to sketch is exactly like any other Indian tomb—and you may see plenty of them in a morning's ride—but it is rather picturesquely situated, has a fringe of verdure round it, and a splendid tamarind-tree partly hiding it from view, from out of which fly about a dozen green parrots, chattering and screaming discordantly. They are pretty little things, with their bright green plumage, long tails, rose-coloured beaks, and ringed necks; and it is really too cruel to use them for shooting-matches, in lieu of the pigeons which are not. This, however, is too often done, and they are purchased for the purpose at the rate of about two rupees for fifty. We make pets of them at home, and

they are when tamed most lovable little birdies, having even more coaxing ways than usually belong to the parrot tribe.

After making my sketch—a very feeble one, I feel obliged to admit—I ride round by a tiny *jhil* (pool), and surprise a splendid *sarus* and a few queer water-



fowl. Some fish are also to be seen rising and making little circles in the water. It is getting hot by this hour, and time to go back to cantonments; but the breeze this morning has been refreshing, and I feel I have drunk in enough ozone to carry me through the weary hours of stifling heat which have, alas! to be endured.

S.P.H.

I reach the bungalow about half-past six, in time to dress for *chota hazaree*. My husband has returned from his military duties, and brought a brother officer in to breakfast with him; one or two others drop in while that most pleasant meal of the whole day is progressing. Our table is spread in the verandah, adorned with flowers; it is not too hot to be bearable, and so the *chics*—large reed blinds—are some of them left rolled up, and we catch glimpses of the many-hued convolvuli, which however are fast closing up their petals; a date-fence round the house and the tennis-lawn in front is, in the early morning, a complete blaze of colour, as it is so thickly covered with different sorts of convolvuli that the fence is entirely hidden.

We dawdle over our breakfast, talk a small amount of *gub* (gossip), learn each other's plans for the day, arrange where we shall again meet, discuss the last news from home, until the heat becomes oppressive, and the outsiders, not caring to risk sun-stroke by remaining out too late, drop off.

I am writing of the hot weather, and one of the ordinary days of Indian life. Every now and again there is, of course, a diversion—a big dinner, a moonlight picnic, a tennis match, or something just a trifle out of the usual line; but as a rule the monotony of life in the hot weather is very trying and really the hardest thing to bear. "What am I to do all day?" is the question most people ask themselves when the morning breaks—that is, if they have no real aim in life. Those who have some settled plan of action, who do not lose their energy and allow the climate to steal away their talents, are the people who keep their health in India. But I am digressing. After *chota hazaree*, come the usual duties of the lady of the house everywhere. I order dinner, give out the stores for the day, and, that accomplished, settle down to some work or other till lunch; for we, unlike most people in India, kept English hours and made our breakfast at 7.30 or 8 o'clock suffice us till lunch at 1, not going in for another breakfast between 10 and 11.

It is wonderful how many letters have to be written in India—*chits*, as they are familiarly called. Messages are never sent by native servants, but letters or notes, so there is a constant post going on, the most trifling request being contained in a *chit*, which must be answered.

After lunch the hours begin to hang heavily; the house is all shut up, the punkahs and thermantidote are at work, and if you are not a neuralgic person you draw your easy-chair close to the *khush-khush tattie*, which blocks up the door on the side the breeze is supposed to come from, and read or work. For the latter employment, though, you have hardly enough light—that is, if you darken your rooms to the extent most people do. I never could endure to sit in the semi-darkness and wish for the sun to set; the hours always seemed then to be double their ordinary length.

In the worst time—in the hot weather—people rarely stir before dinner, ordering the carriage round immediately after it, and driving in the evening air—if there is any—until it is time to return home to bed. When not quite so hot as this, they adjourn to the band-stand, or some lawn-tennis or Badminton party, or pay calls if they know intimately the people on whom they call—state calls and first calls have to be paid between twelve and two o'clock—returning to dinner about eight o'clock, and sitting out in the compound afterwards, tea or coffee being brought out there.

I liked the life, but then I am bound to say that in India or in England the days are always too short for me, and at the close of each day, spent no matter where, I find I have not accomplished all I had wished and intended to do when I first rose, but have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and most probably have done those things which I ought not to have done. I write this in all seriousness, for such is probably the experience not only of myself individually, but of many amongst us.

E. J.

A HOSPITAL NURSE'S DAY.

BY A PROBATIONER.



HERE is a great deal of talk in these days about ladies as hospital nurses. It is spoken of scornfully by some as the "fashionable mania" of the times; others extol it as the noblest of all vocations. But in spite of all that is spoken and written on the subject, there are very few outsiders who seem to have at all a clear idea of what goes on inside the

walls of a hospital, and perhaps this may be one reason why so many young girls who throw them-

selves enthusiastically and unthinkingly into the work, retire at the end of a few months, weeks, or even days, disappointed and disgusted.

Possibly a brief sketch of hospital routine, by one who has made trial of it, may prove interesting to those who have heard and read discussions on the subject, more especially if they have any fancy for taking up the work themselves.

The day-nurses enter their respective wards at about half-past seven in the morning. Wards are not pleasant at that hour. In spite of good ventilation and open windows, they get close and disagreeable. If there are many bad cases, probably there will be, in spite of disinfectants, an odour the reverse of agree-