ANOTHER BIT OF INDIA.

By Mrs. H. V. Bagshawe.

PART I.

After being stationed sixteen weary months at New Cantonments, Delhi, we set forth on the long journey to our new station, Wellington, in the Nilgiri Hills of S. India, without any regrets. As we wished to see something of the east coast we decided to travel via Calcutta and Madras, instead of the more direct route due south.

We left Delhi on a bitterly cold night in February; in spite of big coats and many blankets it did not seem possible to keep out the icy blasts that find their way into an Indian railway carriage which is built for heat and not for cold. When we woke the next morning the temperature was many degrees warmer, and the air much more moist. By 9 a.m. we were at Cawnpore; the scenery had completely changed from that to which we were accustomed in the Punjaub; big trees were growing all around us, mostly mangoes covered with a profusion of beautiful white bloom, and the cultivation was nearly all cotton. Cawnpore is famous for its cotton and woollen manufactories; everywhere one looked one saw huge buildings and chimney stacks which did not improve the landscape.

Allahabad we reached at noon, and soon after crossed the River Jumna; about half a mile down stream on our left we caught a glimpse of the Ganges, for it is here that the two rivers converge. By sunset we were running through fields of opium (a white poppy), and at dusk crossed the Sone River, just outside Patna; the river-bed was over half a mile broad, but at this time of year the actual flow of water is barely fifty yards wide. It took us just twenty minutes to cross, as the train has to go dead slow owing to there being no overhead girders or guards of any description.

We awoke next morning at dawn to find ourselves in the suburbs of Calcutta, in a land of palms, paddy (rice) and water. Here and there we passed factories with their tall chimneys belching forth columns of smoke and wreathing the low-lying country in a thick blue haze. We passed many fine native houses and thousands of miserable hovels that house the majority of the inhabitants of the second city of the Empire.

The air was damp and sticky and the temperature fairly warm. We ran into the terminus Howrah at 6.30 a.m., after a very interesting thirty hours' journey. Kind friends met us and took us to their quarters in Fort William, where we were to stay for our short visit of thirty-six hours in Calcutta. Immediately on leaving Howrah Station we crossed the
famous Hoogli Bridge, across the river of that name. At present this is the only bridge across this river, over which the whole of the traffic entering Calcutta from the west has to pass. It is said that more traffic passes over this bridge in the course of a year than over any other in the world; if what we saw that morning was a sample, I can well believe it.

The little I saw of Calcutta in the short time I was there did not impress me; it seemed much like an English city, with the heat, smells, dust and disadvantages of the East thrown in. There were many fine buildings, wide streets planted with avenues of shady trees, excellent English shops, and in the European quarter everything very modern and up to date, but somehow East and West did not seem to blend. One of the finest thoroughfares, Chowringhee, runs beside the Maidan, a fine open space on the left bank of the Hoogli; on this is situated the race-course, the Victoria Memorial, cricket and football grounds; and beyond on the river's edge Fort William, which houses practically the whole garrison of Calcutta, only the British Military Hospital being outside its gates at the southernmost end of the Maidan.

The Victoria Memorial is a fine building or white marble-like stone; erected at the instigation of the late Lord Curzon when Viceroy, and houses various collections, whilst immediately beneath the central dome is an imposing statue of Queen Victoria.

At the northern end of the Maidan are the Eden Gardens, beautifully laid out with ornamental waters, flower beds, and flowering shrubs a blaze of colour, and here and there quaint little pagodas and kiosks. Fort William dates from the time of John Company, and is much the same as the others built in India at that period. It has a fine old church within its walls and prettily laid-out gardens. A walk from the fort to the Outram Ghat (landing stage) is interesting; it reminds one very much of the Thames and the Pool of London, with all its busy craft from all corners of the world loading and unloading their cargoes; but there seems to be more colour and life than in the Thames, and the surroundings are more picturesque.

There are in Calcutta some very fine Jain (Hindu sect) temples, the finest of their kind in India, I believe, but, alas! we had not time to visit them. Another show place we missed was the Zoo; my children went, though, and informed me "it was just as nice as the London one."

The place that interested me most of all was the New Market, in which one could buy anything from curios and clothing to foodstuffs, etc., all at the cheapest possible rate. The fruit, vegetables, meat, etc., were all housed in buildings after the style of Covent Garden and Smithfield, whilst the rest of the market was laid out in arcades, the various trades being housed in different lanes.

After a little more than thirty-six hours in Calcutta we entrained again at Howrah, on the second half of our journey south. We steamed out of the station at 5 p.m., and until nightfall were running through groves of
tall palm trees, fields of paddy, and crossing innumerable small streams and rivers which, in the rosy hues of the setting sun, seemed all colours of the rainbow. The next morning we found ourselves still in the land of palms, but not so dense and of a different variety, and there was practically no water anywhere. Now and then we saw isolated clumps of that beautiful red tree “flame of the forest,” and at intervals patches of bright scarlet in the fields, which on closer inspection proved to be red chillies drying in the sun. By this time the temperature was more than warm, and the further south we went the less clothes the natives wore; in fact, all they boasted of now was a loin cloth and an umbrella made from palm leaves. At sunset we crossed the Godaveri, another of the holy rivers of India, and shortly afterwards stopped at Rajamundry, the headquarters town of this district. During the night we crossed many other big rivers, one of which was the Kistna, but it was too dark to see more than the barest outline. We ran into the terminus at Madras about 8.30 a.m. the next morning, the last few hours of our journey being through the swampy creeks and inlets that run up from the sea; we got occasional glimpses of the coast fringed with palms, the sun glistening on the sea beyond.

We were only to stay a day in Madras, and again kind friends put us up. Their quarters were in Fort George, another old John Company fort on the edge of the sea. The various barracks and quarters contain much beautiful old woodwork, and there is an old Protestant church which is said to be the first Christian church built in India, which is very interesting. Madras is a very picturesque city, well laid out with broad and shady roads, magnificent modern buildings, nearly all of Eastern design, a fine sea front and marine drive. I found Madras a most attractive place, the attraction lying, I think, in the fact that, although it was modern and up to date, it did not lose its oriental aspect and remained everywhere very picturesque. The Aquarium is well worth a visit, as it houses many weird and curious denizens of the deep. The Victoria Institute of Arts and Crafts should not be missed, as it gives one a first-class insight into the varied trades and crafts of the Madras Presidency. The British Military Hospital is situated at the southernmost end of the fort, facing the sea; from the outside it appeared very small, which I believe it is; it has no sisters, and the families have to go into the Government General Hospital when sick.

We left Madras that night at 8 p.m., on the final stage of our journey. We saw nothing of the country through which we were passing until dawn the next morning, when we arrived at Podanor, the junction for the West Coast and Nilgiri Hills. The country round us looked bare and dry, very few trees, and nothing green; in the far distance we could discern a range of deep blue mountains, which we took to be the Nilgiris; the nearer we got to them the bluer they became, hence their name, nil (blue), giri (mountain).

We reached Mettupalliyan, the terminus of the broad-gauge line, about
Another Bit of India

8.30 a.m.; here we had to change into the narrow-gauge mountain railway that was to take us up to our destination. The first two miles to the little village of Kallar is flat, through dense palm groves; then the engine that had been pulling us retired to the rear of the train, and from thence onwards proceeded to push us upwards with the assistance of a rack. The planning and building of this line must have been a difficult task; in some places it is cut out of sheer rock, with a drop below of some thousands of feet. The gradients are severe, hence the use of the rack. I noticed in some parts the gradient marked on posts at the side of the line was as much as one in fifteen. As the train climbs over 6,000 feet in less than eighteen miles it is not surprising. The scenery is very fine; one looks across a deep and thickly-wooded valley to a sinister looking peak at the end of a long spur which is called the Droog. Through openings in the jungle below one gets glimpses of the Kalla River tumbling down steep falls in mad haste to join the Bvani River in the plains below. At an altitude of about 4,000 feet one runs into the coffee and tea estates; the various bungalows and factories are dotted about on the hillside above one. Just before turning into the inner valleys one gets a fine view of the valley and the plains beyond; at sunset this view is really beautiful; the hills are blue, the valleys green, and the plains beyond a lovely shade of deep pinky red. The first station one reaches is Coonoor, a very popular summer health resort, two miles from Wellington. From the railway station Coonoor is most unattractive-looking, as one only sees the native quarter and bazaars, which, like elsewhere in India, are ramshackle and dirty. The residential quarter is above on the top of the hill and quite out of sight. As the train stops three-quarters of an hour here to allow the passengers to have breakfast, a friend came to meet us and motored us straight up to Wellington, by a pretty road running above but almost parallel with the railway line; our luggage we collected later from Wellington station.

There was no house available for us in Wellington, so we had to take one in Coonoor, and it was not until six months later that we were able to get one in our proper station and settle down there. Our journey from Delhi took us exactly a week; every moment of it was full of interest and we all thoroughly enjoyed it. In spite of the cares of a family and a pet cat, we arrived safely after a very pleasant little trip half way round India.

PART II.

The Nilgiri Hills, though not so grand as the Himalayas, are prettier and the climate is more equable. Wellington is situated at an altitude of 6,000 feet above sea level, on a long open spur running down from the central range, the highest point of which is Dodabetta (8,500 feet), the highest point in the Nilgiris. The native bazaar is at the bottom of the valley through which the railway runs. The barracks and hospital are on
Like Coonoor the approach from the station is not prepossessing; one sees only the ugly native hovels, and still more ugly barracks, but directly one gets on the top of the hill one comes to shady roads and pretty bungalows, with gardens a blaze of flowers. Wellington was for some years the headquarters of the Madras District Staff, but in September, 1926, they moved to Bangalore, where they had been previous to the Great War. The garrison consists of one battalion of infantry (British), a company of which is away on detachment at Mallupura in the Moplah country. It seems a great pity that more troops are not stationed in this perfect climate, and where the cost of living is low, rents ditto, servants cheap, and the sick-rate practically nil. Although I have mentioned a bazaar, there is really no such place, at least not what one is accustomed to elsewhere in India, where one’s cook can go daily and procure supplies. In all the Nilgiri towns it is the custom to hold a weekly “shandy,” or market, from which one lays in a week’s supply of fruit and vegetables, and at which one buys the best meat, that which is slaughtered during the rest of the week being generally of inferior quality. The gaily clad men and women squatting in front of their goods in the market place are very picturesque, if not exactly clean, and one sees such a varied collection of tropical and English produce, rhubarb and Brussels sprouts, next to coconuts and brinjals, mangoes and strawberries, tomatoes and celery; every kind of fruit and vegetable seems to flourish in the Nilgiris. My only grouse is the inferiority of the servants; they are all Christians, very lazy and unreliable. I tried many and found only one worth thinking about; anyhow, the supply is bigger than the demand, so one can always go on trying and hoping for the best. I think I am right in saying this is a general grouse everywhere—especially by people coming from the north, where all servants are generally excellent.

Wellington has a charming little gymkhana club, situated in an amphitheatre half way to Coonoor. The club-house is in the centre, and round it the race-course, whilst an excellent little golf-course crosses it; there are also several good gravel tennis courts. The greens of the golf-course are real greens, which is unusual in India, and the whole course is kept in excellent condition, and voted by many of the enthusiasts of the game one of the best courses in India. In fact, the whole club is well run, which is due to a very capable and more or less permanent hon. secretary who takes the greatest interest in the whole show.

Excellent big game shooting of every variety, from elephant and tiger to much smaller species, may be had within a hundred miles of Wellington. Small game is not so plentiful and more difficult to get. Fifteen to twenty miles away, on the Ootacamund Downs, there is very good trout fishing. These downs are also the home of the famous Ooty Hunt.

The biggest civil station in the Nilgiris is Ootacamund, ten miles west of Wellington by road or rail, and another 1,500 feet higher. Ooty (local abbreviation) is situated in a basin in the hills, the bigger and nicer
private bungalows clustering high up on the surrounding hills. It is much greener than Wellington and frightfully overgrown with enormous blue gum or eucalyptus trees, originally imported from Australia many years ago. A stream that used to run through the valley in Ooty has been dammed up, forming a very picturesque lake; sloping lawns run down to the water’s edge, and dotted here and there along the banks are graceful firs and flowering shrubs, whilst arum lilies and other water-loving plants are to be seen in or on the water everywhere. Looking across the lake one cannot believe one is in India, it reminds one so much of Virginia Water at home. Ooty is everywhere an extraordinary mixture of tropical and English growth; one finds arum lilies and lotus growing alongside gorse and broom, whilst not far off there is a dense jungle of bamboo, moonflower (the deadly datura), tree-ferns and palms. Ooty has a pretty little race-course on which races are held for a week every May. The famous Downs commence about three miles out of Ooty, and remind one very much of Sussex; they are perhaps a little steeper. The valleys are thickly wooded and provide fine covert for the many jackal that give the Hunt their sport.
Alas! these “sholas” (woods) also harbour sambur and pig, which so often lead the hounds astray and give the Hunt officials many a bad half-hour.

There are some very fine rivers running across the Downs, in which trout are caught. The Mukerti, Krumund, Billithadhulla, Avalanche, Emerald, Pykara, and Kundah, the three former being considered the best. Nowadays really big fish are not caught, the rivers being overstocked. Last year we had excellent fishing every time we went out, but this year, with the exception of on the Billithadhulla, we had poor sport. Five days on Billithadhulla brought two rods in a total of 227 fish, which is not to be despised.

Ooty, like Wellington, has an excellent golf-course, but the greens are “browns” and crows devour one’s balls. There is also a big club in Ooty itself, whilst the club-house on the golf course takes the place of the gymkhana in other places.

The next biggest station after Ootacamund is Coonoor, a very pretty spot on the edge of the hills and commanding fine views of the plain and outlying ranges.

In the most central valley of Coonoor is Sims Park, laid out as public
gardens, with green lawns dotted here and there with flowering shrubs and trees. The lawns slope down to a pretty lake at the bottom of the valley, in which grow water-lilies, lotus and other aquatic plants. Just above these gardens is the Pasteur Institute, the only one in Southern India.

There are many pretty drives and favourite picnic spots within a short distance of Coonoor and Wellington. Lambs Rock and Lady Canning’s seat on the edge of a mighty precipice, dropping sheer over to the plains beneath. And a drive to the Droog is not without interest, as it provides a different outlook over the plains to the other two places mentioned.

There is one other small station in the Nilgiris, and that is Kotagiri, eleven miles due north of Wellington. A sleepy little place, situated on an open slope, and supposed to have the best climate in the Nilgiris. The little I have seen of it gives one the impression of it being half dead, and very dull and uninteresting.

Seven miles beyond Kotagiri is a large tea estate called Kodanaad, from which one may obtain one of the finest views in India. The tea gardens slope down the northernmost spurs of these hills for about 2,000 feet, and from a rocky promontory beyond them one gets a magnificent view of the plains and Mysore Plateau, in a complete semicircle, in some places for over a hundred miles. The country beneath one stands out like an immense map in relief; to the far west one sees the hills of the Wynnaad, then a little further north-west the city of Mysore, with the famous sacred Chamundi Hill standing out clearly by itself in the middle of the distant plains. Immediately opposite, across the valley of the Moyar River, are the Billigirirangaans, which are nearly as high as the Nilgiris, and stretching away to one’s right, due east, is Salem and the surrounding plains through which the amalgamated Moyar and Bvani Rivers wend their way. On one occasion, when I was at Kodanaad, the manager of the estate kindly offered to take us over the tea factory and explain the process of making the tea. A most interesting day; we saw the whole business from the time of picking until the leaf was packed in familiar lead packets ready for export. It is too lengthy a tale to go into now, but I strongly recommend anyone on a visit to the Nilgiris to try and get permission to go over a tea factory; it is well worth a visit.

The Nilgiris are plentifully supplied with many first-class roads in all directions, consequently everyone has motors; in fact, I really do not think one could exist without one, as distances are so great. There are so many charming spots to visit, both near and far. One of the prettiest trips is round the northern slopes of Doda Betta, and home by Ooty. A walk of about three miles from the road takes one up to the very highest point, where there are the ruins of an old observatory. From the top of this one gets a wonderful view in a complete circle, the Nilgiris standing up like a huge island, the sea being the plains all round.

There are numerous pretty spots all over the Downs, the most favourite
I think, being the banks of the Pykara River. Then there is the Katteri Lake, six miles south of Wellington; the lake was formed by damming up a small river where it dropped sharply down to the valley of Kullakumbay below. The actual dam wall is built across the edge of the waterfall, and from here one gets another lovely view of the valleys below, nearly all under tea cultivation, and of the far distant range of the Animali Hills.

The climate of the Nilgiris is perfect, never very hot and never very cold. The rains are fairly heavy, but there is always sunshine at intervals. Ooty gets the full force of the south-west monsoon, Wellington and Coonoor only getting the tail end, but with the coming of the north-east

monsoon the order is reversed, Ooty only getting a fraction. From December to May, the so-called winter months, there is bright sunshine and blue skies every day; the days are hot enough for thin frocks, but the evenings are such a contrast that one is glad to don thick woollies after sunset and have big fires and many blankets at night. Gardens are wonderful, things absolutely ramp; so much rain and so much sunshine act like a hot-house, and things grow in the night. I have made twenty-three gardens in four continents, but never anywhere have I seen both

**Fig. 3.—On the Kodanad Tea Estate.**
flowers and vegetables grow like they do in the Nilgiris. It is almost impossible to kill things, prune and cut as much as you will; cuttings jammed into the earth anyhow root, and seeds come up in the night, so to speak! All over the Nilgiris one meets retired military and civilian officers, glad to end their days in such a beautiful spot and in such a perfect climate. They all seem to live to a great old age, which speaks well for the country in which they live.

Surely there can be few people who have had the luck to be stationed in the Nilgiris who have anything bad to say of them, like of most stations in India, where everyone can find something to grouse at. I have met a few but I think they must be of the kind who are never happy anywhere. Personally, we never hope to be in a more delightful spot or in a more perfect climate; we should be perfectly happy to spend the rest of our lives here, let alone the rest of our tour, but, alas! family ties call us home to England. We have been travelling for over twenty years, and it is the first time we have not had the slightest inclination to move on to "a better station"! I do not think there is one in India, and possibly not in the British Empire; anyhow, not under the jurisdiction of the War Office.