For the first time in nineteen years’ service, I experienced the joys of bringing down a party of troops from the Hills. On the whole the trip was amusing, and a few details may prove of interest to the readers of the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, as the experiences were fairly typical.

My permanent station at the time was Ferozepore, in the Punjaub, and I was directed to proceed to Dagshai, Simla Hills, to bring down a party of British infantry from the latter to the former station.

Two routes were open to me when going up to Dagshai; a shorter, via Ludhiana to Kalka, or a longer journey, involving two changes, one at Raewind and the other at Lahore, which was more convenient.

As the route via Ludhiana entailed leaving at 4.13 p.m., arriving at Ludhiana at 9.25 p.m., and waiting there until 12.35 a.m., I decided to pay the extra fare and travel via Lahore.

This meant that I had to commence my journey two hours earlier, with a wait of forty-five minutes, actually one and a half hours, at Raewind, and another wait of about two hours at Lahore.

The advantage of this route was that the Kalka train left Lahore at 8.45 p.m. and reached Kalka at 6 a.m., without a change in the middle of the night, and as the train started from Lahore, one was able to obtain a seat and “bed down” with every prospect of passing a more or less comfortable night in the train; also a very reasonable meal could be obtained at the dining-room at Lahore station.

I was fortunate in being able to find an empty coupé at Lahore, and after securely fixing every means of ingress to the compartment, I went to bed and, except for the energetic attentions of one or two bugs, now deceased, spent a fairly comfortable night, though my sleep was frequently broken by the cheerful voices of the “Matai wallahs” and the gentlemen desirous of disposing of “Hindoo pani” and other such aids to health.

After taking “chota hazri” at Kalka, I was again lucky enough to obtain an empty compartment in the Kalka-Simla train, and proceeded to Dharampore.

Though very small, the carriages on this line are fairly comfortable, being intended chiefly for the conveyance of the “heaven-born” and other exalted personages to and from their summer paradise at Simla.

One amusing point is that the first and second class carriages are identical and become either first or second class at the will of the guard, who has simply to turn a small board over the door of the compartment to alter the class. This system is simple and reduces rolling-stock, but is
liable to raise suspicion regarding additional passengers in the minds of those entomologically inclined.

The Kalka-Simla railway is a wonderful piece of engineering work, winding, as it does, along the hill-sides and gradually rising up to Simla. On one hill-side it is possible to see two sections of the line over which the train has recently passed directly below one. The track is of narrow gauge, and except at stations is for the most part single.

After a journey of about two hours, Dharampore, sixteen miles from Kalka, was reached, and a tonga was taken up to Dagshai, about three and a-half miles away.

On arrival I was told that I was not expected, as, owing to the small number in the party, it was thought that an assistant surgeon would have been sent up to take over medical charge during the move, but immediate steps were taken as regards my comfort and for my accommodation on the downward journey. I was told that the party was not leaving until the day following that mentioned in my orders.

Luckily, I had several friends in Dagshai, and was very kindly put up by my old friend Major W. R. Durham, I.M.D., retired, the local executive officer. I was very pleased to renew the acquaintance of many friends of the previous year, during which I had acted as Senior Medical Officer to the station and had held command of the British Military Hospital.

I need not give a description of Dagshai here, as this was published in a previous article of mine in the "Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps." I need only say that the weather was fine and the views excellent.

Two trains had been arranged for at Dharampore for the downward journey; the first, with the baggage, left at 1 p.m.; the second, with the troops, at 2 p.m.

Not being very fit I asked for a pony for the trip from Dagshai to the railway station, but a rickshaw with four coolies was sent instead.

On a steep part of the road the rickshaw "ran away," and on going round a corner skidded badly and nearly upset; luckily the two coolies forming the rearguard were alert and so saved the situation and myself. I arrived at the station at 12.50 p.m., according to plan, and was in time to see the baggage train leave at 1 p.m.

The officers detailed for the second train had lunch at the railway refreshment room. It was a strange meal, more like "brunch" than "lunch." We began with soup, followed by mutton chops with a particularly strong flavour, which seemed to indicate that if the mother of the animal from which the chops had been obtained was a sheep, she must have been very lax in her morals, have strayed from the fold and finally had an assignation with a billy-goat. The third course consisted of eggs and bacon, with tinned pineapple to follow. Tea was served as a beverage, though one or two preferred bottled beer. On the whole the meal was much better than was expected, the room and its contents were clean and the service good. The presence and marked friendliness of several rats, how-
ever, seemed to indicate that a "rat week" was unknown, or at any rate forgotten by these rodents.

By the time we had finished lunch, the second train had been drawn up at the platform; some of the carriages were fairly new, or had at any rate been recently painted; others were the reverse. There were two carriages near the brake van; each consisted of one first class and one second class compartment; each first class compartment was intended to carry five passengers, but we decided that if both seats were occupied it would be impossible to move our legs, owing to much space being taken up by "hand" luggage, so the O.C. party and myself took one compartment and three junior officers the other.

One officer had already gone on in the baggage train, and when last seen was sitting on the floor of the guard's van, with his feet on the step, this being the only vacant space he could find; it is pleasing to state that he was found intact on our arrival at Kalka later in the afternoon.

One second class compartment was given to the warrant officers and the other reserved as a hospital. As the latter was a saloon compartment with lateral seats, the orderly in charge was probably the most comfortable passenger on the train, at any rate he was asleep whenever I looked into the compartment.

The troops were given third class accommodation and, though somewhat overcrowded, had much more room than the baggage party in the first train, who, although they had sufficient seating space were crowded out by an accumulation of packs, rifles, dogs, and one small peaceful cat, which during the march down from Dagshai had sat quietly on the top of its owner's pack.

Every one was cheerful, possibly at the prospect of no more "khud hopping," which seems to be the chief aversion of a certain class of soldier stationed at hill stations.

One third class compartment was allotted to officers' servants. One particularly offensive menial, category uncertain, took possession of one compartment of the same carriage and packed into it numerous women and children, said by him to compose "my family, sahib." He and the so-called family were ejected after considerable difficulty, together with much of his kit. I am still rather doubtful if he had any claim to travel on the train at all.

Numerous followers tried to get into the train from the "off" side; these were finally overcome by the regimental police and were ordered back on to the platform.

When the train left there remained on the platform a large, noisy and unpleasant smelling crowd of so-called followers for whom no space was available on the train. It is wonderful on these occasions to see the vast number of natives who consider that they have a legitimate claim to a free trip. In addition to the recognized followers, with their wives and families, there are numerous relatives, brothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, cousins to
the "N'th" degree, and unrelated friends, who turn up and claim the benevolence of the Government.

About half an hour after leaving Dharampore the train stopped suddenly and one of the railway servants was seen to go between two of the carriages with some string in his hand; after a short delay he reappeared, minus the string, so presumably he had repaired the damage and our lives were no longer endangered.

A short time later the train again stopped; the defect appeared to be between a different pair of carriages, but after the application of more string we were able to proceed and eventually reached Kalka without further mishap.

The unloading of the baggage train was in full swing when we detrained, and we were relieved to see that the baggage officer had arrived safely. The methods employed in unloading were worthy of the best efforts of the world-famous American "baggage smashers"; undoubtedly the most easy way to unload heavy baggage from a truck is to pull, roll or push the various packages to the edge of the truck and allow them to drop to the ground.

Whenever possible, that is to say whenever strict supervision was not maintained, these methods were employed, and it is to be hoped that the contents of the boxes were unbreakable, though judging from some of the results the boxes themselves were not made to resist such energetic handling.

When unloading was completed, rations "Scale S" were issued to the troops, and here there seemed to have been a slight misunderstanding on the part of the I.A.S.C. agent, concerning whom I had heard previous reports.

Each man was supposed to receive eight ounces of bread, one ounce of butter and two ounces of jam. On examining the rations it was found that each man was to receive two slices of bread; on one slice of bread there was the most minute scraping of butter, with a similar quantity of jam on the other slice. On weighing one such ration it was found to be three ounces underweight, and when weighed in bulk the total weight of the rations was seventy pounds or nearly one-third under what it should have been. A voluminous correspondence, so dear to the Indian babu, was anticipated regarding this trivial error of judgment.

Whilst waiting for the baggage vans to arrive we watched the entraining of the horses belonging to H.E. the Viceroy—they were magnificent animals, by far the best of their class I had ever seen in India. The larger horses gave little trouble, being evidently used to railway travelling, but two small ponies, which formed the tail of the string, caused much commotion and strongly objected to entering their respective horse boxes; eventually the smallest was lifted bodily by several coolies and so placed in its box.

I do not know who was in charge of these horses, but, although I have
seen a large number of horses, mules and camels entrained at various times, I have never seen anyone handle horses in so quiet and gentle a manner as was employed by the gentleman in charge. One horse held back at first, and instead of the intensive shouting, swearing and waving of arms usually associated with such occurrences, there was almost silence, just a tap on the horse's flank, first with a topee and then with a small stick, and the horse entered the box without any further trouble.

When all the baggage had been loaded on to the broad-gauge vans, the men were ordered to entrain.

The rolling stock provided comprised one composite first and second class coach and several third class coaches. The usual troop train was being used elsewhere, and so was not available.

The composite coach consisted of two first class compartments, each with four sleeping berths, two second class compartments to sleep five each, and two servants' compartments to hold apparently as many as could squeeze in.

These compartments were allotted as follows: First class to officers, one second class to warrant officers, and the other for use as a hospital, officers' servants being told to occupy the servants' sections.

A slight complication now arose; the wife of one of the officers, with a small infant and nurse, arrived by the Simla train, so naturally the officer wanted to take her with him on the train. As she had a first class ticket the local railway authorities had no objection to this, but the question arose as to how she was to be fitted in. After a little discussion it was arranged that one first class compartment should be handed over to the officer and his wife; this left five officers for the remaining first class compartment, so the hospital compartment was taken over by the O.C. party and myself, on the understanding that should it be needed for its legitimate purpose we would turn out and get into one or other of the first class compartments. A third class coupé was handed over to the nursing orderly as a sleeping place for himself, much to his disgust, as the seat had no cushions.

The present arrangements for the wives and families of officers travelling with troops to and from the plains are, from the point of view of the parties concerned, very unsatisfactory; every one will, I think, agree that India is not a country in which white women and children should travel alone, and it would be highly appreciated by all married officers, so employed, if some special accommodation could be provided on the troop trains to enable their wives and families to travel on the same train, of course, on payment of the usual fares, or, better still, if the railway authorities could be induced to allow them to travel on a "Form E."

In the case in question the lady had her ticket and all was well, and as her husband has recently passed the Staff College course, perhaps at a later date, when he has reached the higher ranks, he may be able to arrange for some such scheme as is suggested above to be sanctioned, so that all junior
officers at a later date may, with their hands before their faces, pray for his long life and prosperity, though it is not anticipated that they will claim him as their "father and their mother."

As the troops were overcrowded an extra third class carriage was asked for and was supplied at once by the station master, who did everything he could to make every one as comfortable as possible.

The real excitement of the day commenced when the "followers" were ordered to entrain. The official number of these was forty-two, and a third class carriage to hold thirty-two was set aside for them. By the time the gate was opened to admit them to the station the majority of those left behind at Dharampore seemed to have arrived at Kalka, probably by road, and the whole platform became a mass of struggling and fighting humanity.

Each man seemed to possess at least one wife, several children, two or three huge bundles of bedding and cooking pots, all of which had to be taken into the carriage; in addition there were uncountable "hand butties," empty kerosene tins, sticks, indescribable dogs, and one parrot.

The followers swarmed into the carriage; some sat on the seats, others on the floor, they pushed, fought and swore, speed being added to their efforts by calling out that the train was going to start at once.

I rescued one better type of dog from the mêlée and handed it over to a B.O.R., who took it into his compartment. Finally one had to become serious, and I said it would be absolutely dangerous to life to allow any more followers to entrain; the "Black Hole of Calcutta" must have been Paradise compared with the conditions in the carriage.

As many genuine followers had been unable to fight their way into the carriage, more space was needed. An empty goods van was standing just in front of the train, which it was thought had been provided for the kits of some of the married families, who were following later by mail. Luckily this was not used for the surplus followers, as it appeared to be an all-metal truck, which when closed would be more or less air-tight; and, as the baggage officer said the doors would have to be locked before starting, there would not have been sufficient ventilation for the number of persons still needing accommodation, and one did not wish to have to complicate matters by having to detrain a number of corpses at the end of the journey. Later it was discovered that the van had been provided for the kits of officers from Army Headquarters who were going to Delhi, so it is perhaps just as well it was not "jumped" by the unit.

Eventually one compartment of the extra coach supplied for the B.O.R.'s was filled with selected Indians, known to be legitimate followers.

It may appear that there was considerable lack of control as regards the entraining of the followers, but any one present would fully realize that it would have taken a large picquet to control the mob, and as the matter concerned the railway authorities more than the military, things went as they did.
When the station had regained its normal peaceful condition, the officers went to get a meal and much needed drink at the refreshment room.

After dinner a very agitated railway official asked how many followers were included on the warrant, and when told that forty-two was the correct number, he asked: "Sahib, what can I do, there are many more on the train?"

It was suggested that he should take steps to turn out the unauthorized passengers; he saw the joke, many Indians have a keen sense of humour, and replied: "Sahib, it is impossible, I could not get into the carriage." When asked how many he thought were in the carriage, he estimated the number at "about ninety."

Suddenly he had an apparent brain wave and said that he would wire to Ambala and Ludhiana for travelling ticket collectors to board the train and collect fares from all the canteen employees, wives, and other unauthorized persons on the train; how these unfortunate officials were to get into the carriage unless through a window or by cutting a hole in the roof seemed to defeat him; so he went away smiling and, as expected, nothing happened. Eventually all, including the parrot, arrived safely at Ferozepore, and I was able, after the troops and followers had detrained, to get back to my bungalow for a bath and breakfast, after what had proved a not unpleasant and most amusing experience.