III.—The North.

The conclusion of a six months’ leave found one embarking again for India. A pleasant outward trip on the P. and O. mail boat was devoid of any special happenings. The company on board was of interest; civil and military officers and their wives returning to India, tourists en route to Australia, the Whitley Labour Commission, a Dominion Governor, and many people whose names are household words.

The ship moored at Ballard Pier in the middle hours of a soft tropical night. Sleep was impossible, and, clad in pyjamas, one watched the mooring arrangements. Fifty coolies sprang to life on one side and fifty on another, each hauling on to the hawsers which hoisted the gangway to the ship’s side.

Below the lengthy building of the Post Office, now being illuminated and prepared for the reception of the mails, was seen a vast quantity of old mail bags, but yet dimly perceived in the all-pervading gloom. Gradually in mysterious fashion from beneath first one and then another appeared a moving arm or leg and steadily the long heap of mail bags assumed life and, with clearer light, was found to be sheltering for their night’s lodging vast numbers of coolies, all waiting with the philosophic resignation of the East, to man-handle the mails.

With the blinking of an eye, the stretching of an arm or leg, the removal of an occasional parasite, their toilet was complete, and they were ready for the duties of the day.

A local mail was received on board for incoming passengers, and after a tedious wait in a long queue outside the Purser’s Office, an advertisement from a Poona money-lender was safely placed in one’s hands.

The journey northwards from Bombay to the Punjab was by the Frontier Mail, India’s fastest train, which performed the 1,342 miles in thirty-nine and a quarter hours. The north of India is always spoken of as the real India and is associated with wild open country, rolling plains, great mountain systems, a virile and manly race, great irrigation works and a real cold weather. Most of one’s preconceived ideas materialized, and as the train sped northwards the country gradually assumed a different aspect.
Gone were the palm trees and thick vegetation of the south, the squalid hovels of the Mahratti and Gujerati peasants. Here instead were great open stretches of dead flat country, the landscape punctuated by occasional isolated trees, odd towns of a new and peculiar architecture with flat-topped roofs, solidly made and compactly clustered within the crumbling ramparts of some ancient fort, an occasional mosque with domed roof, a graceful minaret, strong and powerful looking workers in the fields, vigorous and healthy cattle, and slow, swaying and cynical camels.

At noon on the second day Delhi was reached and away in the distance could be seen the skyline of the great new city which has become the capital of India. Quantities of dust entered the carriage, far worse than that of the Canadian Prairies, till the floor assumed the aspect of wind-blown sand on the sea shore.

At night Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, the temperature cooler, and in the early hours of the morning the coach was shunted off the Mail Train and daylight found us in a siding at the station of Rawalpindi.

Orders had been received to proceed straight to one's hill station in the Murree Hills as the hot-weather season was not yet over. The morning was spent in official calls, arranging for a taxi, and lunch in the Mess. Soon afterwards was commenced a rapid run up to Murree, with a climb of over 5,000 feet, and here, indeed, was a new experience. One had seen the gently rolling downs of the Nilgiris, whose very extent had concealed the idea of altitude, but here one soon realized that people lived on mountain tops, on narrow ridges of ground, 7,000 feet or more up, with steep precipices on each side, and where the only flat places are those which have been made so artificially for the accommodation of troops, families and football grounds.

The road to Murree is part of the Kashmir Road; the surface and width are excellent, the gradient easy and with increasing height, the landscape assumes a more and more beautiful aspect. There are many military stations in the Murree Hills tucked away in the remote recesses of mountain tops and the road to the Galies, as these small stations are called, is picturesque, narrow, bumpy and of steep gradient. One's first experience was of engrossing interest. A winding track through extensive woods, with the slanting rays of a western sun casting long shadows through the trees, a drop of 500 feet to a narrow col, and then commence a steep ascent of 1,000 feet in bottom gear.

Here steep valleys drop a thousand feet from the very edge of the road, close at hand to the left are the irregular slopes of a pine-clad hill, and away in the far distance to the right can be seen chain upon chain of blue mountains culminating in the superb snow outline on the Pir Panjal Range bordering the famous Vale of Kashmir.

On a clear day, to the left of this extensive skyline, can be seen standing out in marked isolation a lofty mountain covered in perpetual snow, Nanga Parbet, one of India's highest peaks. Younghusband in his book on
Kashmir [1] considers this scene from the Murree Hills to be one of the three great Himalayan views. Inaccessible and unclimbable, Nanga Parbat stands out a giant among lesser giants, and its 26,600 feet do not appear unduly dwarfed by its 120 miles of distance.

One's destination was reached before dusk and there was sufficient light left to realize that one's summer quarters for the next two years would be in a pleasant place. A large and comfortable bungalow with an English-turfed lawn in front falling gracefully to lower levels, a wide sweep of pine trees on each side, two stately Himalayan oaks in the centre, and between the two belts of pines, an uninterrupted long distance view of Pindi and the plain.

Behind were two other stations, reaching a height of 7,700 and 8,500 feet, where duty would take one from time to time. Close to the latter station was seen a dak bungalow perched on a narrow projecting spur of rock which looked as though at any moment it might slip down the 3,000 feet of cliff below.

A stay of twelve days was made to learn the lie of the land in readiness for the following year, and one returned to Pindi for the commencement of the cold weather.

Here in Westridge, a western suburb of Pindi, lying just off the Grand Trunk Road, one settled down and awaited the arrival of the car from home. In the meanwhile stock was taken of the situation and a modest but expensive staff engaged. The bearer, a Punjabi Moslem, had met the boat at Bombay, an old pock-marked retainer of the Mess and quite a good servant. His customary form of address was “Sir.” If however he desired to discuss anything out of the ordinary, such as minor complaints against the other servants, he would address his master as “Your Honour.” On the less frequent occasions when he had something of prime importance to request, such as an advance of pay, his remarks would be prefaced by the title “My Lord,” with emphasis on the first word. Unfortunately, after a year he had to be dismissed as he did not see eye to eye with his colleagues, and quarrels and bickerings became frequent.

A long delay of six weeks occurred before the car arrived from home, twenty-eight days of which it spent in a “fast” goods train between Bombay and Pindi. In the meanwhile, frequent visits to Pindi were made by tonga, an ancient type of vehicle resembling a low-covered dog-cart and drawn by an animal somewhat resembling a horse. They are much in favour in northern India on account of their cheapness. They have no other claim to popularity and are highly dangerous contraptions from which frequent falls may occur. The animal may take fright and overturn the vehicle, or slip on the smooth tarred surface of the Mall. In each of these ways one fell out in the course of ten days, once in front and once behind.

With the arrival of the car much ground was covered, partly on duty and partly on pleasure. Official tours to Jhelum and Abbottabad, 68 and
75 miles respectively, inaugurated many miles of travelling in Northern India.

The Grand Trunk Road, running from Calcutta through the important towns of the Gangetic Plain, passes in the north through Delhi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Attock and Nowshera to Peshawar, where it is continued westwards through the Khyber Pass to the Afghan Frontier, and so on to Kabul. This great and historic highway, immortalized in Kipling’s “Kim,” has been the scene of countless comings and goings, of armies on the march, invaders advancing southwards and defenders northwards, and at many places on the way have been fought battles which have decided the fate of many a ruler and many a nation.

In the Punjab Plain the ground is for the greater part well surfaced and the gradients are easy. Let not the uninitiated think that because one speaks of the Plain, that therefore the road is level. It is for many miles, but frequent elevations of land in the northern part are encountered, rising in places almost to the height of a mountain at home, and these have to be negotiated very often by long and winding climbs. Again, a common feature is a five-mile rise of gradual ascent followed by a similar descent, then a bridge over a river or dry nullah, another similar rise and fall, and so on for mile after mile. Fast timings can be made, far more so than at home, for the traffic is light, just an occasional bus, a car or two, or a jumble of dazed and lethargic cows. Bile carts are few and far between in these parts, and the punctures of the south caused by bullock shoes are almost non-existent, in fact 5,000 miles of Northern India, mostly on the Grand Trunk Road, were done before the only puncture.
A four days' leave in the early Spring enabled one to visit Peshawar (106 miles) and the Khyber Pass. The road runs first to Attock, an ancient town whose Fort is perched on a dark coloured rock overlooking the deep ravine of the Indus River. Beyond is the important road and railway bridge, the only crossing for many miles. The river is the boundary between the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. On the other side the road is good, long avenues are passed and white marks on the trees at the level of one's head indicate the height of the recent floods.

Next comes Nowshera, with a long straight road passing through an extensive cantonment. Here a halt was made for lunch at one of the messes, and the journey resumed in the late afternoon. Miles of orchards are traversed, and then Peshawar City and Fort come into view on the left and one arrives in the cantonment, where a scene of colour meets the eye. Here are beautiful gardens well laid out with a profusion of brightly-coloured flowers, a marked contrast to the dust and dryness of the long run from Pindi.

The next day was spent in sightseeing and purchasing various local curios and wares. Peshawar is the entrepot for practically all Central Asia, and contains many attractive articles, carpets from far-off Turkistan, and gold and silver and brass ornaments from many a distant bazar, all brought down through the Khyber Pass by camel convoys. The city is also noted for its wax cloth, that is to say, black cloth decorated with coloured wax in various designs, the effect being that of gold thread work, and one looks in vain for signs of stitching behind the fabric. These are artistic and cheap.

In the evening one was joined for the rest of the tour by an officer from Nowshera, and a short run was taken over the wild desolate country towards Kohat, but stopping short of tribal, i.e., unadministered territory.

On the following day, accompanied by driver and bearer, we made an early start for the Khyber, and in a short time Jamrud Fort was reached. The Fort has the appearance of a battleship, and here the toll road commences and one signs the book. From now onwards two roads, one for cars and the other for animal traffic, proceed the entire length of the Pass. The road continues westwards, the country is dry and barren, there is much rock and scrub, and here and there in dead flat country a meandering dry nullah indicates the course of some temporary stream.

The entrance to the Pass is not very noticeable till one gets fairly close, and for some distance back conjecture had been rife as to where exactly a road could possibly penetrate the mountain barrier looming up ahead, for it stretched from one horizon to the other without a break. A narrow U-shaped gap is found, and through this enter the two roads and the railway, which now becomes our near companion.

The hills on each side are rugged and absolutely barren; scarcely a blade of grass relieves the monotony of a wild and inhospitable country. A gradual ascent takes one into the heart of the Pass. The width of the valley varies from a few yards, where there is hardly room for the road and
the railway has to tunnel its way through the hills, to wide open spaces often half a mile wide where occasional walled and fortified villages with look-out towers like truncated windmills tell their tale of a wild and lawless people, now happily engaging in, but probably not enjoying, one of their periods of quiescence.

Winston Churchill [2], in his recent book, sums up very accurately the people of these parts when he says that their perpetual vendettas were most markedly affected by two events of the nineteenth century: the introduction of the breech-loading rifle, which enabled them to fire on their enemies without even leaving the security of their own houses, and the gradual approach of the British Raj, which they regarded as an unmitigated nuisance.

![Fig. 2.—Looking into Afghanistan.](image)

The road climbs up higher and higher and then reaches Landi Kotal, truly one of the outposts of Empire. Here the trains reach their terminus. The road continues downhill in zigzag fashion for about three miles, when a closed gate indicates the limit to which the ordinary traveller is allowed to go. The car is parked alongside a khassadar’s post, and one walks towards the edge of a steep declivity, when suddenly one sees far down below a scene of dramatic interest. Steep and rugged hills form the framework of the picture; in the middle is the last frontier post, that of Landi Khana, and just beyond on a continuation of the road is a small square white house, the customs house of Afghanistan. To the left, the road to Kabul can be seen turning off in a deep valley, and beyond rise tier upon tier of wild forbidding mountains leading into the heart of the Amir’s
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dominions. Such, then, is the view into Afghanistan, and here in this northern gateway of India have been enacted, in times past, deeds which have reverberated throughout the Empire.

A picnic lunch was taken on a spur of rock overlooking this famous scene, and comment was made on the absolute peace and quietness of the place; not a sound disturbed the air, not a bird nor an insect conveyed a sign of life, merely the occasional muffled cough of the khassadar leaning out of his look-out tower as he surveyed the scene. Then suddenly and dramatically came a most deafening sound, echoing and re-echoing through the valley, and all the past of the Khyber came crowding into one's mind. It was merely a runaway army mule-cart which had got out of control, and with increasing speed was rushing headlong down the winding and precipitous road to Landi Khana. We watched the mad career of these two excited animals, and at every sharp corner we expected to see them fall hundreds of feet into the valley below, but there is no accounting for the ways of the army mule, and, as far as field glasses could reveal, they arrived safely at their destination. The driver did not appear on the scene at all. Probably, with a cunning almost equalling that of his mules, he had foreseen events and jumped off while the going was still good.

On our way back we drove through the camp of Landi Kotal and, intending to work our way back gradually to the main road, found ourselves five miles from the camp on the wrong road and leading upwards into tribal territory, or at least we thought it might be, and made our way discreetly back to the camp and so to the road we knew.
We returned to Peshawar by dusk, and were satisfied that we had seen the Khyber and under perfectly good conditions. Our gratitude to fate or luck was more strikingly felt a fortnight later, when two bankers had been foully murdered by an insane khassadar at the very spot where we had had lunch, and again a month later, by which time the Afridis were in Peshawar, facts of recent history which in this place call for no comment.

Another interesting trip was taken during the first cold weather, and this was to Taxilla, the old buried Græco-Bactrian city dating from pre-Christian times. No records existed in India, but from Greek sources it was understood that somewhere between Pindi and the Indus was at one time a city of great importance. Determined efforts, aided by Greek records, led to the discovery of a series of buildings covering an area of about twenty-five square miles.

Tucked away in deep ravines or else on the sloping sides of some rocky hill are the excavated remains of numerous Buddhist temples, and nearer at hand, close to the modern town of Taxilla, are the very extensive remains of the chief city. One climbs an embankment and looks down on to a scene of much activity, hundreds of coolies digging away the earth, a town with the lid off, for all the roofs are demolished, and one looks down into vast numbers of single-storied dwellings, narrow straight paved streets in parallel and rectangular fashion, and one pictures oneself back in Pompeii, beneath the shadow of Vesuvius.

Here, however, no volcano had brought to an end a great civilization; merely accumulated earth to the depth of eighteen feet, produced by the dust storms of twenty-two centuries.

The royal palace, the seat of government, the university, and the medical school have been unearthed; the city so far revealed measures about half a mile by a few hundred yards, and there is still much to be brought to light, and hundreds of coolies are working daily in a steady and systematic manner. A photograph was taken. The overseer informed one that it was forbidden as the copyright lay with the Archaeological Department of the Government of India, but as a promise was made not to publish he did not persist in his demand to destroy the film. He need not have worried, for later on a snapshot of modern Taxilla was taken, and as in the excitement of the moment the winder had not been turned on, two pictures were taken on the same film, each mutually destroying the other.

Finally, a visit was made to the Museum and one saw, in a fine and modern building, rare examples of the potter's and goldsmith's art, relics unearthed from the buried city. It is recorded that Alexander of Macedon stayed in Taxilla. He was received with much ceremony, stayed many months and, leaving the King of Taxilla as his Viceroy, continued his celebrated journey southwards to the Hydaspes [3].

With the onset of the hot weather one's thoughts turned again to the hills, and by the first week in April one was again installed in the pleasant surroundings already described.
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The staff had to be augmented and it seemed surprising that a simple establishment in India required so many servants. Those who have never been in this country may be interested to know the details, others may conveniently skip the next paragraph.

First it should be understood that the Indian servant is often precluded by custom, prejudice, religion or laziness from doing certain forms of duty, and he prefers to stick to his own particular job. The most important member of the staff is the bearer, who acts as valet, makes the beds, and generally supervises the establishment. He may with increased emolument act as butler. He then becomes that important individual known as a khitmagar, and wears round the waist of his white cotton uniform a belt of one's regimental colours, and on a similar cloth on his turban an extra large-sized regimental crest in gilt. The next is the khansama, or cook, who does the catering and purchases the food. Then comes the masalchi, or washing-up boy, for no cook washes up in India. Then the bhisti, or water carrier, who prepares the hot bath and carries all the household water from the outside tap or well. Further, the mali who looks after the garden. Then the chaukidar, or night watchman, who, with the inevitable guttural cough, guards the house at night; he is aided in his duties by some sort of tacit understanding with the local thieves, so although his duties are largely nominal he does fulfil a definite purpose. This is the normal establishment, but in addition everyone has to employ a dhobie, or washerman. This is the gentlemen with sibilant explosions who, through constant practice in breaking stones in one's shirt on a hard rock, succeeds in altering the geological conformation of the country and the major anatomy of one's most intimate garments. In addition, one had to have a driver for the car, a syce for the horse, and a grass cutter to cut grass for the horse. Lastly, a patrol, or day chaukidar, was employed to police the compound and prevent it being used as a highway by the local paharis (hillmen). Such then was the establishment employed throughout two years.

A word regarding the grass cutter. A stranger was seen one day cutting grass on the lower part of the lawn. The bearer was summoned. "Who is this gentleman?" "Grass cutter, sir." "What is he doing here?" "Cutting grass, sir." "What for?" "For horse, sir." "Whose horse?" "Sahib's horse, sir." "Oh, so this is the man who supplies grass for the horse and he is actually selling me my own grass at 12 rupees a month?" "Yes, sir." A downward adjustment of his month's bill was promptly effected.

The khansama was an excellent servant and a man of many parts. He had a go of malaria one day. Quinine in the usual ten grains to the ounce was ordered and twelve doses sent to his quarters. Next day after breakfast he paraded and asked for some more quinine. What had he done with the twelve doses he had yesterday? Drunk it. Drunk it all? Oh yes, very good quinine for fever. He was asked if he were deaf? No, he was not. Were his ears buzzing? A little bit buzzing . . . and so one was left
with the therapeutic phenomena of a very small-sized man who had consumed 120 grains of quinine in twenty hours.

On another occasion, after breakfast, and after the daily settling of the accounts, he said he was not well. On closer look he certainly appeared ill. His eyes were red, his face suffused, and he bore all the evidence of a severe cold. A discussion then took place as to how he might have contracted the cold—the weather, the condition of his quarters, the possibility of rain finding its way through a leaky roof, the chance of a chill on one of his frequent bazar visits to Murree—all these seemed to meet with negative response, so he was finally asked the direct question as to how he thought he had contracted it. "Think it was because up in night."

"Oh, so you were up in the night. Now what was the cause of your being up in the night?" "Family had baby." Wives in purdah in India are never referred to as such, in fact it is not polite to refer to them at all, and this was his method of breaking the news that his wife had given birth to a baby in the night. The explanation for this indirect announcement lay, of course, with the sex of the child, for it was one of the many thousands of unwanted females which are born annually in India.

The syce also was a gentleman of parts. Late one evening, after paying out the usual monthly pay for the staff, it was discovered that this man was not to be found anywhere. Usually they collect like flies on a hot day at the very suggestion of money, but somehow he was absent. The bearer was asked, "Where is the syce?" "The syce, sir, he is dining out." Pictures of the syce in bow tie and long tails immediately cancelled out his remissness of attendance.

The summer months, there are seven of them in India whatever number there may be at home, passed pleasantly and quickly. Officers from the plains were accommodated from time to time, the house was never empty, and dinner and tea parties, tennis tournaments and walks over the hillsides took place, and with the excellent climate of the hills, one kept remarkably fit.

With social diversions, as relaxation from work, one was fully occupied. As regards work, conditions are very different in the hills, both from those prevailing in the larger stations of the plains and also from those at home. Many diverse matters have to be attended to, from the vagaries of the families, about which much could be written, to the mass of routine office work and correspondence. The former subject has been ably depicted by "Ola" [4] in "Our Station," which appears to bear close geographic and ethnographic relation to the present one.

With approach of the cold weather a move was made back to Pindi, and the numerous servants, all one's household effects, a car, a horse, a dog and a monkey, were transported back to Westridge without accident or incident.

[References will be printed at the end of the article.—Ed.]

(To be continued.)