Travel.

BY RAIL AND ROAD IN INDIA.

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(Continued from vol. liviii, page 464.)

III.—The North.

At Kohala is the bridge crossing the river, and beyond is the toll post of Kashmir. To the left is India, to the right Kashmir. One now enters the Maharajah's dominions, and for the next hundred miles climbing gradually upwards, the road cut out of the steep mountain side never leaves the valley, and with raging torrent below and a limited expanse of sky above continues on its way and finally after many tunnellings, twistings and turnings emerges into the open country of the Vale of Kashmir. The gorge through which the road passes is about 100 miles long, and there must be few parts of the world where a mountain pass achieves such length.

The Customs post at Domel was found to resemble a railway station with covered roof, and on each side were long counters resembling platforms. Here full particulars were taken of incoming travellers and certificates produced that one was free from tuberculosis.

The landslide further on was negotiated with extreme care over a soft bumpy surface on which many coolies were working in their endeavour to shore up the road and prevent further falling of soft red scree. How the road continues to exist at all is a matter for conjecture, for in this part there are no rocks to afford stability. The road is carved out of the softest and most crumbling earth imaginable, an easy prey to the frequent violent rain storms of this part.

At Baramulla (134 miles), the first town within the Vale, a houseboat brought down by an officer friend from Srinagar, was waiting, and here one embarked on a fifty-mile tour. The Kashmir houseboats are complete travelling houses fitted up with sitting-rooms, dining-rooms and bedrooms; the man in charge arranging everything, from the food you eat to the coolies who pull you along. Behind is the cook boat, where meals are prepared and the servants and crew and their family live, and behind again is the shikara or dinghy.

Slow and picturesque progress is made along the winding Jhelum, soft shadows of the higher peaks caress the verdure of the valleys, and
at every turn the outline of some graceful hill is mirrored in the calm waters of a lovely stream. Ranges of hills rising to a height of 3,000 feet above the river surround the Vale on every hand. Great white markings in V's, W's and Y's indicate the still lingering snow in the nullahs on the upper slopes of the Pir Panjal. Long avenues of silver poplars show the direction of the main roads. Herons and wagtails, kingfishers and golden orioles, winding stream and open lake, profusion of tree and flower, groves of walnut and chinar, and every scene is an artist's picture.

By easy stages our way was gradually directed towards Srinagar, the capital, but a diversion was made to Gandabal up the Sind River, a tributary of the Jhelum, and here a couple of nights were spent. A good mooring place was found above the bridge and some time was spent in waiting for the rain to stop.

Behind the small town is the entrance to the Sind Valley, and here could be seen disappearing into the obscurity of the valley mists the first stage of the long trail leading towards Ladakh, the world's highest inhabited region, and mysterious far-off Tibet.

There was some doubt as to whether fishing was allowed at this season, but one's companion was prepared to take the chances, for everywhere there were signs of many fish. The new bearer, taken on before leaving for Lahore, although somewhat uncertain of his English, had no doubts on this subject, and said more than once that there was "Plenty good fish shooting." As one was having one's evening bath he rushed to the door
and announced, "Sahib, shot a fish." "What with, a rifle?" he was asked. "No, no, shot a fish."

The next day he excelled himself. Tea was ordered on the river bank and chairs and tables were placed beneath a shady chenar tree. As he was moving a small table from the bedroom he overlooked the fact that the lower edge was supporting his master's Gillette razor, which thus fell into the river. Attempts were made with rolled-up sleeves and raised lower garments to secure the lost razor, for sahib's temper was uncertain and there would be much trouble in store if it were not found. It was embedded in the mud and the only solution was to procure a sort of shrimping net used by the local fishermen, and with this contrivance the razor was retrieved. Discreet inquiries from the boat staff revealed that he had given one rupee "backsheesh" to the fisherman, and so he had to pay somewhat dearly for his carelessness.

At another mooring place the boat came to rest beneath the overhanging branches of a great chenar groove. This was one of the mooring places belonging to the Maharajah, and soon after our arrival a gentleman wearing some sort of semi-uniform came and paid his respects, and amid many salaams and desires for our future prosperity demanded a mooring fee of one rupee. He was asked to produce his receipt book, and on hearing this vanished into thin air and was not seen again.

The next day a carpet and silk merchant arrived on the scene, and in the middle of a crowd of small grimy urchins who persistently demanded "paisa" commenced to unfasten his numerous packages. He was informed that it was no good, the sahibs did not wish to purchase anything. He, however, continued his unpacking with the persistence of the East, and when told to go away said, "Sahibs no buy, just look see." He was again warned to clear off. He took no notice of this and started to walk to the gangway to the boat. Some experience had been obtained of this particular gangway. It was very narrow, very slippery and was by no means securely fastened to either bank or boat. He was told on no account to cross the gangway, as he would fall in. This, apparently, he regarded as the Sahib's little joke, for he took no notice of repeated warnings, and with armfuls of costly silks and a couple of carpets balanced on his head he set foot on the plank and was immediately precipitated into the slimy mud of the Jhelum. A sadder, wiser and dirtier carpet wallah retired crestfallen to the bank, and with ill-concealed surprise at the ways of the sahib betook himself and his goods back to Srinagar.

A car with driver in attendance on the houseboat is a great asset to one's stay in Kashmir, and at every stop the car was brought round by some odd track or road to the mooring place. In this way several excursions were made to Srinagar, and as we gradually worked our way nearer to the city more and more time became available for seeing its sights.

Srinagar is quaint and interesting with, many solid and substantial houses. The river is crossed by seven bridges of wood, and at the Bund
with its big houseboats resembles the Isis at Oxford. The European part of the town is beautifully laid out with fine avenues, parks and a big polo ground. There is a large European hotel, Nedou’s of Lahore, and the English visitors who stay here and in the houseboats are very numerous.

Two steep hills dominate the town, the Tukt-i-Sulieman surmounted by an ancient temple, and Hari Parbet by a fort. To one side of the town is the celebrated Dal Lake, one of the world’s most beautiful scenes, and dotted along the placid waterways can be seen great numbers of houseboats. Scurrying here and there are shikaras, gaily decorated and comfortably cushioned taxi-boats, rowed by four men in the stern. Spreading along great stretches of the lake are the famous floating gardens where thick mud supported by rushes forms a fertile soil for the growth of melons, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.

The first visit to Srinagar was noteworthy for a picturesque scene at the south end of the lake where ornate white shikaras came slowly into a private pier, and from the first was seen landing the Maharajah and his retinue. They entered elaborate Rolls Royces and drove slowly along the lake side.

Beyond the silvered waters of the Dal Lake where sloping hill sides reach the shore is a great walled enclosure with stately trees rising on each side, and within is the Shalimar Garden, famed in song and verse. Here flowers of exquisite beauty grow between lawns of velvet, and down the middle runs an ornamental stream rising from the heights above. A long straight canal, bordered by shady trees, the home of thousands of ducks

![Fig. 3.—The Dal Lake, Kashmir.](image-url)
and geese, leads from the lake to the garden and forms a ceremonial approach which in Moghul times must have been the scene of many a royal visit.

Many days can be spent on the Dal Lake, the scene changing according to the light and shade, and wherever the eye may rove is some enchanting picture.

Kashmir is noted for many local productions, the best known, of course, being the woollen shawls. These are made from the soft down beneath the neck of the wild Tibetan goat. Walnut wood-carving and lacquer work are also carried out on a large scale. The former is well done and always worth studying, but the latter is inartistic and tawdry and bears no comparison with that done in Burma. It is sheer waste of money to buy lacquer in Kashmir.

There is a certain fascination in making purchases in the East. It is also somewhat of an art. Never hurry, never praise the article desired, never appear to want it particularly, never confine attention to any one line of goods, never accept the man's first price nor his second, never remain in the shop too long, but at the psychological moment walk away as though the deal were off, and he will almost certainly pursue you into the street and there accept your last offer. Even then you may be sure he will get a handsome profit.

Between the Post Office and Nedou's Hotel is a row of curio shops. With plenty of time on hand we entered one of them. Wood-carving was shown; a price asked, an offer made; a big discrepancy revealed, aspersions cast on the quality of the goods, a renewed and slightly higher offer, and then the remark "You no joke me." After several financial skirmishes the engagement was broken off and twice the quantity of wood-carving was subsequently secured at a neighbouring factory at approximately the same price.

Next door was a general curio shop. One entered and was received by the bearded owner with deep salaams, hand raised to head and body stiffly inclined from hips. "Salaam, Sahib." "Salaam." "What may the Sahib wish to see?" "Let me see the most expensive thing you have in the shop." "Oh, Sahib," and breathing deeply he produces a gorgeous Persian carpet, reputed to be 300 years old. "How much?" "2,000 rupees." "What! for a kutcha thing like that. Why, it's been repaired in several places." Then follows a long explanation of its history and quality, probably improvised. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation he resigns himself to the inevitable and asks what else he may have the honour of showing. "Now show me the cheapest thing you have." With a look of disappointment he produces a small artistically embroidered bag at one rupee. This appears to meet the financial position more closely. With these two extremes disposed of, one was then prepared to examine in detail his general stock.

Numerous carpets, shawls and silk embroidery caught the eye. One
carpet, a Shiraz, took one's fancy and one inquired the price. "200."
"Too much. I would give you 50 for it, nothing more."
"Oh, Sahib. I do small business. I am poor man with large family."
He is assured that the sahib has heard previously of the reputed size of carpet wallahs' families and with a shrug of the shoulders he places the carpet on one side.
Next Kashmir shawls and wraps are examined, beautiful artistic work of the softest texture imaginable. A shawl and a wrap are ordered to be put on one side. These are 85, but of course too much and he is duly informed of this. He is then asked to what extent he will reduce the carpet at 200 and the other two articles at 85, if all three are purchased. 250 is suggested; again too much. After some discussion as to the inclusion of a small bag at one rupee and the suggestion that all these could be bought more cheaply at another shop his price actually comes down to 200. He realizes that a number of articles may be bought if he is only reasonable enough and with visions of a competing shop which he is not allowed to forget he drops to 175. Still nothing doing and an attempt is made to leave the shop. He at once comes down to 150. No, that won't do at all. He will have to include for this figure a small embroidered tea-cosy at one rupee in addition to the bag. He is then informed, with a wave of the cheque book, which acts like magic, that a perfectly good cheque will be given him at once for 150. He then shrugs his shoulders again and gives in, but as the cheque is to be made payable for the current date, a perfectly good cheque on the best bank in India and he can get it cashed at once, he had better throw in two pairs of walnut-wood nut-crackers at four rupees each. He appears hesitant and bewildered and is much afraid the blue cheque book will disappear into the sahib's pocket, and he becomes more amenable and throws a pair of nut-crackers on to the pile of goods. As the cheque is handed to him the second pair of nut-crackers are very gently removed from his hand and join the first pair. And so the deal is done and purchases made at 150 of a Shiraz carpet, a Kashmir wrap and shawl, a bag, a tea-cosy and two pairs of nut-crackers, whose original price was 295. The ways of the East are tortuous, the journey long, but somehow or other one gets there.

Before leaving Srinagar a run was made to Islamabad, and to the foot of the Banihal Pass at the far end of the Vale. Here the road to Jammu, Lahore and the south climbs to a height of 8,500 feet, and in the winter is closed on account of snow.
The last morning in Kashmir was spent in a short run to Tanmerg, at the foot of Gulmerg, the hot weather station for Kashmir. There was not time to go to the top, but a superb view was seen of Nanga Parbat towering over the northern ridge of the Vale. Here, at nearer view, it is even more majestic than when seen from the Murree Hills. Its great triangular, snow-covered summit, forms a fitting crown to India's most charming State.
The journey back of 168 miles was hot and uneventful save for the escape from a falling rock which missed the bonnet by inches. Within a
few weeks of one's return the monsoon broke, the road went in several places, a span of the Kohala Bridge collapsed and the road was temporarily closed to all traffic. Travellers had to leave their cars at Kohala, walk a plank bridge over the river, and enter hired taxis on the other side. One felt thankful that our trip had been taken at the right time.

Burma and Kashmir are reputed to be the most beautiful countries in the world, and as this narrative includes each, the question may reasonably be asked as to which bears the palm. Burma has a hot and sticky climate, Kashmir a wet and variable one. Each depends for its great charm on vistas of hill and water. This is the predominant feature of the scenery, and it is very difficult to say which country is the finer. It may perhaps be put in this way: Burma's landscape is a study in soft gold, Kashmir's in clear silver.

As regards the inhabitants, there is no doubt whatever. In Burma a beautiful country produces a strikingly handsome people, and their dress is a reflex of their country's charm. In Kashmir one is disappointed to find that the people are singularly unattractive both in their features and dress, the coarse dull clothing of the women being the only blot on an otherwise fair and charming landscape.

The industry of the two peoples, however, is in inverse ratio to their charm, for whereas the Burman loathes work and always avoids it, the Kashmiri is never idle. The Burman lives in a land where it is "always afternoon." The Kashmiri has to put up a fight against floods and cold at a height of 5,000 feet, and cannot indulge in the lotus existence of a southern climate.

In a few months' time a "five-year Indian tour" was concluded; this had included a considerable part of a great sub-continent and a circuit of the globe, together totalling 30,000 miles by ship, 14,000 by train, and 22,000 by car.

And so in a few short years journeys are made by water, rail and road, through many distant lands whose closer acquaintance increases one's knowledge, broadens one's views and brings some measure of understanding to their various characteristics and problems.

REFERENCES.