

DOWN SOUTH.

BY U. P. A.

II.—TO ADAM'S BRIDGE.

(Continued from p. 266, vol. lx.)

A MAN and his wife who proceed on three months' leave, and whose itinerary includes several big cities within the tropical zone, require a good deal of baggage which is both heavy and bulky—even when (as in our case) everything was rigorously cut down. If you travel in Europe, you need not carry towels and bedding. If you trek in Kashmir, you and your wife do not want special clothes for race meetings, or for dining out. In a tour such as this one, the easy course is to send the heavier baggage on ahead by rail; but this entails a fixed programme as regards places and dates, and that is an arrangement which neither Georgina nor I can abide. So we carried everything with us, and our big six-cylinder tourer was crammed to bursting point. Georgina produced a brilliant solution of the bedding problem, which, so far as we know, is original. Towels, sheets, nets, rugs, and blankets—spread flat—a camp mattress and two pillows, were packed into a khaki drill envelope which sat on top of the hood. The interior of the car was thereby relieved of a very bulky package, and we were provided with excellent protection against the heat and glare of the sun. For various reasons I much dislike a rear luggage carrier unless it forms part and parcel of the original design of the car; but we had an expanding fitment which, when screwed on to one of the running boards, took a goodly assortment of the lighter articles. A brother-officer kindly offered us an ice-box which it was intended to fasten to the other running board; but unfortunately it was heavy and too broad, and, when fixed, the doors of the body could not be opened. As the expanding rack closed the doors on the other side, it is evident that, when the car was fully laden, it would be impossible to enter it or leave it, except by "going over the top." To this Georgina objected—not on the score of physical disability, but because she considered that we ought not to perform acrobatics before an audience composed of Café and Noir: bad for discipline. In the end, the whole load comprised the following articles:—

Bedding envelope on top of the roof.

Motor accessories in a tin strapped to a rear buffer.

Hurricane lamp, "Flit" outfit, and two despatch cases on one running board.

We two, and the tiffin things, in front.

Café, Noir, two suit cases, canvas kit bag, hat box, small basket and the two servants' bundles, behind.

Fortunately it is not necessary to carry extra petrol in any part of India nowadays. Our tank held eight gallons, and the car did 22 m.p.g.

On a trip such as this there is seldom any difficulty—though there may be delay—in getting running repairs carried out ; but if you wish to insure against loss of temper, misery and exhaustion, make certain that your tyres are up to the work. Old or worn tyres will not stand up to 200 m.p.d. over shocking surfaces when the temperature is 100° or more, and especially when the car is laden and running at speed. Finally, join your local automobile association. Naturally, it cannot give you as much or as efficient assistance as the A.A. or the R.A.C. can give you at home ; but, in this tour, membership of the Western India A.A. proved a real benefit, which—through the agency of the Southern India and Ceylon A.A.s—continued from beginning to end.

Possibly all this is inexcusable. Probably it is intensely boring.

We all have our little ailments—muscular rheumatism or what not.

We have all sat in dentists' chairs and suffered the tortures of the damned.

We have all been employers of servants who were "the limit."

Most of us have been through an exceptional hot weather, the like of which had never before been known.

Few of us have not toured in automobiles, and fewer still have not inflicted the ego often, and persistently, on weary, woebegone ears.

I apologize.

Hot, grimy, and weary, our spirits rose as we sighted the oasis of Trichinopoly. Delightful visions of baths, changes of clothing and tea floated before our tired eyes.

We missed the by-pass into the cantonment, and wasted precious minutes in plunging about the narrow, stuffy, crowded streets of the native town.

On entering the compound of the dāk bungalow, a wave of despair drowned the high hopes which we had foolishly conjured up and nurtured. Georgina wilted. My heart sank. Café and Noir regarded the scene with suspicion and dismay : they did not attempt to unload the car.

The compound wore a neglected air : it was dusty and unswept. The bungalow was bankrupt of self-respect : it was shabby and dirty. The dusky occupants, lounging in long chairs on the verandah, were clad in thin cotton sleeveless vests and dhotis. A good deal of brick-red betel juice had been expectorated to the four points of the compass : fresh or dried, it is æsthetically offensive. The members of the staff, with some hangers-on, formed a group which looked like an anti-Bolshevik propaganda poster : a villainous, miserable, unclean crowd.

A glance was enough for Georgina. "We cannot stay here," she declared, with conviction.

As my command of language was inadequate, I said nothing : but I tried to convey my disgust in looks. No one seemed to be much impressed : they were case-hardened. A nasty, low-caste fellow detached himself from

the group and reeled towards us. He was heavily doped. He rolled his bloodshot eyes, clutched at nothing with his grimy paws and swayed. He frothed at the mouth and his articulation was paretic. He said he was the dāk bungalow butler—a statement which made Café and Noir laugh aloud: I had to rebuke them. He also said—with difficulty—that he had received my letter, and had taken it to the butler of the M.E.S. inspection bungalow.

This was great news indeed!

Another hooligan, who was less intoxicated than the alleged d.b. butler, mounted the running board and guided us to the fort. He wanted to accompany us inside the gates, but I gave him four annas and a push.

The exterior of this fort seemed strangely familiar: high mud walls with loopholes and parapets but no windows, and pierced by a single big gateway. On entering, we were filled with surprise and delight, for we realized at once that we were in the safe custody of an old friend. There was a big parade ground bounded by barracks, offices and stores, which were built against the inner faces of the perimeter walls. There were stables, a few trees and one or two plots bright with flowers. Order and cleanliness, peace and quiet reigned everywhere. There was nothing artistic about the scene: indeed, it was ugly; but it was British to the core and a welcome sight for *sair een*. It was just as if a magic carpet had suddenly transported us to the fort at Peshawar or Kohat. I felt that at any moment we might hear a rattle of arms and see a smart Piffer guard turn out to greet us—but now there are few troops in Trichy. However, there are still two or three good fellows in the fort—caretakers and the like—who make your interests theirs, for they are obviously ex-members of the good old pre-War army. They and their families, and the band of the S.I.Ry.Bn. (A.F.1.) are the sole occupants of the fort to-day.

The bandmaster—a typical old soldier wearing a long string of ribbons: ex-Devon Regt.—told us that our letter had arrived in time to obtain the sanction of G. E., Madras. He conducted us to the M.E.S. inspection bungalow, and remained until he was sure that all arrangements met with our approval. It was a small thing; but it was one of those small things one notices, and remembers.

This bungalow was as clean as a new pin, and most comfortable. The butler looked after us just as well as if he had been in our service for twenty years. He was a servant of the old-fashioned type whose lightest form of address was an impressive “Huzoor!” and whose tea was infused with water which was really and freshly at boiling point.

Long live the G.E., Madras!

Do not make the mistake of thinking that, in devoting space to these apparently trivial matters, I have lost all sense of proportion. So many of us spend long years in India, and so many of us travel on leave or duty by motor car in out-of-the-way places, that the question of board and lodging en route is anything but trivial; it is vital. The deterioration of

dāk bungalows is a serious thing. Residence in many of them is fraught with danger to health; and it must be remembered that in no sense are they under military control. Hence, the existence of M.E.S. inspection bungalows is a great blessing; and the privilege of occupying them is one to be thankful for. Disappearance of these M.E.S. bungalows would mean that certain places could never be visited, either on leave or duty, without the aid of a caravan trailer. But surely life is already sufficiently complicated without the addition of a trailer. Would it not be better to revert to the bullock cart and double-ply tent of our grandfathers' days? Certainly it would be more healthy and restful; and a little hiking might prove the salvation of these pampered striplings, *Café and Noir*.

Trichinopoly, of cigar fame, is pleasantly situated on the River Canvery. To the north rise the Pachaimalai Hills, and to the south stretches the plain of Pudukkottai State.

In the Franco-British wars of 1749-63, the town was besieged by Chanda Sahib, the Maharattas and the French. It was to draw off a part of this besieging force that Clive—then an officer of the Trichinopoly garrison—made his famous dash on Arcot. His manœuvre succeeded in raising the siege.

A second determined siege was defeated by Major Lawrence.

Trichinopoly Rock is a striking feature of the place. It is a dominating mass of gneiss, rising 273 feet above the plain. On it is perched a temple to Siva and, on the summit, a smaller temple dedicated to Ganpati.

At the foot of the rock is a beautiful tank, with a graceful island pavilion in the centre, and near by is the nawab's old palace which now houses the Government courts and offices.

Trichinopoly has always been a great missionary centre. The R.C. community alone probably numbers over 10,000, and here is the residence of the Vicar-Apostolic of Madura. There are also several big Protestant missions. Bishop Heber, while on a visit from Calcutta, died here in 1826, and was buried in St. John's Church.

The population contains a large proportion of the Kallar, or thief, caste, and the place is—or was—a choukidars' paradise.

From all this it will be gathered that Trichy is a veritable museum of objects, animate and inanimate.

Next morning we were off bright and early, although, at the start, we were delayed for a minute or two. The old butler had been generously rewarded for his good offices: in return he put up a long and earnest prayer on behalf of our health, safety, prosperity and happiness, and we had to stay to hear it through.

On this day the scenery and the people recalled the India of our childhood.

Long service in the north had half-convinced us that the India of our picture books, children's magazines and mission services was a fraud

without either humour or sense: that it simply did not exist outside the imaginations of our wicked preceptors. However, that conviction had been weakening for some days, and now it altogether disappeared, for we were in the very midst of the India of Southern Hinduism. Here the sun is hot, but not fierce: the trees are mostly waving palms, and giants of the forest are rare in the plain country: the sacred places are angular and elaborately graven instead of sinuously graceful and austere: the men are small, wiry and dark, or bulky, shaven and olive-skinned; and the women are smiling, purdah-free and clad in gay colours.

How different from the Punjab and the Frontier!

Soon after leaving Trichy we ran south for about sixty miles, over indifferent roads, through Pudukkottai State. This State covers an area of 1,100 square miles of somewhat bleak and undeveloped country. Pudukkottai, in the middle of the State, is the one town of any importance in the whole area. This, the capital, is exceptionally clean, airy and well built. For long the reigning prince has been known as the Rajah Tondaman (Tamil for a "ruler.") The Tondaman family identified itself with the British interest during the siege of Trichinopoly in 1753 and, since then, has remained consistently and actively loyal.

On emerging from the State the road, turning south-west, leads via Tiruppattar to Madura, where we arrived at noon, after having covered 95 miles.

The district of Madura is bounded on the west by the spurs of the ghats, notably the Palni Hills, where is situated the delightful hill station of Kodaikanal, about 70 miles from Madura. Until this district passed to the British in 1801, it was the scene of constant warfare between the Maharattas and Mahommedans.

The town is situated on the river Vaigai, and in its immediate vicinity rises the Anamalai or Elephant Rock, the Pasumalai or Cow Hill and the sacred Skandamalai. From time immemorial this town has been both the political and religious capital of the extreme south. In consequence, it is full of interest. However, when you are hot, grimy and thirsty, your own creature comforts come before Indian religions and politics. We made for the dāk bungalow and—we drooped on its dilapidated doorstep: it was a wretched caravanserai, and the room reserved for Europeans was occupied. So, too, were the rest rooms at the railway station. The prospect of spending the night on the dāk bungalow verandah was more healthy than inviting, for on to this verandah opened many rooms, each of which was occupied by one or more Indians. However, the situation was saved by the people in the reserved room moving out, and by 4 p.m. we were able to take possession. Georgina regained her wonted cheerfulness, although the room was small, and apparently designed for a single traveller—also small. The bathroom was a mere cupboard, dirty and disreputable. Still, the meals were excellent, and the butler did his utmost to make us

comfortable. He had been in the service of an officer of the I.M.S. for over twenty-eight years:

While Georgina was bearing the brunt of these domestic difficulties, I was attempting to fight a non-co-operation conspiracy at the railway station. This is what happened:—

1 p.m.—Arrived at the station for the purpose of entraining the car. First babu regrets inability to accept; must have twenty-four hours prior notice. Show him copy of letter written to station-master fourteen days ago. First babu grunts and tells second babu to make out ticket. Second babu says that ticket forms are locked up in office safe, of which station-master has key. Station-master will not return from tiffin till 3 p.m. Politely but firmly declare my intention of remaining in the office till the ticket is handed over. Dispose myself accordingly, and in such a way that first babu is cramped, second babu is crowded out and third babu finds it difficult to spit in safety. Fourth babu, whose chair I have commandeered, suggests I would be more comfortable sitting on the platform or in the refreshment room. I agree, and intimate my resolve to study the view from the platform—with aid of a glass of beer—*after* the ticket has been produced.

Invasion of office by a mob of shunters, signalmen, porters, greasers, coolies, tonga drivers and spectators. Excitement, noise (Tamil), overcrowding, heat, stench. Black Hole of Calcutta. Hell. Am centre of interest. Take off my coat (having first emptied the pockets), roll up my sleeves and light a cigarette. Third babu in office says smoking in office is forbidden. Thank him, and draw his attention to notice on wall re penalties attendant on spitting. Non-official members of mob delighted: third babu goes out for breath of fresh air and to remove betel quid. First babu addresses mob. Implores. Argues. Cajoles. Everybody addresses everybody else. Din (Tamil). First babu mounts table: upsets ink bottle: threatens to call in police. I back him up and send my car boy for constable. Omnes pray me not to send for constable, and second babu hurriedly produces ticket from a fold in his dhoti. Officials look gloomy. Non-officials lose interest. Mob melts. I run the car up the ramp. Doors of covered van locked, bolted and barred: very secure and strong. Door opener absent on three months' leave, getting married. Substitute is expected at 3 p.m. Constable arrives, hands me a note-book and requests me to make written complaint in detail. I tell him I have no time at present to write an article for the Journal, R.A.M.C. I say: "Beat 'em up, my boy: they are all 'burra badmash.'" Constable makes a mental note that I am a lunatic at large. I depart at 2.15 p.m.

3 p.m. Return. Substitute door opener not yet on duty. Local Shell Oil agent, working on tank truck near by, agrees that Madura is . . . and that everybody in it is . . . Am heartened by his conversation. Discover that S.O. agent wallowed in a trench in front of Cambrai early in '18. We agree that Madura railway station and staff are * * * * Feel

much better. Station-master still tiffing. His assistant tells me that, as goods train does not leave until 6 p.m., I have come too early. Depart at 4 p.m.

5 p.m. Return. Dy.-asst.-station-master tells me that, as train leaves 6 p.m., I have come too late. Last saw dy.-asst.-station-master proceeding at a hard gallop, in an ekka, to lodge a complaint somewhere or other. A touchy individual. Note an official council of war being held afar off. Council approaches and, with commendable skill and alacrity, opens the proximal doors of the covered van. Virtuous and triumphant, I entrain car Ticket inspector discovers that the tackle for fastening the car securely to the floor of the truck has been lost. Chief plate-layer is unable to close the distal doors of the vehicle. The tackle storekeeper and the door repairer have gone home for the night. Council agrees that the truck cannot possibly proceed by to-night's train. I am on point of surrendering—when third babu commits tactical error: having procured fresh betel quid, he expectorates at range of $7\frac{1}{2}$ yards. Very fine shot: misses my boots by 2 inches. Had no intention of hitting my boots, but did mean to register an outer. Potential King's prizeman.

Aspersions cast on third babu's morals, ancestry and virility. Ditto re his paternal grandmother and maternal cousins who, it appears, are goats devoid of horns and hair. Council (less third babu) overjoyed. Opine that third babu is an owl in moult. Council (less third babu) in ecstasies. Third babu silent: green: swallows hard: betel quid goes down the wrong way; coughs: splutters: retires spluttering.

Important Personage appears, viz., station-master returned from tiffin. Tremendous excitement and noise (Tamil). Shout my sorrows into station-master's large-size ear. Request address of most expensive lawyer in Mudura, for purpose of bringing an action against railway company for breach of contract and wrongful detention. Propose to claim heavy damages. Station-master horrified: say—"But s̄ār, it is not fault of railway company. Damn oil tank truck arrived at 9 a.m. It should have been null and void by 11 a.m., but pipe line broke down, and it is being unloaded by hand. Doubtless job will be finish not before 9 p.m. Agent sabib say with much cursings job to go full speed astern till bloody finish. S̄ār, I cannot do nothing in predicaments. I am poor man." "And what is all this to do with me?" "Impossible not to shunt your truck on to train till petrol truck is nonest. Same loop line, s̄ār."

Stroll across to tank truck. Resume Cambrai sector reminiscences. Declare I think I have met agent before (which is true). Discover his name is T—. Discover he is a cousin of an old friend of mine, a popular officer in the Corps who is also a T—. Oil truck vanishes within 5 minutes. Car truck is shunted on to train. Station-master accepts a cigarette. Multitude cheers. T— and I revert to Cambrai. Iced beer. Return to Georgina at 7 p.m.

The story of the despatch of the car is not retailed for the purpose of self-glorification : we can all display a certain amount of bulldog determination, or long-eared obstinacy, when need arises. No : the story is presented as an example of historical parallel. The successful issue of the struggle was due to the prosaic fact that, in The War, part of my service was spent as an ambulance train and embarkation officer.

It is interesting to note the close resemblance between the railways of Southern Indian and those of Northern France.

Memory was further stimulated when Fate decreed that the counterpart of my dear old friend, Monsieur Edouard Pamplemousse, should appear on the scene. Ofttimes, in France, when I was on the point of pushing a Gallic railwayman under an engine or into a dock, Comrade Edouard would pop up from nowhere, to find that the moment was suitable for to create a little diversion innocent, since it was evident that the phlegm English was—temporarily, no doubt—consigned to the dark shadows.

Likewise it fell out at Madura where, on several occasions, Pundit Bolanath Shankarji dropped from the skies in the nick of time. True, old Pamplemousse was a jolly bourgeois with a great sense of humour and a hearty laugh, whereas B. Shankarji was grave, dignified and as pompous as a stage bishop ; but as you were compelled to make fun with the one and induced to poke fun at the other, the net result of their entrances was the same.

Punditji was a Madrassi Brahmin. He was somewhat fleshy. His features would have been handsome had they not been so sensual. His expression was alert and intelligent, and his English perfect, but his otherwise faultless manners were marred by an assumption of proprietorship which was bound to evoke resentment in some minds and levity in others. Thus, Georgina disliked the pundit the moment she saw him : " That man makes me shiver," she said. On the other hand, I thought he was a great find and particularly on discovering that he had never read of Mark Twain's famous encounter with the guide in Rome. Of course punditji was sufficiently astute to ignore Georgina's shiverings and my sallies, so he scored.

As befitted the senior cicerone of the great Madura Temple, Bolanath Shankarji was clad from head to foot in spotless white raiment, and was driven in an expensive automobile by a uniformed chauffeur. Also, he was attended by two acolytes. When this imposing equipage drew up at the dāk bugalow a few seconds after our arrival, I expected to meet, at the least, the D.G., M.S., Congress Volunteers.

On that day, from noon till 10.30 p.m., the pundit expended much energy and petrol running between Georgina at the d. b. and me at the railway station. It amazed him to think that Georgina insisted on supervising the cleansing of the room with cresol solution, when she might be inhaling the vapours of a hundred incense burners. It confounded him to watch me toil and sweat on a railhead ramp, when I ought to be pondering over higher and better things in the calm, cool atmosphere of the cloistered shrine.

ALDERSHOT
CAMBRIDGE ROSETTE

Why hurry?

Of what account is the loss of one day?

Is it possible that a so noble lady and a so wise a gentleman can pass through Madura without visiting the so unique and magnificent temple—the most renowned and most sacred of all the temples in India?

Such a thing is quite inconceivable: utterly unheard of.

It is not possible.

Well, that sort of thing takes a deal of doing over a stretch of ten hours in the hot weather. Despite opposition and raillery, Pundit Bolanath Shankarji remained imperturbable, insistent and full of hope: a most creditable performance. To the temple authorities punditji, his car and his minions must be worth many times their weight in gold.

As a matter of fact we were disappointed that our best laid schemes had gone a-gley, and so prevented us from visiting this temple; but, having been nurtured in the north, our disappointment was not acute: neither Georgina nor I care much for the Dravidian architecture of the Brahmins, and if you see one good example of Dravidian, you see the lot—if not in size, at least in type. To the ordinary sightseer as distinct from the expert, there is hardly any difference between the temples at Udaipur, Chitor or Gwalior. There is the same setting, the same design, the same marvellously detailed carvings and the same difficulty in seeing the wood for the trees. Then again, the Western mind is not always, or even often, able to appreciate this specialized form of architecture: we are not all Besants and Yeats-Browns. There is nothing eerie or repulsive in the Byzantinism of Westminster Cathedral or of the basilica of Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre; but a typical Hindu temple is always eerie and often repulsive; and the more you know about it, the more repulsive it is. Its counterpart is not to be found throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Why? Because Christianity and Mahomedanism are closely related, whereas Brahminism is a thing apart.

Most of us can visit the Taj and similar buildings time after time, and enjoy each visit; but few of us wish to visit a particular Hindu temple more than once. In the former case the visit is based on our Western conception of beauty: in the latter it is prompted by curiosity. Snakes, monkeys, elephants, lingams and bulls are all very well in their own spheres of influence, but the ordinary Englishman prefers to adorn his religious beliefs and sacred buildings with what are, in his eyes, higher and better things. To be sure, he may be wrong; but that is his attitude, and he is content to leave it at that and to re-visit the tomb of Salim Chisti for the nth time.

Madura was the capital of Tirumala Nayak, and it is to this powerful monarch that many of its architectural masterpieces are assigned, including the most important renovations in the precincts of the temple. Tirumala's palace (1623-1659)—a Hindu building with Saracen features—is the most

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perfect secular relic in the Madras Presidency. Another notable structure is the Vasante, the reputed summer residence of the God Sundaeswara.

The great temple is honoured by the personal presence of Siva, who, in Southern India, is worshipped to the practical exclusion of the other two members of the Hindu Trinity. The ground plan of the temple measures 847 × 744 feet, and the main building is surrounded by nine gopuras, one of which is 152 feet high. The hall of a thousand (actually 997) pillars is a striking feature; and the whole place is a museum of exotic sculpture and painting.

Early in the fourteenth century the Mussulman invaders tried to destroy the great pagoda, but, although much damage was done, the inner shrines escaped. Since then the Brahmins have carried out extensive repairs and alterations, not always to artistic advantage.

One of the greatest names associated with the history of Southern India is that of Robert de Nobilis. De Nobilis was a priest who, in 1606, obtained permission from his bishop to adopt the life and dress of a sadhu. He settled down in Madura and lived as an extreme, orthodox ascetic. He wore the usual simple saffron robe, but he displayed a Cross which hung suspended from his neck by three gold threads representing The Trinity and two silver threads symbolizing the body and soul of the Saviour. He told the people that he was not merely a Portuguese foreigner, but a guru from Rome meditating on God. His piety, self-denial and Christ-like qualities so appealed to the countryside that, on his death, it was computed that he had converted at least a million souls: a marvellous individual feat.

Robert de Nobilis was succeeded by another Portuguese, the aristocratic and learned John de Britto; and he, in turn, was followed by the scholarly Beschi, whose Tamil writings are regarded by native pundits as the high-water mark of their literature.

Thus did the Roman Catholic Church raise its missionary structure on a solid foundation—a wise thing to do in a land where caste means everything. So old and so penetrating is the tradition of caste that in Madura, from time immemorial, it has even extended to differentiation between the right hand and the left. The members of the right hand caste are Brahmims, and those of the left hand caste, artizan outcasts. A section of the latter are leather workers; but whereas the men belong to the left, the women are attached to the right. As a result, whenever a feud is in progress between the two castes, the wives of the leather workers refuse to have anything to do with their husbands. Modern Western civilization is not the only complicated social system in the world.

On the morning of March 13 we left the dāk bungalow for the railway station, Georgina and I in a “fitton-gharri” (1837) and Café and Noir in an ekka of the year One. Café and Noir, having become habituated to a luxury six-cylinder automobile, waxed facetious at the expense of the ekka driver whose good humour had to be restored by extra backsheesh.

An Indian railway station is an entertaining place. Its multitudinous sights, sounds and smells are fearful and wonderful, and often amusing. Georgina was captivated by the adroitness of a solemn-looking passenger, who, while reclining at full length on the seat of his compartment, raised and lowered his carriage window several times by using his left foot only. I was button-holed by a ticket examiner of the comic babu type. He was very voluble, and monopolized the conversation thus :—

“ My god, s̄aar, you think crowd of what-nots? My god, no. When peoples go Rameswaram visits, my god, lakhs of them, crores, my god. I say ‘go away: full up: come to-morrow.’ They not listen, my god. They shout: Rameswaram ki jai!’ loud, like that, and—my god—you not hold them back with million stitches in time. Many olds, many youngs, many sickus, some deads. No matter. Rameswaram, ki jai. All go helter skelter on damn rail-gharri; my god, s̄aar, tikkut examiner he sickus too.”

At 10.30 a.m. the train pulled out on its 115-mile journey south-eastwards to the terminus at Danuskodi. The railroad follows the course of the Vaigai River, traversing a flat, sandy country of no interest: monotony is the dominant note. But as we travelled south towards the coast, the temperature fell and a refreshing salt sea breeze reminded us of such pleasant things as the Mediterranean, and the Channel, and the Solent off Netley—with the ship’s stem pointing up-stream, of course. The farther one is from home, the more entrancing it is to visualize the delights attendant on one’s return.

Meals and a health inspection at Mandapam Camp helped to relieve the tedium of the journey. In the course of the inspection we were closely questioned, carefully scrutinized and asked to fill up various forms of such length and complexity as made it evident that, even in India’s penultimate station, the reign of the babu endures, vested and vital. One of the forms was an undertaking to parade Café and Noir, periodically, before the chief health authority in Ceylon. However, before the train proceeded, the senior inspector hurried up with the glad tidings that our real identity had only just been discovered; and that, under the circumstances, we need not parade Café and Noir unless they developed cholera or smallpox or something equally alarming. We were grateful for the favour, and gratified to find that one person, at least, attached some importance to our status and qualifications. After that, Georgina and the senior inspector became quite friendly, while I receded into the background. The guard—a tactful little man—blew his whistle and waved a green flag at the right time. Helped by the senior inspector, Georgina scrambled into the carriage, waved her hand and remarked that, contrary to her everyday experience, a man could be a doctor and a sportsman at one and the same time.

I studied the chapter in the guidebook headed: “ Alternative Routes to and from Ceylon.”

A series of sand dunes and bridges carries the railroad on to the island of Rameswaram, separating Palk Bay from the Gulf of Manaar. This

island measures 11 × 6 miles, is under the nominal rule of the Chief of Ramnad—the “Lord of the Causeway” (Adam’s Bridge)—and is inhabited by the Brahmins and their followers who are on the pay lists of the temples.

Rameswaram contains one of the most venerated Hindu shrines in India. It is supposed to have been founded by Rama himself, and is mentioned in the celebrated *Ramayama*, in connection with Rama’s journey to Ceylon in search of Sita.

The enclosure of the great temple or Coil measures 1,000 × 657 feet. The height of the main gateway is 100 feet, and of the Coil itself 120 feet. The colonnades are 4,000 feet in length, each side measuring 700 feet. (The longest English cathedral is 500 feet: St. Peter’s, Rome, 700 feet.) The whole is a very fine example of Dravidian architecture and workmanship. It is unusually massive—some of the slabs in doors and ceilings are 40 feet long—and the pillared halls surrounding the inner shrine are unique.

It is said that the process of building occupied four centuries—from the fourteenth to the eighteenth. As one might expect, this accounts for many defects as well as beauties; and—as usual—the detail revealed on close inspection is more impressive than the distant view. But despite its beauty, the detail is often vulgar, and sometimes worse; and a modern and copious application of white, blue, green, red and yellow washes has not improved the artistic values of the place.

Soon after 4 p.m. we arrived at Danushkodi, the western end of Adam’s Bridge.

(To be continued.)

