

FINNEMORE JOHN

PEEPS AT
MANY
LANDS—INDIA

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	21
CHAPTER V	25
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

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CHAPTER I

THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

To the vast majority of European travellers Bombay is the gateway of India. It is here they get their first glimpse of the bewildering variety of races, of colours, of types, of customs, which make up India. After the journey through the Suez Canal, and the long run across the Arabian Sea, the traveller is very glad to spend a day or two at Bombay, gaining first impressions of this new, strange country. He may be interested in the fine new buildings of the modern town, or he may not; he is certain to be interested in the native quarter.

Here he gets his first glimpse of that great feature of Indian life, the bazaar – rows and rows of narrow streets filled with shops and crowds. The shops are small booths, often built of mud, or archways, or, again, are mere holes in a wall. Everything is open to full view; there are neither windows nor doors. The merchant or shopkeeper squats beside his goods; the artisan does his work in sight of the passers-by. The crowds are stranger than the shops. Here you may see Hindoos, Parsees, Burmese,

Singhalese, Lascars, Moslems, Arabs, Somalis, Jews of many countries, Turks, Chinese, Japanese, and a score of other nations. Amid the throng of many colours move white people from every land of Europe, and the babel of tongues is as astonishing as the mingling of costumes.

Here is struck at once the note of colour which enlivens every street scene in India. The people wear robes of every shade, and turbans or caps of every hue – black, white, red, green, yellow, purple, pink, every colour of the rainbow – and a hundred shades of every colour meet and mingle as the crowds flow to and fro.

Where there is an open space the snake-charmer squats beside his cobras, playing on his strange pipe, and putting his venomous pets through their tricks; or a conjurer is causing a mango-plant to spring up and put forth fruit from apparently a little barren heap of earth. Busy Indian coolies, naked save for a dirty turban and a wisp of cotton cloth round the loins, hurry along with water-skins, and the skins, filled with water, take roughly the shape of the sheep or goat which had once filled them with flesh and bones. Other coolies are driving queer little carts drawn by a pair of tiny, mild-eyed, hump-backed oxen; and others, again, squat beside the way with their chins on their knees, waiting to be hired.

When it comes to sight-seeing proper, the traveller will visit the island of Elephanta, six miles from the city. Here stands a great temple cut in the solid rock, its roof supported by huge pillars left standing when the chamber was hollowed out. The

temple is adorned with colossal figures and carvings of Hindoo gods and of animals. Its excavation must have been a tremendous piece of work, and it is considered that it was carried out some eleven hundred years ago.

Among the crowds of Bombay no people are more distinctive than the Parsees. The Parsees may always be known by the strange head-gear and long coats of the men and by the splendid dresses of the women, who move about as freely as European women, and are not shut up like Hindoo women of the richer classes.

The Parsee man wears on his head a long, high, shiny hat in the form of a cylinder; it has no brim, and is one of the oddest head-coverings that may be seen. In origin he is a Persian, for the Parsees are descended from a race that fled into India from Persia when that land was attacked by the Arabs twelve centuries ago. The Parsee women are dressed very splendidly, because their race is very rich. The Parsee is the banker and money-lender of India. No other native is so clever in trade or amasses wealth so swiftly as a Parsee.

In his religion the most sacred thing is fire, and to him the sun, as the emblem of fire, is the greatest religious symbol. Upon the shore of the bay many Parsees may be seen at evening at their devotions before the setting sun. Each seats himself upon the sand, bows to the sun, taking off his hat and replacing it, and then, with a small brass jar at his side, begins to read prayers from a sacred book, chanting them aloud.

The Parsee reverence for fire is seen in the treatment of his dead. The Hindoo makes a funeral pyre and burns his dead. Not so the Parsee. He considers that fire is too sacred to use for such a purpose; nor, on the other hand, is he willing to defile the earth by digging a grave. So the Parsee dead are exposed to be torn to pieces and devoured by vultures. Beside the sea there stand five broad low towers, the famous Towers of Silence. In these the bodies of the dead are exposed. One of these is reserved for the use of a wealthy family, one for suicides and those who die by accidental deaths, and three for general use. The towers and the trees around are loaded with huge vultures, which, in a couple of hours, reduce a body to a heap of bones.

CHAPTER II

IN THE LAND OF THE RAJPUTS

Rajputana is the land of the Rajputs, a splendid warrior race of Northern India. In times long gone by the Rajputs held power over the wide plain watered by the Upper Ganges, but seven hundred years ago their Moslem foes drove them westwards into the land still called Rajputana.

The history of the Rajputs is one of battle. They are born fighters. They have taken a share in all the wars which have torn India through all the centuries. They struggled hard against the British power, but now they are good friends of ours, and their Princes rule under British protection.

The history of this fine race is full of stories of romance and chivalry. Nor is the Rajput of to-day inferior to his brave and haughty fathers: "The poorest Rajput retains all his pride of ancestry, often his sole inheritance; he scorns to hold the plough, or use his lance but on horseback." Of all the brave old stories of Rajput valour and constancy none are more beloved than the tales which hang around the three sacks of Chitore. Thrice was that ancient city seized and plundered by Moslem foes, and never have those terrible days been forgotten. To this day the most binding oath on Rajput lips is when he swears, "By the sin of the sack of Chitore."

Long ago there was a Prince of Chitore named Bhimsi, whose wife, Princess Padmani, was famed far and wide as the most beautiful woman in the world, and as good as she was beautiful. The report of her beauty drew Allah-u-din, a great Moslem warrior, to the walls of Chitore at the head of a powerful army. He demanded to see the face of Padmani, were it only a reflection of her face in a mirror. Prince Bhimsi invited him to a feast, and he saw Padmani. When the feast was over, the Prince escorted Allah-u-din back to his camp. Then the wily Moslem seized the Prince, and sent word to the chiefs of Chitore that, if they wished to see their King again, they must send Padmani to become the wife of Allah-u-din.

Every one in Chitore was aghast at this treacherous deed; but the Moslem was powerful, and Princess Padmani, with her attendants, set out for the enemy's camp. Slowly the long train of seven hundred litters wound its way from the city, and Padmani was in the hands of Allah-u-din. The Moslem gave permission for Bhimsi and Padmani to take a short farewell of each other, and then was seen a proof of Padmani's wit and Rajput devotion. From out the seven hundred litters sprang, not weeping women, but seven hundred warriors armed to the teeth, while the bearers flung aside their robes, and showed the glittering swords in their strong right hands.

Covered by this devoted bodyguard, Bhimsi and Padmani sprang upon swift horses and reached Chitore in safety. But none else escaped. The noble Rajputs, the flower of Chitore, gave their

lives to the last man to save their King and Queen.

Allah-u-din never forgot how he had been foiled. Years passed, and once more he marched against the city set on its rock. No one had ever captured it, and Chitore feared not Allah-u-din until he began to raise a huge mound of earth. He did this by giving gold to all who brought a basketful of earth, and at last he secured a vantage-ground whence he could hurl his missiles into the city, and the end of the siege was near at hand.

Then one night King Bhimsi had a terrible vision, from which he woke in affright. The goddess of Chitore had appeared to him, saying: "If my altar and your throne is to be kept, let twelve who wear the crown die for Chitore."

Now Bhimsi and Padmani had twelve sons. So it was resolved to make them twelve Kings by setting each on the throne for three days. Then the saying of the goddess would be fulfilled, and these twelve must die for Chitore. But when it came to the youngest of the twelve, to Ajeysi, the father's darling, Bhimsi said no. The King called his chieftains together.

"The child shall not die," he said. "He shall go free to recover what was lost. I will be the twelfth to die for Chitore."

"And we will die for Chitore!" cried the warriors. "In bridal robes of saffron and coronets on our heads, we will die for Chitore!"

Then a great plan was made throughout the place: all, men and women, would die for their beloved city. In the vaults and caverns which stretch below the rock a vast funeral pyre was

built, and to it came the Rajput women singing, dressed in their festal robes, and glittering in all their jewels. The last to enter the vault of death was Padmani, and when the gate was closed upon her the men knew their turn had come. Setting the little Prince in the midst of a picked band, who had sworn to bear him off in safety, the King led his sons and chieftains to the battle. The gates were flung open, and the warriors, clad in bridal robes, hurled themselves upon the foe: for the bride they sought was death.

When the last had died for Chitore, Allah-u-din entered the city. But it was an empty triumph. Every house, every street, was still and silent, only a wisp of smoke oozed from the vault. This was the first sack of Chitore.

The second sack was in the time of Humayun, father of Akbar the Great. The ruler of Chitore had died, leaving a baby son to inherit the crown, and when a powerful foe came against the city, the child's mother, Kurnavati, sent messengers to Humayun, saying: "Tell him that he is bracelet-bound brother to me, and that I am hard pressed by a cruel foe."

There is an ancient custom in India by which a woman may choose a bracelet-brother to protect and assist her. She may choose whom she pleases, and she sends him a silken bracelet, called a ram-rukki. It is a mere cord of silk, bound with a tassel, and hung with seven tiny silken tassels – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, the colours of the rainbow. The man may accept this bracelet or not, as he pleases; but once he has bound it round his wrist, he becomes the bracelet-brother of the

sender, and is bound to her service. In return for the bracelet he sends the customary gift of a small breast-bodice.

Now Humayun, the Mogul King, was bracelet-brother to Kurnavati, and when he heard that she was in distress, he hurried to her assistance. But he came too late, and the garrison of Chitore saw that their city must fall. Then they remembered the first sack, and all resolved to die in the same way. Kurnavati succeeded in getting her little son away in safety; then she led the women to the funeral pyre. The men of the garrison were few, for many had fallen, but the gallant handful, clad as before in bridal robes and crowns, dashed upon the foe, and died to the last man, ringed about with heaps of slain.

Although the baby King, Udai Singh, was smuggled in safety from Chitore, it was not long before he was in danger again. He was carried off to the palace of his half-brother, Bikramajit, where he lived under the care of his foster-mother, Punnia. One night Punnia heard a terrible uproar, and then the screams of women. Enemies had broken into the palace of Bikramajit. But whose life did they seek above all? Punnia knew, and she saw that Udai Singh was in great danger. How could she save him? There was only one way, a terrible way; but the Rajput woman did not flinch. Two children lay sleeping before her, Udai Singh and her own child. She caught up the baby King and thrust sugared opium into his mouth that he might be lulled into deeper, safer slumber, hid him in a fruit-basket, and gave the precious burden to the hands of a faithful servant. "Fly to the river-bed without the city,"

she said, "and wait for me there."

Then she flung the rich royal robe over her own sleeping child, and waited for the murderers. In they burst. "The Prince!" they cried. "Where is the Prince?"

With a supreme effort Punnia pointed to the little figure beneath the splendid robe, and hid her face, giving the life of her own child to save that of the little King.

When all was over, and the last funeral rites had been performed over the body of the child whom the conspirators supposed to be the young King, Punnia sought the river-bed. There she found her nursling, and with him she fled over hill and dale, never resting till she gained a strong fortress held by a loyal governor. Into his presence she hastened, and set the child on his knee. "Guard well the life of the King!" she cried, this noble Rajput woman.

The third sack of Chitore happened in the days of Akbar the Great, son of Humayun, who had once hurried to the aid of the city. The Rajputs and the Great Mogul came to blows. Akbar led a powerful army against his foes. This was the last sack, "for the conqueror was of right royal stuff, and knew how to treat brave men. So when the final consummation was once more reached, and thousands of brave men had gone to death by the sword, and thousands of brave women met death by fire, he left the city, levying no ransom, and on the place where his camp had stood raised a white marble tower, from whose top a light might shine to cheer the darkness of Chitore. But a few years afterwards,

when in dire distress and riding for his life through an ambush, the man on Akbar's right hand and the man on his left, shielding him from blows, making their swords his shelter, were two of the defeated Rajput generals."

These are stories of long ago. Here is one of times nearer our own, when the English were mastering India. A beautiful Rajput Princess, the Princess Kishna Komari, was sought in marriage by three powerful suitors. She could not wed all three, and her father feared the vengeance of the fierce men who quarrelled over his daughter's hand. Lest their savage disputes might end in attack upon his city and palace, he said that his daughter must die. "She took the poison offered her, smiling, saying to her weeping mother, 'Why grieve? A Rajput maiden often enters the world but to be sent from it. Rather thank my father for giving you me till to-day.'"

CHAPTER III

IN THE LAND OF THE RAJPUTS (*Continued*)

The ancient town of Chitore still stands on its ridge, with its grey lines of ruined walls and towers broken by two beautiful Towers of Victory, which raise their slender columns toward the sky. The smaller tower is very old, having been raised in A.D. 896, and the larger was built in A.D. 1439 to celebrate a victory of the Rajputs over their Moslem enemies. The latter is ornamented with most beautiful carving, rises to the height of 130 feet, and is divided into nine stories.

Some sixty miles from Chitore lies Oudeypor, or Udaipur, a Rajput city of great fame, for it is said to be the most beautiful city in all India. It is also of deep interest as being one of the few cities where the old native life goes on almost untouched by the presence and influence of the white people in the land. Here strut Rajput nobles in silken robes decked with gems, and followed by splendidly clothed and armed retainers. Here the elephant is seen at its proper work of carrying stately howdahs, carved and gilded and hung about with curtains of rich brocade, while long flowing draperies of cloth of gold, embroidered in the most lovely patterns and in the most striking and brilliant colours, sweep down the broad flanks of the huge slow-moving

beast, and almost brush the ground with long fringed tassels. Here are bebies of women who resemble a moving garden in their shining silks of every hue that is soft and delicate, and here are naked coolies, whose bronze bodies glisten with sweat as they toil along under their load of water-skins or huge baskets heaped with earth.

The people in the streets of Udaipur strike the traveller at once as a finer type than usual. The men are tall, slender, and of lofty bearing; their features are fine, sharp, and regular. As regards the women's features you cannot judge, for in Udaipur the rule that no woman's face shall be seen by a stranger is very strictly observed. Even the poorest woman, however busily she may be at work, has a hand at liberty to draw her filmy veil of coloured gauze, red or green or blue or pink, across her face when anyone glances her way.

As the crowd passes along, two things above all strike our eyes – the beards of the men, the jewellery of the women. The beard of the Rajput is very black; it is combed and brushed till it shines in the sun; it is as large as he can grow it; then it is parted in the middle, and drawn round the face so that it stands out on either side, and the ends are curled. It is said that a Rajput dandy who cannot get his beard to properly part in the middle will draw it round his face to the required shape, and then tie a bandage tightly round his head to train the hair to the mode which he and his friends affect.

The jewellery of the women is overwhelming, and this word is

meant in its literal sense: the women are absolutely loaded with ornaments. If they are wealthy, the ornaments are of gold, decked with precious stones; the poorer classes are weighed down with silver. A Rajput woman often carries on her person the wealth of her house, and may be regarded as the family savings bank. One writer, speaking of the ornaments upon a working woman of the lower classes, says:

"Her smaller toes were decked with rings of silver, made by an ingenious arrangement of small movable knobs set close together. She wore a bracelet of the same design, which was one of the most artistic and effective triumphs of the jeweller's art that I have ever seen. Upon her eight fingers she wore twenty-six rings. She carried on her left lower arm a row of many bracelets, mainly of silver, but with here and there a band of lacquer, either green or red or yellow. Upon her left upper arm she displayed a circlet of links carved into the shape of musk-melons, each the size of a nutmeg. From this fell three chains, each five inches long, and terminated with a tassel of silver. Upon her right arm she had also many bracelets. Finally, upon her neck was a chain of silver, of such length that, after it had been coiled several times round her throat, sufficient remained to fall in a double loop upon her bosom, where a heart-shaped silver charm finished both it and her scheme of display."

Another writer gives a sketch of a Rajput dandy which forms a good companion picture to the above: "A long-skirted tunic or frock of white muslin, close-fitting white trousers, and a rose-

coloured turban with a broad band of gold lace and tall flashing plume of dark heron feathers and gold filigree were the salient points. Other accessories were the sword-belt, crossing his breast and encircling his waist, of dark green velvet, richly worked with pure gold, and thickly studded with emeralds, rubies, and brilliants; a transparent yellow shield of rhinoceros hide, with knobs of black-and-gold enamel; a sash of stiff gold lace, with a crimson thread running through the gold; bracelets of the dainty workmanship known as Jeypore enamel, thickly jewelled, which he wore on his wrists and arms; and there were strings of dull, uncut stones about his neck. The skirts of his tunic were pleated with many folds and stood stiffly out, and when he mounted his horse a servant on each side held them so that they might not be crushed.

"The trappings of the horse were scarcely less elaborate. His neck was covered on one side with silver plates, and his mane, which hung on the other side, was braided, and lengthened by black fringes, relieved by silver ornaments. White yaks' tails hung from beneath the embroidered saddle-cover on both sides, and his head, encased in a headstall of white enamelled leather and silver, topped with tall aigrettes, was tied down by an embroidered scarf to give his neck the requisite curve."

The streets through which these gay figures move are worthy of them. Hardly two houses are alike, but all are beautiful in "this shining white pearl among cities." No building is bare. Its front is decorated with half-columns, carved panels, or frescoes

in brilliant colours, picturing horses, elephants, and tigers in pursuit of their prey. Balconies and projecting windows are faced with panels of stonework so delicately carved and fretted as to resemble lacework, and in the most beautiful and graceful patterns. And everything is white, glittering white, under a clear, glowing sky, and set beside a great lake as blue as a great sheet of turquoise.

Along the streets flows a most mingled crowd, clad in all the hues of the rainbow, and through this brilliant throng all kinds of beasts of burden thread their way. The mighty elephant, rolling along with his ponderous tread, is followed by a tiny ass no bigger than a large dog. Oxen just as small as the asses, and long-legged camels with great loads on their humped backs, come and go, and people on balconies lean over the parapets and gaze idly on the busy scene.

The most striking thing in Udaipur is the vast palace of the native Prince. The most beautiful things are the two lovely water palaces which stand on islands in the lake.

The former is entered by a fine triple-arched gateway. "Above this gateway soars the great white fabric, airy, unreal, and fantastic as a dream, stretching away in a seemingly endless prospective of latticed cupolas, domes, turrets, and jutting oriel windows, rising tier above tier, at a dizzy height from the ground. A single date-tree spreads its branches above the walls of the topmost court, at the very apex of the pile."

From the foot of the ridge on which stands this glittering

pile of splendid masonry the dark blue lake stretches away, its surface broken by two islands, each of which is occupied by a water palace of wonderful beauty. Here one may roam through miles of courts, saloons, corridors, pavilions, balconies, terraces, a fairyland of splendour, in which every room, every gallery is decorated with the most exquisite art. And all this has been wrought by the hand of man, not merely the marvellous palaces, but the very lake itself. This site was once a desert valley, but immense wealth and boundless power have filled the great hollow with blue water, and littered its shores with temples and palaces and pavilions, presenting a scene which, for charm of colour and beauty of outline, can nowhere be surpassed.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE PUNJAB

Beyond the wide desert which stretches along the north-western border of Rajputana lie the plains of the Punjab, running up to the foot-hills of the Himalayas. The Punjab (the Land of Five Rivers), where the Indus and its tributaries roll their waters to the Arabian Sea, is, above all and beyond all, the battlefield of India. For it was upon these plains that the onsets of invaders first fell. Greeks, Persians, Afghans – swarm after swarm poured through the only vulnerable point of Northern India, and fought out on the plains of the Punjab the struggles which meant for them victory or disastrous retreat.

The last native rulers of the Punjab were the finest ones of all – the Sikhs. The Sikhs, a nation of fanatics and heroes, fought the Moslems for hundreds of years, and the prize was the rule of the Punjab. The Sikhs won, and formed a barrier behind which India was safe from the savage Moslem tribes of the north-west.

The Sikhs are a warrior race pure and simple. They make splendid soldiers under white officers, and the fine Sikh regiments are the pride of our native Indian army. They did not yield up the Punjab to British rule without a stern struggle. They were noble foes, and they proved noble friends. They accepted the British Raj once and for all. Within ten years after their

conquest the Indian Mutiny broke out. The Sikhs stood firm, and aided the British with the utmost gallantry and devotion.

The Sikh is a fine, tall, upstanding fellow, with an immense beard and a huge coil of hair. This follows on his belief that it is impious either to shave or to cut the hair. He holds tobacco in abhorrence, and worships his Bible, which is called the Granth. In every Sikh temple sits a priest reading in a loud voice from the Granth, while beside him an attendant priest fans the holy book with a gilt-handled plume of feathers.

The most famous Sikh temple is at Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikh faith. Here is the Pool of Immortality, and in the midst of the lake rises the Golden Temple, standing on an island. From the gates of the city a throng of stalwart, bearded Sikh pilgrims sets always towards the Golden Temple. You follow in their train, and come suddenly upon a wide open space. It is bordered by a marble pavement, and within the pavement lies the famous Lake of Immortality. The Golden Temple rises before you, glittering with blinding radiance in the hot sunshine, and mirrored in the smooth water which runs to the foot of its walls.

But you may not yet enter the sacred place and walk round the lake and see the temple. At the gates you are stopped, and your boots taken from you, and silken slippers tied on in their place. If you have tobacco in your pockets that, too, must be handed over, and left till you return, for tobacco would defile the holy place. Then you are led round by a Sikh policeman, who will show you the temple and the hallowed ground.

The marble pavement around the sacred lake is dotted with groups of priests and pilgrims, and behind the pavement stand palaces of marble, owned by great Sikh chiefs who come here to worship. Here and there are flower-sellers weaving long chains of roses and yellow jasmine to sell to worshippers who wish to make offerings. A teacher with a little band of students around him is seated beside the pool, and in a shady corner is a native craftsman busy fashioning wooden spoons and combs, and other trifles, which he sells as souvenirs of the shrine.

The Golden Temple itself is gained by a causeway across the lake, and the causeway is entered through a magnificent portal with doors of silver, and four open doors of chased silver give access to the sanctuary itself. Here sits the high-priest reading the Granth, and before the holy book is spread a cloth, upon which the faithful lay offerings of coins or flowers.

From Amritsar, the holy city, to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, is only some thirty miles. Lahore is a large town of great importance as a military station, and many troops are quartered in the grand old fort built by the Mogul Kings. Some of the palaces which once filled this ancient fortress still show traces of their former splendour. There are sheets of striking tilework, with panels of elephants, horsemen, and warriors worked in yellow upon a blue ground. There are marble walls inlaid most beautifully with flowers formed of precious stones. But many of the halls have been converted into barracks, and in spots where once an Emperor smoked his jewelled "hubble-bubble,"

surrounded by a glittering Court, Tommy Atkins, in khaki and putties, with his helmet on the back of his head, now puffs calmly at a clay pipe.

Lahore has streets which display some of the finest wood-carving in India. These streets lie within the city, the old part of the town, enclosed by brick walls sixteen feet high, and entered by thirteen gates. In one street every house has a balcony or jutting window of old woodwork, carved into the most beautiful or fantastic designs, according to the fancy of the owner who built and designed it long ago. The balconies are of all sizes and shapes, and their line is delightfully irregular. The walls, too, are painted and decorated lavishly, and domed windows are adorned by gaily-tinted peacocks worked in wood or stucco. The splendid woodwork, the shining beauty of paint and courses of bricks richly glazed in red and blue, the gay crowd which throngs the way – all these things combine to form a striking and splendid picture.

At the end of this marvellous street rise the tall minarets of the Great Mosque, and close by is the fine tomb where lies Runjit Singh, the greatest of the Sikh rulers. Under him the Sikhs rose to the height of power in India; but a few years after his death, in 1839, the Punjab passed into our hands.

CHAPTER V

AMONG THE HIMALAYAS

India is bounded and guarded on the north by one of the grandest mountain-chains in the world. This is the mighty range of the Himalayas, which stretches a row of lofty peaks from east to west, as if to shut up India behind a gigantic wall.

There are very few points where this vast range can be crossed, and then only with the greatest difficulty. The most famous pass of all lies in the north-west, the well-known Khyber or Khaibar Pass leading into Afghanistan. Through this pass invader after invader in age after age has poured his troops into the fertile plains of Hindostan.

At this point Alexander the Great at the head of a Greek army crossed the Indus and marched into India. To this day there are left in the land tokens of that far-off raid. The Indian hakims, the native doctors, practise the Greek system of medicine, and the influence of the invaders is seen in old Indian coins which turn up with Greek inscriptions upon them, in statues which are found in the soil, as full of Greek feeling as any in Athens itself.

But it is now a task for British brains and hands to see to it that no fresh invader swoops through the pass, and it is very strictly guarded. In itself the pass presents many difficulties. The way lies through tremendous ravines, beside which tower precipices

of stupendous height, and the road could easily be blocked and destroyed at many points. The people who inhabit this region are also of a very savage and dangerous character. They are called Afridis, and belong to wild hill-tribes, who are always ready for a fray, all the more so if there is a little plunder to be gained by it.

With these fierce and lawless people the British officers have come to an arrangement: that for two days a week the Afridis themselves shall furnish soldiers to guard the pass. For this duty an annual payment is made, and thus the Khaibar Pass is quite safe on Tuesdays and Fridays. On other days the traveller must look out for himself. He must keep a wide eye open for the Zakka Khels, a notorious Afridi tribe. When a son is born to a Zakka Khel woman she swings him over a hole in a wall, saying, "Be a thief! be a thief!" And a thief he is to the end of his days.

Among the Himalayas to the north-east of the Khyber Pass lies the beautiful vale of Kashmir, or Cashmere (the Happy Valley). Cashmere is a lofty plain, yet it is not a plateau, for you go down into it from every side. It is so high that its climate is nearer to that of England than any other part of India. The summer is like a fine English summer, but a little hotter, and with more settled weather. In winter the snow lies on the ground for two or three months, but about the end of February the snow disappears, and the spring bursts out, and the vale becomes beautiful with the tender green of growing crops and grass and a profusion of most lovely flowers. The scenery is very fine. Around and far off is the great wall of lofty mountains, which

encompass the plain with glittering slopes of eternal snow. The vale itself is dotted with hamlets and villages, with fields waving with corn and rice, with meadows, with orchards of mulberry- and walnut-trees, with forests of giant plane-trees.

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