

ditional mouse. A faint, far-away yelping sounded half a mile or more down the branch. After a proper pause Matt yelped again. In due time came the response and for fully ten minutes we banded calls to no purpose. The yelping down the branch, instead of approaching, was evidently stationary.

"I can't understand that," whispered Matt. "Old turkeys sometimes fight shy that way, but from the bungling way he yelps, this is bound to be a young one. Still, young ones break their necks running up to the first call they hear. I can't make it out."

For some minutes later no change occurred, then the voice began slowly to approach. Matt still looked puzzled. It crept cautiously down over the hill. Then came a faint rustling amid the dry oak leaves at the hedge-row, forty yards distant. A dusky form moved among the broom-straw. Quivering with excitement, I leveled my gun, only to have its muzzle instantly knocked up by my companion, who at the same moment gave a low whistle. At this signal the dusky form, straightening up, developed into a man, "Squire Watson, one of Matt's chums.

"Well, 'Squire, that's a closer acquaintance than ever I keer to make with two fingers of double B's," exclaimed Matt.

We now made room in the blind for this truly unexpected guest, and the calling was renewed by the two yelpers in turn.

In time responses came from several

different quarters. We replied, slowly and cautiously. Then came a flapping and fluttering, as several large birds rose from the opposite side of the branch and lit on ours. A subdued "put! put! put!" is heard, drawing closer and closer. Our guns are softly cocked and the muzzles thrust out through the blind. The tension is almost overpowering. My heart pounds away like a steam-hammer.

A line of tapering black columns tipped with red appears above the sea of yellow broom-sedge. I have a confused recollection of tugging away at something, as we pull at stubborn things in dreams. A jarring explosion followed, and then a sound of wings as if all of bird kind had taken flight in a body.

We sprang out amid the smoke and ran down to the position just held by the vanished line.

Alas! it was as bare as all old fields are. Not a turkey; not even a feather.

"That ar fust skeer flung us outer gear," observed the "Squire.

"Well, I do declar!" exclaimed Matt, incredulously, as he gazed at the spot where his turkey had stood, for the line was long and each of us had fired in a different direction.

Just then the old field resounded with a tremendous fluttering and flapping in the line of my fire, though a long way off down the hill-side. We ran to the spot. A twenty-pound gobbler lay dead on the straw.

It wasn't exactly the one I fired at, but this is the first time that I have ever thought it necessary to say so.

UP TO THE SNOW IN A DAK GHARRI.

By K. V. B.

PITCH-DARK and four o'clock on a February morning is not the usual time, in the temperate zone, to begin a journey; but in India one is governed by other conditions, and that hour found us girls waving adieu to our friends, and encoscing ourselves in the Dāk gharrī, leaving the railway station at Amballa on our journey up to the hills, in other words, on our way back to the convent in Simla to resume our studies.

The Dāk gharrīs are somewhat after the style of an English coach, except that they are drawn by two horses instead of four, and cannot accommodate so many people at a time, but they are more convenient, especially at night, as the interior has a level surface, where one can remain in a reclining posture; and, as in India, travelers always carry their own bedding, it can be spread inside with comfort. There is no reason, either, to share your coach with

strangers, for travelers can engage the entire vehicle and have it reserved.

Probably an hour or more had passed, before any of us were sufficiently roused to take any interest in our surroundings; but, as dawn was breaking, the sharp morning air made us keenly alive to the fact that we were leaving the plains of India and ascending.

As the sun rose and the mist partly cleared away, we could see the open country more clearly; and then realized the beauty of the scenery before us—the plains stretching away as far as eye could see, with here and there large clumps of spreading trees; the herds of cattle on their way out for the day's pasture, tended by boys, who seemed to enjoy the crisp morning air, singing, with their dogs at their heels; the birds, too, awakening from their rest, sang their morning lays.

We were suddenly startled by the sound of the bugle of the driver, which always announced the approach of a stage or any obstruction in the road. We looked out, and saw a long line of country carts ahead, drawn by oxen, all the drivers half asleep, with their blankets arranged in a very picturesque cowl over their heads. Their sudden awakening so confused them, that they did not get out of the way soon enough to suit our irate coachman, who vigorously applied his whip as he dashed by, narrowly escaping a collision.

A change of horses is sometimes a very exciting event. Our first change proved to be so. One of the horses was not as willing as his partner; he stood stubbornly at first, when the whip was applied, but presently kicked, and literally screamed, clashing wildly from side to side of the road, leading the other poor animal whither he would, till visions of upset coaches flashed through our minds, and we begged the coachman to unyoke the brute, which he was unwilling to do. However, to pacify us, the horse was taken out, when he succeeded in breaking away from his *balghir* (postillion) and galloped across the plain. After another pair had been put in, we started, with the aid of the boys' shouting, as they helped to turn the wheels; and with barking of dogs, and screaming of women and children, we were on our way again.

About ten o'clock we reached the Ghuggar River (a branch of the Jumna), which had to be crossed, and, being winter, it was swollen with the snow from the mountains, and in some parts impassable. The water was so deep and swift that the horses and coach were left behind, and we, with our luggage and coachman, were taken over on elephants. The river looked beautiful in the morning sunshine, winding in and out till lost to sight in the distance. It reminded one of a huge serpent; while the fields of cultivation away beyond the banks gave it a defined outline. This river is not more than half a mile wide, though most of the rivers in India are very large, so our journey was soon over, and we were met on the opposite bank by a fresh Dak gharrī.

About noon we neared the renowned "Pinjore Gardens," one stage off Kalka. As we had never been fortunate enough to visit these gardens, we took this opportunity of doing so, and were well repaid for the short hour we spent there. The road leading to the gardens branched off into a beautiful, shady walk, with a perfect avenue of trees on either side, till we came to the gate-way, which was a large masonry arch with "Welcome" carved above. As the gates were thrown open we passed into the spacious grounds, where in every direction we could see the groves of orange trees laden with fruit; and, along the paths, all the brightest flowers in bloom, with the birds twittering about, and the water, as it rippled along the side of the walks, with here and there a playing fountain, lent charm to the scene.

The occasional hideous roar of a tiger, that had been recently captured in a cage, was the only inharmonious sound which greeted the ear. The terrible monster bounded from side to side of his cage, lashing his tail with impotent rage against the iron bars, and we shuddered as we thought of the fate that had befallen the unfortunate goat which had been tied to decoy him.

The palace, entirely white, was clearly marked amongst the green foliage. The long rows of cypress trees, which lined the paths that intersected the garden at right angles, were of venerable age and backed by masses of evergreen foliage.

Each of the main avenues amongst these trees had a small canal, along the centre of which were fountains, set working for our pleasure.

The square massive walls, forming a central tower, made a great contrast to the delicate trellis work of the minarets at the corners. The principal gate had a very imposing appearance, and, as we entered, we knew we were intruding upon the deserted home of some *Rajah*, who must have lived in great pomp some few years back, though it is now kept only as a resting place for any native of rank to pass a night in on his journey through that part of the country.

Our guide took great pains to explain to us all that was of interest. The rooms inside were most curiously arranged; there was one large central hall, probably used as the throne room, with a beautifully polished floor; all around were placed cushions substituted for chairs, and at the end was a divan or throne gorgeously upholstered. On the walls were pictures of *Rajahs* and *Ranies*, which, looked at from a European standpoint, were not strictly speaking works of art, being painted in the most brilliant colors, with a supreme contempt for harmony and the monotonous sameness of features peculiar to Indian painting. Our guide knew some story connected with each-exploits of their ancestors at various tiger and elephant hunts, and battles. We pleased him very much by inquiring into the details of each different legend, and examining all the old armor arranged around the room. The other rooms were smaller, branching off the main one and opening on to balconies, or verandas, overlooking the inner court; each floor was a repetition of the first. We mounted up, going through dark passages and climbing narrow stairways, and emerged on open terraces, each a little smaller than the last, till we reached the highest, whence we obtained a good view of the surrounding country.

We girls regretted our short hour was over when the driver warned us it was time to leave, and, as we returned to our coach, we were presented with a large basket of oranges, and each a bouquet of flowers, as mementoes of our pleasant visit.

Our next stage of four miles brought us into Kalka, a small town at the foot of the hills, and from here our upward journey began in real earnest. We stayed at the hotel just long enough to have lunch, and change our conveyance from the large *Dāk gharri* to the open four-seated *tonga*. We were closely packed, by the time our luggage was strapped on to the two wings on either side above the wheels. I sat by the side of the driver, in front, and my three companions behind; we were all in excellent spirits, and had made up our minds to enjoy the seven hours' drive to Simla.

It was one o'clock when we started; the bright morning had turned cloudy, and, as we journeyed up, winding through the hills, we found the air much cooler. How well I remember the almost constant sounds of the bugle, that warned others, who might be behind some corner, of our approach; the jingling of the harness, as the horses galloped on, with now and then a steep incline, where their pace would slacken to a walk; and then the arrival at a stage, where the poor animals halted, knowing that they had earned their rest.

The time passed pleasantly to us, who were never tired of looking out for the monkeys which appeared above us, sometimes clambering over the rocks, or seated in the trees, to welcome us, as we passed, with a shower of nuts and twigs.

As the evening approached, we had turned the long corner of the Baron Ghat, where we lost the last glimpse of the plains and the familiar old white houses of *Dagshai*, where I had spent most of my childhood years; we noticed the snow commencing to fall, and knew that Simla must be enveloped in its white mantle. From there we drove down hill till we reached the valley, through which we had a pleasant drive, along a level road, passing through a little station called *Solon*, this time of the year looking very desolate, as all the troops were down in the plains and there was hardly any life to be seen. We passed below the *Dāk bungalow* and wound on, round and round the base of the hills. I can remember the scene as we passed along; on either side of the road, stretching far away along the valleys, we got glimpses of the quaint little hill villages, surrounded

by tier upon tier of fields, climbing up the sides of the hills, with many a gushing waterfall.

By this time it had grown very cold, and, as we neared the Dāk bungalow of Karri Ghat, on the side of the hill, bleak and desolate, and open to the four winds of the heavens, we drove up to it, as we had been looking forward to a hot cup of tea, if we could prevail upon the sleepy old man to hasten his movements, for we had only a short time to stay. I have generally found that at these Dāk bungalows (or resting houses) the man in charge, always a cook, or supposed to be one, is an old man; therefore, more slow than natives usually are. The interior of the house is very sparingly furnished, having, perhaps, but one bed, table, and a few chairs for each room. They are generally squarely built, with low roof and verandas all round, without any ornament in the way of flowers outside. This one was not the exception to the rule.

The coachman hurried us away, as it was getting dark, and we galloped on for a long stretch of twelve miles under the cliffs of Tari-Davi, towering dark and grim above us, the road being cut out of the solid rock. Soon we entered the gorge, where we could have obtained a good view of Simla had it not been for the snow storm which was now upon us. It had become completely dark as we ascended the final hill to Simla. The road being almost impassable from the heavy fall of snow, our progress was very slow. We succeeded in passing the last stage, but were blocked within two miles of our destination. We could get occasional glimpses of the lights of Simla through the blinding snow, but the coachman found it impossible to get on any further, as the horses refused to be urged forward, the storm raging with such fury. The mist, which in the morning lay so softly in the valley, level and white, and from which the tops of the trees were scarcely visible, had changed now into heavy clouds, black and threatening.

We looked around, unable to conjecture any possible means of advancing, till our coachman suggested going into Simla to bring assistance, as it was impossible for us to remain there till morning. We were hardly prepared for such severe weather and felt nervous, besides, at being left alone, so we sent the *balghis* instead, keeping our coachman as some sort of protection. These hills were not free from wild animals and, in winter, they roam up nearer to the habitations in search of food; the cheetah, a species of leopard, was always to be feared, especially if dogs were anywhere about.

We were very cold, hungry and depressed, and hailed with delight the approach of another tonga which had gained on us, containing but one passenger, a gentleman.

Finding us in distress, he came to our assistance and was surprised to see four helpless, shivering girls, in the wind and blinding snow. With the help of his rugs he made us as comfortable as circumstances allowed, and we felt very thankful to our benefactor. Presently we heard a deep growl, as some black object made a leap at the front of the tonga, where lay our friend's dog, a beautiful spaniel, his faithful friend and companion. There was but one yelp and the dog was gone; the gentleman sprang up and, pulling his revolver from his pocket, fired; but the cheetah, for it was one of those brutes, had plunged away in the darkness.

The terrified horses dashed wildly to the side of the road, and might have done some damage, had it not been difficult for them to make headway; and it was some time before the coachman managed to pacify them. This made us more than ever nervous, and the hours seemed long as we waited. We were at last relieved to see a light approaching, and help came to us in the shape of two Jhampan (a kind of Sedan chair) with bearers to carry us into Simla.

