

In The Nilgiri Hills!

About 12.45. they started in the small

mountain railway. It has only two classes of carriages, the III & I. The latter, although like ordinary carriages was a closed car but the former was nothing better than a miniature tram car open on all sides with curtains as the only protection against wind & rain. The 'snail' like speed with which the tiny engine managed to pull the train up the hills proved a welcome feature of the journey as it allowed the party to enjoy fully the fascinating scenery all round for which the hills are so well known. In the present rainy season the hills looked all the more beautiful with the silvery clouds flitting here and there. The more they topped the hills the more their majestic charm was revealed but at the same time the atmosphere began to be extremely uncomfortable owing to keen cold winds that swept through the 3rd class open carriage.

By the time the party reached Ooty, the last station of this railway, at the height of about 7250 feet all were quivering with cold, although it was only about 4 in the afternoon! Padri and Peeram were sent in the bazar to get Dhal or any other vegetable soup to eat the bread with. In spite of hotel to hotel search none was found to be available and the party had to be contented with bread and grams that they had with them. Baba was almost laid down with fever, and it was decided to return back to Coonoor, pass the night there, and then walk back through the hills to Metropalayam the following morning.

Accordingly they started back from Ooty the same evening at 6.20. and arrived at Coonoor at 7.45.

Owing to fogs the night was pitch dark, and yet there was only a solitary lamp burning flickeringly ~~in~~ on the whole of the platform. However here they ~~was~~ succeeded in getting a square meal in a hindoo hotel

* after some search, through the help of a Bombay Tea merchant.
 But the hotel itself was not found to be suitable
 for the mandali's stay owing to insanitary conditions hence
 the food was also brought over to the station as Gustadji
 said he would prefer to remain in cold on the platform
 rather than in that dirty place. The station master was
 approached to allow them the shelter of a I class carriage for
 the night only as the train was to remain in siding till then
 and they were quite strangers ~~is~~ there. The request was
 granted, and the prospect of sleeping in the open night
 eliminated. The party took meals in the carriage and
 then after sometime retired for the night. All slept
 well throughout the night, save Baba, who passed it very
 uncomfortably through fever which ~~kept~~ continued till
 the following morning. In spite of it the party started
 on foot for Metropalayam a distance of about 21 miles
 at about 7.20. although the same Bombay merchant who
 had met them last night came across them in the
 morning too and invited the party for sight seeing
 the great tea plantations but he was put off politely.

After walking a ~~or~~ few miles the party ~~made~~
~~short halt~~ took rest near a small village. Excepting
 Baba, the rest had bread & cheese for their breakfast. *

The rest of the tramp through the beautiful
 hills was made very slowly. Stalling here and there
 on account of the fever that was still raging hot with
 Baba. Although a large amount of tea is ^{exp}orted out
 in other countries from Nilgris, yet it was not found
 to be available in any of the refreshment shops that
 were passed by. But whenever asked for, coffee was
 said to be ready! Very careful enquiries were made
 for tea as Baba wanted the same but to no purpose,

* Baba again delivered a "punning" lecture, now planning about his own suffering and planning
 the mandali for having very weak mind. During this discourse Baba told Baba's name is because
 a Baba.

it was available nowhere. Hence Baba remained without food and drink throughout the tramp in spite of having fever, although he made the rest of the party take a cup each of coffee. While passing villages Baba distributed ^{handfuls of} the grams they had with them to the children encountered on the way and thus finished the whole stock. However the tramp was not continued exactly to the programme. The party took to train again at the station of Kallar after walking 16 miles and thus crossed the remaining five miles to Metropalayam by railway. The return journey to Madras after the flying visit into the Nilgiris was completed comfortably. The party got a small 'ten seats' compartment to themselves throughout the night and arrived back in Madras at 8.30. A.M. on the 8th of Aug.

The following ^{same} day Baily declared himself unable to accompany any longer and said he had enough of the racing from one place to another. Quite a hot discussion followed and it was finally decided that he should leave the party and go where he liked. He decides to go to Poona and the spare luggage with the mandali's packed to be sent away with him including the heavy overcoats which made a big bundle in itself.

Accordingly the next morning Baily left for Poona with a considerable lot of spare things making the remaining party's travelling kit very light. But before he went there was another serious breeze between him and Baba. During the last passage at aruns Baba said "Gone has Prem and feelings for me. I don't sleep throughout the nights for the last 4 nights while you all do so snoring away cozily in your beddings. Everybody is 'Khud-Parast' and cannot give me 'Sath'.

