

BESIEGED ON A LOCOMOTIVE.

A Ride With a Cobra on the Engine of an Indian Railway.

I was stationed at Sooranungalum in 1875, says a writer in an English paper, where I formed a close friendship with Tom Newdegate, the assistant traffic manager of the western section of the Chenaputnam railway. He was a widower and I was a bachelor, and being the only Europeans in the station with the exception of Major Nimrod, the government district engineer, whose duties seldom allowed him to be at home, we naturally spent a good many evenings at each other's bungalows.

It was a very hot June evening, and Tom and I were stretched in long American chairs in the veranda of my bungalow smoking our "richies" when my "boy" came to ask for my instructions about a journey I had to make by train on the following day to a station a few miles down the line.

The prospect was not a pleasant one, as the land wind was still prevailing and I had little inclination to face that parching, fiery blast. Therefore I did not look forward with eagerness to spend a day in the Dak bungalow at Stunkery Droog. "Why not go to-night?" asked Tom. "I am running a special 'goods' to Pothanore at 12 o'clock and you can be dropped at Stunkery Droog after still, I will go with you and we will ride on the engine, the coolest place in the train by day or night."

I readily closed with the offer, the chance of traveling by night instead of by day at that time of the year being too good to be lost, and telling my boy to pack up a day's provisions, not forgetting a bottle of Epsom and half a dozen sodas, and ordering the black chef to join him with his cooking utensils, Tom and I dined off in our chairs with eagerness to get a start. At that hour precisely we were aroused by the boy's monotonous "Sah! Sah!" and we were forthwith driven to the railway station.

We were soon off, and I found out at once that Tom was right about the engine being the coolest place. The velocity of the engine creates a current of air which rapidly absorbs the abundant moisture thrown out from one's pores when the thermometer registers 90 degrees at midnight.

With our cheroots burning fragrantly, we howled along very chattily and felt grateful that we had not a longer run before us. Nothing worthy of notice had happened since the driver ordered his fireman to make up the furnace.

Sooranungalum being upward of 200 miles from the sea, coal or compressed fuel would be too costly to burn in the engines on account of the expense of bringing it from the coast; besides coal perishes very rapidly under a tropical sun. Therefore, the furnaces are constructed to burn wood, of which there is a fair supply available from the company's jungle reserves. Of course all fuel is precious and drivers must take the fat with the lean—that is, roots as well as logs.

Now, snakes very much affect the hollow crevices of roots of old trees in India and thus they are frequently introduced into the wood stacks at the railway stations, and these are occasionally transferred to the engine tenders.

This was exactly our case. As the fireman took up a log to throw it into the furnace down dropped a lively cobra on to the foot-plate. It was not a very large species of "spectacles"—about four feet long—but a one-foot hooder is quite enough to grant a passport to the stoutest man that ever hopped and to frank him to that country from whose boume no traveler returns. So the hooder is quite enough to grant a passport to the stoutest man that ever hopped and to frank him to that country from whose boume no traveler returns. So the hooder is quite enough to grant a passport to the stoutest man that ever hopped and to frank him to that country from whose boume no traveler returns.

But the creature showed no inclination to go. Either it knew the by-law against leaving the train while in motion, or it liked the fierce heat from the open furnace. It used itself up in the hope of frightening it I made a kick at it, taking care, of course, not to let my foot go within striking distance, as my light ducks would have afforded no protection against those awful fangs.

It was an unfortunate demonstration, for the snake, so far from being intimidated, accepted me as a casual bell, and advanced upon us.

We were besieged. The driver sprang out on one side of the engine, being on the hand-rail which runs over the boiler; the fireman went up the pile of logs behind him like a mountain cat; "Tom" vanished from the scene on the opposite side of the boiler to that which had been taken, calling to me to follow him. They were all as much at home skipping around on the engine in the dark as squirrels on the top branches of a beech tree; but to me the unfamiliar situation was perfectly bewildering, and being partly fascinated by the loathsome thing I was unable to stir, and my feet seemed rooted to the spot.

The cobra raised itself to strike! I tried to jump off the engine, but I could not move. I would have called out, but horror had tied my tongue. The next instant I expected to receive the mortal wound, when the fireman slipped down from the logs behind the snake, seized it by the tail, and flung it bodily into the furnace. It was a relief to see that cobra squirming in the fire.

Sunkery Droog signals were now in sight, and I heard the whistle after enjoying a peg in the station. But before the train went on there was a short interview between that fireman and myself; and by the very broad grin on his naturally faded and the hearty "Salaam, Iyer!" with which he brought both his palms to his forehead, I judged he was well satisfied. Certainly I was.

THE BETTER HALF.

Should it be the One That Knows Most Cooking?

Miss Juliet Corson maintains that if in an average company you select at random a dozen men and a dozen women the masculine group will possess much the more knowledge of cookery. This declaration she backs up in a recent conversation with many illustrations. Go into a restaurant, she says, with a number of men and women. Unless there should chance to be in the company a woman who has traveled extensively and observed much you will never go wrong if you intrust the selection of the dinner to the gentlemen. Let some critic should reply that men are more used to restaurant and hotel fashions and feel themselves more at ease in ordering, Miss Corson is willing to go a step farther. If it is a case of ordering a nice little family dinner at home, which consists usually of a roast and a pudding, but, next, a soup, fish and perhaps one side dish, the husband, she alleges, will commonly lay out the best bill of fare.

If he is a club man or a man used to camping out, he will cook it better than his wife, but whether he knows anything about the process of cooking or not, he will show more ability in planning a good dinner. Being asked to define a good dinner, Miss Corson said that it must possess three qualifications: it must please the palate, satisfy the appetite and be easily

digested. This culinary ability a man does not usually develop, she is of the opinion, until he reaches 35, or, say 40 years of age. At this period of life she accounts for it on the theory that mature men pay more intelligent heed than do women to their food. The average woman cares comparatively little what she eats, as is shown by her common neglect of herself when she has no man to provide for; while the man who is actively engaged in business knows that if he is not fully nourished his work will suffer.

NEVER THOUGHT OF IT.

How a Boston Lady Tried to Find a Glove to Fit Her.

From the Boston Transcript. There is an esteemed and popular lady of Cambridge who recently has a somewhat remarkable experience. "I had been trying for a long time" (she tells the story herself) "to get a No. 5½ glove that was small enough for me. I had tried nearly all the glove stores in Boston. Now I thought I had got one that was small enough, and now it turned out, upon wearing, to be unpleasantly large. You don't know how much annoyance I had undergone in this way, when finally I went to a reputable dealer in gloves, insisted upon seeing the proprietor himself, took him aside and addressed him:

"Now, Mr. Kidd," said I, "I have been trying in Boston for the last two years to buy a No. 5½ glove that was small enough for me, and I cannot do it. Do you suppose that you can furnish me or obtain for me such a glove?"

"Ahem!" said he; "did you find the ordinary 5½ glove somewhat large for you?"

"Yes."

"Did it ever occur to you to buy a 5½ glove?"

"It never once occurred to me," said the lady.

The servant girl of the Future. From the New York Sun.

Mrs. Cockran of Shelbyville, Ill., has invented a dish-washing machine. This is only one of the comforts that will crown the domestic life of the twentieth century.

The "hired girl" of that happier time will light the kitchen fire by pressing an electric button at the head of her bed, grind the coffee by starting an automatic mill, drop five cents in the slot and have the eggs and the chops sent around from the grocers' and butchers' trust, catch the rolls as they jump off from the bread basket underground, pneumatic supply train and set the table by turning a crank.

The only irregular thing in a house in the age of comfort by machinery will be the cat. The cat cannot be regulated or kept out of the milk by any device short of the guillotine.

Would Make a Good Driller. From the Oil City Blizzard.

"Do you think I would succeed as a journalist?" asked the exchange fiend.

"Possibly," replied the editor, "but your chances for success as a well driller would be vastly better."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because you are such an accomplished bore already."

Satisfaction Not Guaranteed. From Time.

Small Gladys (at the close of her first Sunday school): "I flnk you ought to div' my money back mister, 'cause I don't yike this matinee."

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