

TWELVE YEARS
IN
INDIA AND MALAYA.

A
MEMOIR OF HENRY VACHER,
COMPILED FROM HIS LETTERS,

BY
FRANCIS VACHER.

PRIVATELY PRINTED.

—
LONDON.

—
1880.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

P. & O. S. N. Company, Calcutta.

1866-68.

	PAGE
Embarks at Southampton and lands at Calcutta—Accommodation for Company's Ship-Stewards—A Stewards' Club opened—A Stranger among Strangers—Leaves P. & O. Service	1

CHAPTER II.

Messrs. Marillier & Edwards, Calcutta.

1868-69.

More Congenial Work—Petty Contract System—Applies for employment on Punjaub State Railway .	7
---	---

CHAPTER III.

The Sirhind Canal (near Roopur).

1870.

	PAGE
A Long Journey—Labour Contracting—Provisional Appointment	11

CHAPTER IV.

*Rajpootana State Railway.**(Nynee Tal, Delhi, Agra).*

1870-72.

Nynee Tal—Simla—A Hot Season in Town—Commission Agent—Permanent Appointment—Murder of Chief Justice—Lord Mayo—Death of a Friend—A Second Hot Season at Agra—Trip to Calcutta—Dengue—Fall from his Horse—Christmas Festivities—An Excursion Train	15
--	----

CHAPTER V.

*Rajpootana State Railway (Agra).**Holiday in Java.*

1873.

Examination in Native Languages—From Agra to Calcutta in Hot Weather—Penang—Singapore—Batavia—Buitenzorg—Bandong—A pair of Volcano Craters—Ascent of Pangarango—A Bivouac—To Sourabaya by Steamer—Return from Java—A Durbar at Agra	26
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

Rajpootana State Railway (Agra).

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1874.

	PAGE
A Patent Punkah—Camping Out along the Line—Prospect of a Summer in the Plains—Invitation to Johore—Kindly received—A Christmas Journey	41

CHAPTER VII.

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1875.

Appointment to Johore State Railway—Some Account of the Maharajah—Johore and its Resources—A Wooden Railway—Work fairly begun—House by the Sea Side—A Waterspout—Sir A. Clarke's Farewell Visit to the Maharajah—Opening of the Johore Railway—Visit of Sir W. Jervois to Johore—Opening of the Dewan—The Perak Outbreak—The unsettled state of Malay Peninsula—The Maharajah goes to India	47
---	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1876..

The Prince of Wales at Calcutta—The Maharajah's return—Encounter with an Old Friend—H. H. Promised a Decoration—Sir W. Jervois's Interest in the Railway—	
---	--

	PAGE
Mr. Whampoa—"Moore's Manual of Medicine"—Chinese Colonists—Capture of Maharajah Lela—Office and Emoluments of Mayor—The Mayor's dismissal—An Interregnum—Investiture of H. H. with the G.C.M.G.—Railway Works stopped—A Letter from the Maharajah	60

CHAPTER IX.

Return to India.

Imperial Assemblage at Delhi.

1876-77.

A Perilous Voyage—Cyclone in the Bay of Bengal—Back again in Agra—Imperial Assemblage Works—Dais and Amphitheatre—Delhi after the Show—Commemoration Medal	75
--	----

CHAPTER X.

Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

(Dhond and Munmar Railway, Bombay Presidency).

1877.

A Journey of 1,800 miles—Beginning work at Camp Dhond—Scenes on the Famine Works—Infants born on the Works—The Children—The grown-up Coolies—The Old Women—Visits of Sir R. Temple—Visit of the Civil Commissioner and others—Tent under a Banyan Tree—Welcome Rain—Disappointed Hopes—Famine increasing—Incessant hard work—Reminiscences—Longing for change	83
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

(Peepulgaum, Behloondee, Dhond).

1878.

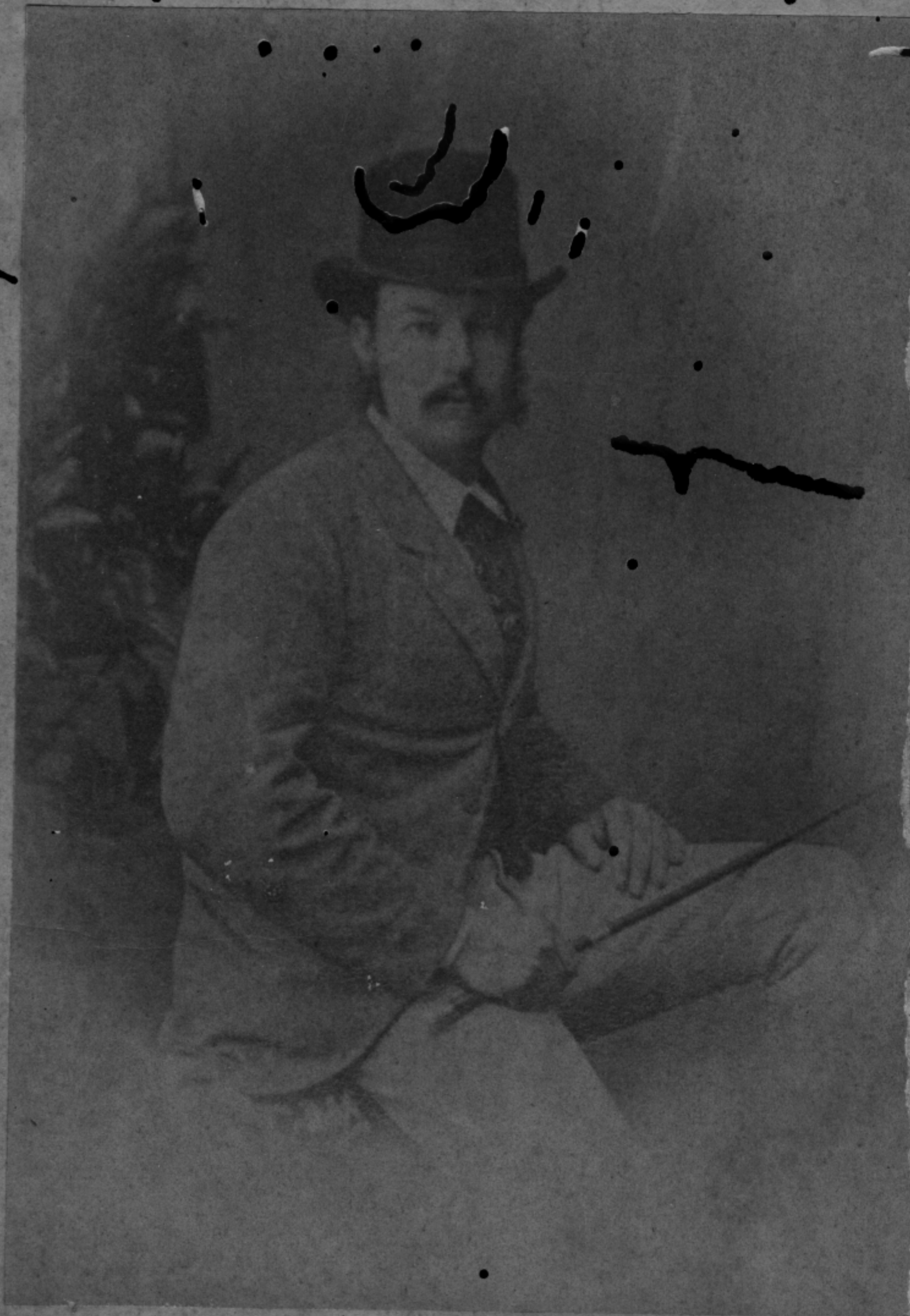
	PAGE
Blasting Operations.—An Accident—Not entitled to “leave” —Return to Dhond—Excessive Heat—Opening of the Line by Sir R. Temple at Ahmednuggur—Festivities after the ceremony—An expected visit—Looking back and looking forward	99

CHAPTER XII.

Transfer to Ahmedabad.

Death.

Western Rajpootana Railway — Last Letter Home — Mr. Parker's Narrative—Kind attentions from Strangers —Letter from Mr. McIntosh—Report of the Official Director of State Railways to the Secretary to the Government of India—Grave at Ahmedabad	107
--	-----





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PREFACE

THE story of this little book is soon told.

During the latter half of 1878, when my thoughts were very full of my brother Henry, it occurred to me there might be enough of general interest in his working life to form the subject of a brief Memoir, and at Christmas I suggested to my father that he should send me Henry's home-letters and papers, and I would do my best to arrange the material as a narrative. My father promised to consider the proposal, and the following May I received from him a liberal selection of Henry's letters, together with most of the official documents and memoranda which had been forwarded from India under the direction of the Administrator-General. Owing to many engagements, this parcel was not touched for some months; but in September I found time to read through all the carefully sorted contents, and from that time such leisure as I could spare was devoted to the preparation of the Memoir. When the work was half done it was interrupted for two months, and the concluding chapters were not completed till February.

Almost the last work of any kind done by my father was revising my MS., and he was thus occupied within a week of his death, which took place on March 16th. Here and there ~~line~~ or two were added, and a few verbal alterations made, but the main effect of the revision has been to shorten the narrative. With a few trifling exceptions my father's emendations have been accepted.

While engaged on the Memoir, I have been especially sensible of the disadvantage of my personal want of familiarity with, or, more correctly, entire ignorance of the countries in which my brother's life-work was done. For this reason I have said scarcely anything myself, being content to build up the narrative with extracts from my subject's letters and a very few documents and newspaper notices. I have thus presented the best likeness I could of the deceased; but it is a likeness with the defects of all work constructed of fragments—hard in outline and unfinished. However, the passages in Henry's own letters will recall the man vividly to those who knew him, and show that he was observant of the scenes and people he lived among, and possessed considerable power of graphic description. I have aimed at giving something more than a mere detail of facts and events. Indeed my one object has been *to show the man as he was*—energetic, self-reliant, depressed, happy, tempted, grateful, discontented, affectionate.

How much the Memoir falls short of this ideal

standard no one can be as painfully conscious as myself. Let the reader remember that any weakness visible is mine and not my model's. In most memoirs the subject is probably scarcely as good as he is represented. Here matters are changed, for my subject was, I will not say better, but stronger and brighter than I have sketched him.

F. V.

BIRKENHEAD,

July 15th, 1880.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

P. & O. S. N. Company, Calcutta.

1866-68.

	PAGE
Embarks at Southampton and lands at Calcutta—Accommodation for Company's Ship-Stewards—A Stewards' Club opened—A Stranger among Strangers—Leaves P. & O. Service	1

CHAPTER II.

Messrs. Marillier & Edwards, Calcutta.

1868-69.

More Congenial Work—Petty Contract System—Applies for employment on Punjaub State Railway .	7
---	---

CHAPTER III.

The Sirhind Canal (near Roopur).

1870.

	PAGE
A Long Journey—Labour Contracting—Provisional Appointment	11

CHAPTER IV.

*Rajpootana State Railway.**(Nynee Tal, Delhi, Agra).*

1870-72.

Nynee Tal—Simla—A Hot Season in Town—Commission Agent—Permanent Appointment—Murder of Chief Justice—Lord Mayo—Death of a Friend—A Second Hot Season at Agra—Trip to Calcutta—Dengue—Fall from his Horse—Christmas Festivities—An Excursion Train	15
--	----

CHAPTER V.

*Rajpootana State Railway (Agra).**Holiday in Java.*

1873.

Examination in Native Languages—From Agra to Calcutta in Hot Weather—Penang—Singapore—Batavia—Buitenzorg—Bandong—A pair of Volcano Craters—Ascent of Pangarango—A Bivouac—To Sourabaya by Steamer—Return from Java—A Durbar at Agra	26
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

Rajpootana State Railway (Agra).

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1874.

	PAGE
A Patent Punkah—Camping Out along the Line—Prospect of a Summer in the Plains—Invitation to Johore—Kindly received—A Christmas Journey	41

CHAPTER VII.

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1875.

Appointment to Johore State Railway—Some Account of the Maharajah—Johore and its Resources—A Wooden Railway—Work fairly begun—House by the Sea Side—A Waterspout—Sir A. Clarke's Farewell Visit to the Maharajah—Opening of the Johore Railway—Visit of Sir W. Jervois to Johore—Opening of the Dewan—The Perak Outbreak—The unsettled state of Malay Peninsula—The Maharajah goes to India	47
---	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Johore Railway (Malay Peninsula).

1876..

The Prince of Wales at Calcutta—The Maharajah's return—Encounter with an Old Friend—H. H. Promised a Decoration—Sir W. Jervois's Interest in the Railway—

	PAGE
Mr. Whampoa—"Moore's Manual of Medicine"—Chinese Colonists—Capture of Maharajah Lela—Office and Emoluments of Mayor—The Mayor's dismissal—An Interregnum—Investiture of H. H. with the G.C.M.G.—Railway Works stopped—A Letter from the Maharajah	60

CHAPTER IX.

Return to India.

Imperial Assemblage at Delhi.

1876-77.

A Perilous Voyage—Cyclone in the Bay of Bengal—Back again in Agra—Imperial Assemblage Works—Dais and Amphitheatre—Delhi after the Show—Commemoration Medal	75
--	----

CHAPTER X.

Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

(Dhond and Munmar Railway, Bombay Presidency).

1877.

A Journey of 1,800 miles—Beginning work at Camp Dhond—Scenes on the Famine Works—Infants born on the Works—The Children—The grown-up Coolies—The Old Women—Visits of Sir R. Temple—Visit of the Civil Commissioner and others—Tent under a Banyan Tree—Welcome Rain—Disappointed Hopes—Famine increasing—Incessant hard work—Reminiscences—Longing for change	83
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

(Peepulgaum, Behloondee, Dhond).

1878.

	PAGE
Blasting Operations.—An Accident—Not entitled to “leave” —Return to Dhond—Excessive Heat—Opening of the Line by Sir R. Temple at Ahmednuggur—Festivities after the ceremony—An expected visit—Looking back and looking forward	99

CHAPTER XII.

Transfer to Ahmedabad.

Death.

Western Rajpootana Railway — Last Letter Home — Mr. Parker's Narrative—Kind attentions from Strangers —Letter from Mr. McIntosh—Report of the Official Director of State Railways to the Secretary to the Government of India—Grave at Ahmedabad	107
--	-----

CHAPTER I.

PENINSULAR AND ORIENTAL STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, GARDEN REACH, CALCUTTA.

1866-68.

THE subject of the present Memoir, Henry Vacher, embarked at Southampton in May, 1866, and landed at Calcutta in the following month, being then in the twenty-second year of his age.

Through the kindness of his friend, Mr. Allan, Managing Director of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, he had received an appointment in the Company's Engineering Establishment at Garden Reach. His first duties were those of a draughtsman, for which some years' previous experience in the important Marine Engine Works of Messrs. John Penn and Sons, Greenwich, had well qualified him.

During a long period of close intimacy, Mr. Allan had learned to place implicit confidence in Mr. Vacher's ability and integrity, and by many considerate acts of kindness and attention afforded him undoubted evidence of his esteem. Mr. Vacher, on his part, was greatly attached to Mr. Allan, was always ready to seek his more than friendly advice and counsel, and throughout life never failed to express the gratitude he felt towards "his oldest and best friend."

- Not long after his arrival in India, Mr. Vacher suffered an attack of simple fever, which, however, was only of short duration, and he was soon able to resume his duties with a constitution in some measure acclimatized. Subsequent to this initiatory fever he enjoyed a large share of excellent health, a blessing which his temperate habits and regular life conserved for him, and enabled him to put to good use.

Early in 1867, a plan was set on foot to supply a much required want of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's staff, by providing a suitable Home or Club at Calcutta for their Ship-Stewards. These men numbered about 200, and while on shore, in the interval between the arrival and departure of their respective vessels, had hitherto been left much to their own resources, exposed to great temptations, and destitute of any more attractive resort than their "tween decks" quarters on board the steamers. It was proposed to provide suitable accommodation in a house on shore for 50 persons — this being the usual number in port at one time — and to afford them ample means of amusement, with all the comfort and conveniences of a private club. The Rev. J. Cave-Browne, Government Chaplain and Incumbent of the parish in which the Company's Establishment is situated, and Mr. Vacher entered heart and soul into this charitable project (the latter acting as Secretary), and devoted much time and energy to its realization. Various practical difficulties had to be encountered, but with tact and patience they were overcome, and after many months of honest effort the good work was done.

St. Alban's House, situated between the Old and New Garden Reach Roads, not far from the Peninsular and Oriental premises, was secured and adapted for the purposes of the new Club. From the first, nothing that could minister

to the comfort and recreation of the members seems to have been omitted. Two billiard tables and the appliances for most modern in-door games were provided, while the reading room was not without the nucleus of a small collection of books towards a permanent library. The upper portion of the building was divided off into comfortable dormitories and a bath room.

Mr. Vacher's faith and perseverance received their fitting reward, when, on September 6th (his birthday), the Stewards' Club was formally opened. Of the 200 men attached to the Company's steamers in this capacity, 130 had already constituted themselves members of the Club. The Rev. J. Cave-Browne delivered the inaugural address on the occasion, and at its conclusion reminded the members present how much they owed their Secretary, who had originated the idea of the Club and laboured so earnestly to establish it.

There is ground for believing that Mr. Vacher was never quite satisfied with his work and associations in the Company's service. His correspondence during 1866 does not contain any such intimation, but early in the following year his periodical letters to his family at home became interrupted, and then entirely ceased for some months. This naturally gave rise to much anxiety, and no explanation of his continued reticence was afforded till April, 1868, when he wrote to his father, commencing—"At last my affairs have taken a favourable turn, and I hasten to break my long imposed silence. I know I have not done right in refraining from corresponding with you for such a length of time, yet I have all along felt that I could never write home until my prospects brightened, until I could write without complaining that my coming to India was altogether a failure." He does not state precisely all the causes of his discontent, but refers

to some of them, and there can be no doubt that his second year in India was one of considerable mental depression. That his prospects were ever really as discouraging as he allowed himself to think is scarcely probable, but that he was cast down and disappointed is certain, and he shrank from communicating with his friends till he could speak of this as an experience of the past.

One of these troubles was purely of his own creation. On leaving England he had resolved so long as he retained his health "to depend entirely on his own exertions," and when he found his slender earnings scarcely equal to necessary expenses, he felt that it would have been "breaking this resolution" to touch his small capital.

Perhaps, the main cause of his depression during the beginning of his career in India arose from the circumstance of some expected introductions not having come to hand. As it was by his own desire that he went out, he was loath to begin the new life by sending complaints home; but referring to this period at a later date, he tells how much he at first "felt the want of a friend, never having had any kind of introduction on my arrival." Indeed, the feeling that he was quite alone, a stranger among strangers, appears to have temporarily developed a nervousness which was altogether foreign to his character. Witness the following, related by himself, as "a curious fact" of his early experiences in India. "Perpetually haunting me is a most extraordinary dream that I am in London hiding away from my friends, having been obliged to return to England for want of employment, and unwilling that anyone should know it. I have dreamt it dozens of times, the same stereotyped dream, insomuch that I know from the beginning everything that is going to happen, feeling confident all the

while that what I have dreamt of so often has at last *really* come to pass, until I wake up in a sort of nightmare."

There is nothing in Mr. Vacher's letters which so fitly illustrates his frame of mind at this time as the above passage. The whole environment of his life had depressed him sensibly. The climate, the unfamiliar scenes, the daily office routine relieved only by almost companionless leisure, kept reminding him of the distance he was from home and help and sympathy, and made him nervously anxious. It is noticeable also that the same exaggerated delicacy which made him reticent in this respect to the members of his family, restrained him from unburdening himself to that friend who could, and doubtless would, have done much to relieve him of all his real troubles. Thus in the note to his father, in which he tells the story of his early experiences, he adds "I have been very careful what I have said to Mr. Allan on the matter, and I hope you will not let him see this letter, as it was entirely at my own request that I came to India, and I would sooner do anything than complain of my luck to him."

Mr. Vacher remained in the service of the Peninsular and Oriental Company a period of about two years, but the work found for him was not such as he loved. He felt that he was not learning, and not likely to improve his position while he remained in the Superintendent Engineer's Office, and thus, in April, 1868, on obtaining an offer of more congenial employment, he resigned his appointment and went from Garden Reach to Messrs. Marillier and Edwards, Calcutta. It will be inferred from the date of the letter just quoted from, that the "favourable turn" in his affairs alluded to by the writer was this offer of employment. It came at a time when he was discontented and longing for change,

and was very welcome. He accepted it gratefully, but not without regret that he thus severed his connection with the Club so lately found at St. Alban's House.

CHAPTER II.

MARILLIER AND EDWARDS, CALCUTTA.

1868-69.

In a letter home, bearing date May 15th, 1868, Mr. Vacher writes of his new appointment as follows:—"I have a very good position in Messrs. Marillier and Edwards's office as Mr. Edwards's assistant; I generally go about with him in the early morning to look at all the work in hand, and during the day I am in the office looking after the Engineering Department and setting the draughtsmen their work. I like the whole place very much." The firm were extensive Contractors for Engineering Works, having their central office at Calcutta, and Mr. Vacher's connection with them was singularly happy. He often speaks of the kindness shown him by Mr. Edwards, and to Mr. McIntosh, a junior partner in the firm, he soon became much attached. Ten years afterwards he writes of Mr. McIntosh as "his one great friend and adviser in India—more like an elder brother."

Among the least of the advantages of his change of employment was an increase of £50 in his salary; the real gain to him was that he was now with those he liked, and that the work required of him was less monotonous and confining. Again and again he refers with manifest interest to the

operations he was employed on, and gives descriptions of little journeys and daily incidents, sometimes dwelling quite fondly on details of his engineering work. Indeed the tone of his correspondence from this May letter showed his friends that the cloud which had temporarily overshadowed him was dispersed, and that he had recovered his natural cheerfulness. In less than six months he writes "My success at Messrs. M. and E.'s has already been more than I anticipated. Hitherto I have always gone out with Mr. Edwards to inspect the work, but a few days ago he told me that now I might go out whenever and wherever I pleased quite independently of him. It is very nice having no regular office hours and not feeling bound to time and place, although I think as a rule in such cases one is apt to spend a good many more hours at work than otherwise." The following paragraph has been selected from his correspondence in the early half of 1869, as showing that he was soon advanced to a position of some trust, and the simple, ingenuous pleasure every fresh proof of confidence gave him. It occurs in a letter dated from Purneah,—"I arrived at the site of our new bridge on the morning of May 20th, and, having examined the amount of damage done, I set to work at once to think of the best means of repairing it. Having turned the matter over and over in my mind during the greater part of the day, I eventually decided to telegraph to Calcutta for a diver. The diver arrived the following week, and has been hard at work ever since. The chief difficulties have now been overcome, and I hope to have the broken pier successfully repaired and finished up to water level in the course of a few days. Beyond the mere success of my undertaking, two things have pleased me very much in this affair,—First, M. and E. never raised a question as to my proposed method

of repairing the pier, although they must have known that there were several other ways, apparently more simple and less expensive. They evidently gave me credit for having formed a good opinion on the subject, as they dispatched the diver at once, and forwarded a letter based on my Report to the Government Engineer of Purneah and the Superintending Engineer of this division, both of whom visited the bridge some few days after we had started work, and expressed their approval of the particular way in which we were doing it."

Mr. Vacher served Messrs. Marillier and Edwards about two years, and then only left them for lack of something to do, in consequence of a radical change having been made in the system of carrying out the engineering works of the country. In November, 1869, he writes to his father, "Yesterday our last Government Contracts—the Port of Calcutta Jetties—were completed, and some 300 of our workmen were discharged, and this month I shall have little or nothing myself to do." Then, referring to the retrenchments of the Government, he says, "what with reducing their staff of Engineers and stopping their contracts there is nothing to be done, and I only find abler and older men in the same position as myself. The only *great* Government Works that are quite sure to be gone on with are the new State Railways and the Irrigation. Both these undertakings Government intend carrying out on the petty contract system, *i. e.*, their own Engineers will plan and set out the general scheme, all the materials and plant will be sent out by the Secretary of State from England, and then the work will be sub-let in small portions to skilled labour contractors." And here he goes on to discuss the expediency, in the event of his failing to secure a suitable appointment, of his going in for some of

10 *Application for Employment on State Railway.*

these contracts. Meanwhile, with the assistance of the professional friends he had made, he was doing his best to obtain employment; for he knew how small were the profits which in any case could be reckoned on in such contracts as a set-off against the anxiety and worry incidental to carrying them out. Among his papers of 1869 is the draft of an application addressed to the Chief Engineer of the Punjaub State Railway, and this gentleman recommended him for an appointment, but ineffectually. The application was renewed in January, 1870, and though this was also not immediately successful, hopes were held out to him that he would be "offered an engagement hereafter." The testimonial submitted by him from Messrs. Marillier and Edwards expressed their pleasure in certifying to his abilities as an Engineer; particularly shown in designing and erecting iron bridges, roofs and girders, and in superintending their general work.

CHAPTER III.

THE SÍRHIND CANAL (NEAR ROOPUR).

1870.

The episode in Mr. Vacher's life now to be referred to occupied only a brief time, but it is, perhaps, of sufficient interest to justify its being dealt with in a separate section. Having waited some months for the expected appointment on the State Railway, and feeling that he was trespassing on the kindness of Messrs Marillier and Edwards, by remaining in their office when there was so little to do, he entered into a temporary partnership with another Engineer, for the purpose of tendering for one of the Labour Contracts already alluded to. His partner was a Mr. Derry, whose acquaintance he had made at Calcutta, and the work tendered for was on the Sirhind Canal, near Roopur, in the North Western Provinces. On March 15th, 1870, he writes home joyfully :—" We have got a small Contract from Government to commence with, under, I believe, very favourable terms, and the promise of a good many more, if we do the first satisfactorily and find it pay." He adds that his partner had already left for the site of the proposed operations, and that he expected to follow him in a few days. A fortnight later Mr. Vacher wrote from Kamulpore, where he

was already busy with the Canal excavations. The following extracts from this letter give particulars of his journey, and the aspect of his affairs when he reached his destination.

“ I left Calcutta by the night express on Saturday the 19th, and travelled right through, without stopping for more than an hour anywhere, until I arrived at Umballa, a distance by rail of 1,180 miles. As our express trains here run considerably slower than the ordinary ones in England, I can assure you that this was a very fatiguing journey. Arriving at Umballa on Tuesday morning, I put up at the Railway Hotel and called on one or two gentlemen to whom Mr. McIntosh had given me introductions, and from whom I learnt my way to the site of the new Sirhind Canal, where my partner Mr. Derry was already hard at work.”

“ Kamulpore, a small native village consisting of a few huts, is above 56 miles by road from Umballa, and the only means of travelling this distance is by dhoolie dâk. A ‘ dhoolie ’ is a rectangular box about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet long by 3 feet square, made of very thin wood, with sliding doors in the sides and a cane bottom; a bamboo, about 12 feet long, passing longitudinally through the top of it. Four natives carry the projecting ends of the bamboo on their shoulders, two going in front and two in the rear. The word ‘ dâk ’ merely means a stage like our stage coach. In performing a journey of this kind it is necessary to give the head man a day’s notice to enable him to place relays of men all along the road at the different stages. I left the Railway Hotel at the first signs of daylight on Wednesday morning, with one man carrying my portmanteau on a bamboo over his shoulder, four men carrying my dhoolie, and four more running alongside to change about with the others every seven or eight hundred yards. I walked the first stage

of about 10 miles as it was early in the morning and nice and cool, but when it began to get hot I was glad enough to get in and be shaken, with all its unpleasantness. The rest of my journey was performed lying down in the dhoolie and trying to get to sleep. The last stage we picked up a torch bearer who ran alongside with a short stick covered with rags and a bottle of bad oil. We arrived at Roopur (the nearest European residence to Kamulpore) about ten o'clock, and the Deputy Commissioner kindly put me up for the night. I started off again at day-break, and reached my destination in time for breakfast with my friend Derry, who had pitched his tent close to the work about seven miles beyond Roopur; Derry was overjoyed to see me, and we met as if we had not seen each other for a couple of years at least, although I had only parted with him in Calcutta some three weeks before."

"The whole length of the Canal at present sanctioned by Government is about 30 miles; it is to average 300 feet in width, and 30 feet in depth. I think Mr. Cheyne, the Government Engineer in charge of our length, told me that the total amount of earth-work required to be excavated was equal to about two-thirds of that excavated in the Suez Canal. Mr. Cheyne has promised us as much work as we can find coolies to do, and every assistance in his power. Derry commenced work on March 14th, and up to date (April 1st) we have excavated about 250,000 cubic feet, which will give us a profit of £25. It is, of course, very slow work collecting coolies at first, but they keep dribbling in 20 or 30 at a time, and we hope that those we have already got from the neighbouring villages will spread the news to others more remote, so that in course of time they will flock in

from all parts of the country. I have been very busy starting a set of books, and making rough estimates indoors; while Derry has been setting out the work, measuring it up, and keeping the coolies in order."

"This is a great change from Calcutta. I should say it was 15° Fahr. colder, the atmosphere is much dryer, and it is altogether a more healthy place."

A special interest attaches to the above letter, not merely because it records the writer's first long journey in India, but what was practically his first start in life in an independent capacity. For this reason the quotations selected for insertion have been fuller than was perhaps necessary for the sequence of the narrative.

That matters did not progress very satisfactorily at Roopur is evidenced by a correspondence between Mr. Vacher and a friend in Calcutta, who appears to have acted as his agent there at this time. The partners failed to secure any further work at the price named in the first contract, and some extraordinary efforts they were to have made to increase the number of men (300) which they had collected were abandoned.

Whether in Mr. Vacher's case, labour contracting would ever have proved sufficiently remunerative to encourage him to proceed with it is impossible to say. Barely was the first contract completed, when he received an offer of an appointment in the Public Works Department for employment on the Rajpootana State Railway as Assistant Engineer, first grade. The appointment was provisional for twelve months, but he was officially informed that there was every probability of his services being required for a longer period, and it was accepted in the belief that it would lead to a permanent engagement.

CHAPTER IV.

RAJPOOTANA STATE RAILWAY (NYNEE TAL, DELHI, AGRA).

1870-72.

The official notification which Mr. Vacher received of his appointment bears date May 13th, 1870. He was posted to Delhi, and a few days afterwards he writes from thence saying that he was already "hard at work in Government harness." Mr. Furnivall, the Superintending Engineer of the Delhi District, was a personal friend of Mr. McIntosh, and the subject of this Memoir found him a kind and considerate principal.

The next letter home, a month later, was written from Nynee Tal, a hill station of the north-west provinces, 6,500 feet above the sea level, so that one incidental advantage Mr. Vacher's appointment gained for him was an agreeable change of quarters in his fifth hot season, of which he would not otherwise have had the benefit.

Nynee Tal is described as "a decidedly picturesque place. The houses or bungalows, are all built on the sides of large hills surrounding a lake about three-quarters of a mile in length, by about half that distance in width. From the tops of the hills are some fine views of snow-capped mountains in the distance." The temperature, which at

Delhi had just been 97° Fahr. "with doors and window-shutters closed and the punkah going," was only 73° Fahr. at Nynee Tal, and there was a prospect of its falling lower as soon as the rains set in.

The July mail brought another very cheerful letter home. Mr. Vacher speaks of his long walks, of bathing expeditions before office hours in the morning, and of all the delights of the "beautiful cold climate." He adds, "as personal assistant to the Superintending Engineer, I shall, in all probability, go with him to Simla, the seat, in summer, of the Supreme Government. I suppose we shall leave here about the end of next month." This visit to Simla was made as anticipated, and at the close of the hot season he returned to Delhi for the winter. Simla does not appear to have impressed him as favourably as Nynee Tal. Certainly his introduction to what has been called the pleasantest place in India called forth no such enthusiastic encomium as was bestowed on the hill station he came to straight from the plains, and where he spent such a delightful three months. This may have been merely due to his having been more occupied at Simla, so that he had less time for long walks, and riding and swimming, or to some other equally sufficient cause; still the circumstance seems worth recording. At Christmas, 1870, Mr. Vacher suffered from a smart attack of dysentery, and as soon as he was able to travel he obtained leave for a ten days' holiday which he spent at Kussowlie. This is specially noted, as it was the first journey he made with other than a business object, the first time he allowed himself a holiday since the day he landed in India.

Early in 1871, the head-quarters of the Superintending Engineer were moved from Delhi to Agra, and here, accordingly, Mr. Vacher found a home for the next two years.

He was, however, not so fortunate in 1871 as he had been in 1870, having to remain all through the sultry summer months "in town." Still, in the immediate prospect of this, and when the hot season had already begun, the tone of his letters is as cheerful as ever. Indeed, in the very letter in which he announces that it had been decided he was to stay in Agra, he draws the following amusing contrast :—

"All the fortunate people are clearing up their offices and sorting their papers preparatory to their annual trip to the hills. The thought of the delightfully cool climate in the mountains stimulates them to work extra hours morning and night, regardless of the fast increasing muggy heat, so that they may escape from the plains a week or ten days sooner. You enter one Government office, and see all the men yawning and looking intensely lazy, not to add cross and ill-tempered, apt to give you a very short reply to any question you may put them. You enter the next office, perhaps in the same building, and are astonished to find all the fellows working as for their lives, in an awfully good humour, and willing even in their press of work to give you cheerfully any information you may require. The secret is easily solved; ask one of the men in the first office if he is going to the hills this season, and see what daggers he will look at you, repeat the question to anyone in the second room, and mark how good-naturedly he replies and finds time to dilate on the subject," Further on, there is a reference to the Calcutta editor's annual abuse of the Viceroy for deserting the City of Palaces, when he ought to remain in the capital in the beautiful house the people have built for him, and a suggestion that "Government House should be let furnished every hot season during the Governor-General's absence. As the rooms were large and

cool they would help some of the poor fellows left behind to drag through the season, and the rent could go towards reducing the income tax." No one would have enjoyed the change more keenly than himself, but as it was not offered him this year, he rejoiced with such of his friends as were more happily circumstanced, and remained where he was, quite content, and glad to do all manner of little services for them while they were away. That a very large circle of friends availed themselves of his ready good nature during the hot season of 1871, and on other occasions, is witnessed by many memoranda and brief notes which have come to hand. One correspondent writes, "Dear Vacher, will you kindly clear those boxes from England for me and send them on as soon as you can," another asks for a supply of Agra potatoes, a third encloses a list of stores and wants them despatched by bullock-cart, a fourth sends a watch to be mended, and so on. In truth his friends seem to have used him as a commission agent and general forwarder. This correspondence, and the work that arose out of it, must have filled up nearly all his spare time. The gratitude of those he obliged took the form of invitations to come and shoot, &c., but as he was kept fast in town he was unable to profit by them.

Fifteen months after his provisional appointment, Mr. Vacher was placed on the permanent establishment of the department. Intelligence of this came home next mail, as under—

"Agra, 12th August, 1871. My dear Father, the following notification, copied from the *Gazette of India*, appeared in the daily papers last Thursday, and it is with the greatest pleasure that I now forward it for your information.

"The 2nd April, 1871. Mr. H. Vacher, temporary Assistant Engineer, 1st Grade, Railway Branch, North Western Provinces, is permanently appointed to the Public Works Department in that grade.

"I feel that such good news will be as welcome to you and to all at home as it is to me. The appointment has indeed come at a most opportune time. The very week in which I was gazetted, the East Indian Railway Company (the largest Railway Company in India) made very considerable reductions in their staff of Civil Engineers, thus throwing a large number of experienced men out of employment, some of whom have had as much as eighteen years' experience in this country. Many of these men may go home and get appointments elsewhere; but the majority will be pretty sure to apply to Government for employment upon the State Railways, and be only too glad to accept, in the competition which will follow, a fraction of their former salaries."

The Superintending Engineer, in recommending Mr. Vacher for a permanent appointment, reports "his abilities as an Engineer are exceedingly good, his business habits regular, and he is hard working to a fault almost," and having regard to the good service he had already rendered the Department, it was urged that the appointment *might have retrospective effect*, a recommendation which was adopted.

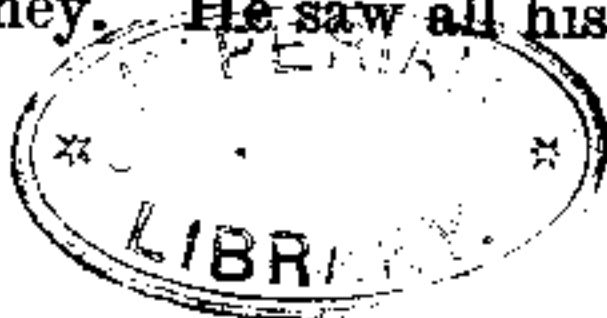
That Mr. Vacher was himself well satisfied with his appointment is abundantly proved by the following passages in another letter written about this time:—

"We all look forward to pretty rapid promotion on these new State Railways. It is certainly by far the best branch of the Indian Public Works." "Of course

there are all the usual good things connected with a Government appointment: the certainty of constant employment, leave to go to England on half pay for the first year and one-third pay for the second year, if sick, and a pension after a certain number of years." "I must tell you, though," he goes on to explain, "before I can get my first step I shall have to pass a pretty stiff examination in languages. There are too distinct characters generally used throughout India—one by the Mussulmans, and the other by the Hindoos—and I have to read and translate fluently from a well-known classical work in each language."

The next letter containing anything of special interest is dated "September 30th (midnight), Allahabad Railway Station." Mr. Vacher had been to Calcutta with his principal to receive tenders from contractors for constructing the Rajpootana Railway, and was on his way to Simla, where the tenders were to be opened. While he was at Calcutta a very sad event took place—the murder of the Chief Justice by a native. Mr. Vacher saw the assassin soon after his arrest, and speaks of the profound sensation created in the capital.

Further particulars of this trip arrived later. At Calcutta, the daily work consisted in exhibiting plans and sections, explaining them, and rendering any information intending contractors might require; and at Simla "there was plenty to do to the tenders after they were opened, before they were presentable to the Governor-General in Council." When the figures had all been verified, the totals abstracted, and the giving of the contract was formally declared, Mr. Vacher returned to the Agra office, well pleased with his journey. He saw all his "old friends down



country, and enjoyed the cold at the hills, and the beautiful scenery." He refers especially to "some very pleasant evenings with Mr. McIntosh."

An atrocity of no ordinary character marked the early part of the year 1872. The Viceroy, Lord Mayo, while on his way from Calcutta to Burmah, was murdered by an Afghan convict at Port Blair.

Writing of Lord Mayo, Mr. Vacher remarks on the great interest he took in the State Railways, sometimes even asking technical questions about the work which it could hardly be supposed he would have thought about at all. "The Civil Engineers out here have lost a good friend in the late Governor-General."

In the same month in which India suffered this great loss, a friend of Mr. Vacher's met with a terrible death. He was attacked by a tiger, and although rescued and carried into hospital at Calcutta he subsequently died from the effects of his wounds.

On March 30th, 1872, the report sent home was—"Our line is getting on rapidly. The greater part of the earth-work is finished, and the foundations of all the small bridges are in. I am happy to say that my office work at present keeps me pretty well employed, and as far as I can see I do not think I shall have much out-door work this hot season."

Mr. Vacher next refers to the "new leave rules just out," and which are described as "a very great improvement upon the old ones." For him now "everything is looking up" under the new rules, and seeing that his service had been ante-dated from the time of his temporary appointment he could count on getting leave to go home in six years.

It is impossible to read this little outburst of exultation

without emotion. The subject of the Memoir is in his twenty-eighth year. Able to look back upon six years of successful struggling upwards, he can turn with courage and confidence to the prospect of another six years of effort, and then would follow the hard-earned holiday at home. The other six years came and went: they were not less toilsome, and more prosperous—but the holiday in England never came. The brave heart and busy hands were laid to rest in the land when their life-work was done.

In the summer of 1872 Mr. Vacher was to have had three months leave “to study languages,” and he was expecting to spend them at some hill station, but, just at the last, he gave up “his turn” to a friend. This is his account of the incident: “My leave had been promised me, and everything was settled most satisfactorily, when one of our fellows, who was engaged to be married when he came out here, suddenly took it into his head that he had better go home and close his bargain at once. So, taking the emergency of the case into consideration, I gave up my leave to him.”

Thus it happened that Mr. Vacher spent a second hot season at Agra, where, on the whole, life seems to have run very smoothly. At this time he writes:—“Although Agra is one of the hottest places in India, in other respects it is not at all a bad Station. It is by no means unhealthily situated, the European part of the town is two or three miles away from the native part, and all our houses are detached and built on fine open sites with lots of room for the air to get all round them. There are several old palaces and tombs of great interest in the neighbourhood, the majority of them being surrounded by large and ornamental gardens, which are still kept up in first-rate order at Government expense:

famous places for an evening stroll or an early morning 'constitutional' before the all-powerful sun is up. Then there is a very good Club here, to which almost everyone in the Station belongs. Twice a week the band of the European regiment quartered here plays 'all the latest selections' on the lawn in front of the Club. Once a week we have a croquet party, and every Thursday evening we have a bachelors' dinner at the Club; and so, you see, it is altogether the centre of amusement." In the same letter (it is dated May 28th) occurs the following passage:—"I always sleep on the top of the house now of a night, with little between myself and the heavens. There was a dust storm the other night, and I was almost blown away before I woke up."

Speaking of the great heat in July, this season, he says:—"In my house, with a thick thatched roof and every mechanical appliance that can be obtained for driving out the hot air, it is pretty steadily 100° Fahr. all day long; in some of the small houses, with flat stone roofs, and without such appliances, the thermometer has stood for several days at 110° Fahr., about the same temperature as the hottest baths used at home."

In September, Mr. Vacher went to Calcutta on business connected with the railway. At the end of the month he writes:—"I have been staying with Mr. McIntosh for the last ten days. The little work I have had to do has not prevented me from thoroughly enjoying myself, and I only regret that I cannot stay longer, for I find it very pleasant riding Mr. McIntosh's horses in the morning, and driving out with him in the evening, to say nothing of his snug little dinners and the nice people one meets at them."

This trip must have been specially enjoyable, as, just

before leaving Agra, Mr. Vacher was confined to his room for a few days, with dengue,* which was at the time so prevalent that "three fourths of the whole Station had it more or less violently."

Writing on October 31st, he says:—"Our working season has thoroughly set in, and we are pushing on with the work as rapidly as possible all along the line. The floods have gone down leaving the beds of all the rivers as dry as they will ever be at any time of the year, and now is the time to get in the foundation of all our bridges and culverts. In my bridge over the Jumna there are 36 more wells to sink in the bed of the stream, all of which must be done before next June, if we are to make the progress we have promised the Government. I am rather unhappy just at the present time, as a bad fall from my horse, when inspecting the Jumna Bridge brickfields ten days ago, has hurt my back a little and prevented me from being at the works as much as I should like at the very time when I was so anxious to push on these wells. As if I could not have had my fall and had it over a couple of months ago, when all the brickwork was two feet under water."

Mr. Vacher's correspondence home in 1872 closes with a long letter giving an account of Christmas festivities. The Superintending Engineer very kindly invited all the Engineers on the line, who could come, to dine with him on Christmas Day. "There were fifteen of us altogether, and we had a capital dinner, and spent a very pleasant evening. It was quite like a family gathering, all 'shop' being tabooed for the occasion. We finished the evening

* Dengue is an ephemeral fever, characterized by headache and severe pains in the limbs and trunk, and sometimes by a skin eruption, resembling that of measles. It is not usually dangerous.

by having a round game at cards, in which we all cheated a good deal, made an awful noise, and behaved generally like a lot of schoolboys on a half-holiday." "On Boxing Day," he writes, "we ran the first excursion train, on our own account, as far as the rails are laid on the Rajpootana Railway. Two ballast waggons were covered with suitable awnings, and temporary rows of chairs and benches placed securely underneath. The engine and the two waggons, with about five-and-twenty ladies and gentlemen, and the engine driver and two other men in charge, left the Fort, Agra, at twelve o'clock precisely, and ran out very fast. As it was only about six miles we could not make much of it as a journey, but we made up for the short distance by whistling very loudly on every possible occasion, and showing all our danger signals whenever we passed a house, without there being the slightest reason for doing so. At the end of the journey we had a grand spread in a large tent pitched for the purpose at the side of the line." On the 30th he had some friends to dine with him, and thus in very pleasant company saw in the last day of the year.

CHAPTER V.

RAJPOOTANA STATE RAILWAY (AGRA).

HOLIDAY IN JAVA.

1873.

Mr. Vacher's life at Agra appears to have passed quietly and busily during the first five months of 1873. A few New Year's parties followed the Christmas gaieties already referred to, and then came the return to the routine work by day, and the rides or long walks in the early morning or cool of the evening.

On February 8th, Mr. Vacher writes:—"I have just passed my examination in the native languages. I have been working at them now for the last eighteen months, so you may guess what a relief it is for me to have it all over."

The above was, of course, welcome news, as the next step in the Department could not be taken till this examination was passed. It was, moreover, especially fortunate for him that he got through the ordeal thus early in the year, for when the long-expected leave of absence arrived he was able to take a real holiday instead of devoting the time at his disposal to philological studies.

This holiday began in the first week in June, and it is proposed now to give some account of it. The materials for the purpose are abundant, as, besides the many references

to the subject in his letters home, a private diary, containing full notes of his travels at this time has come to hand. Indeed the compiler feels that with so much matter he may have some difficulty in making the narrative sufficiently concise.

Without any very definite idea about his holiday, except that it should include a short sea voyage, Mr. Vacher came to Calcutta, and after several days spent in visiting his friends and making enquiries, he decided to go to Java. The journey from Agra to Calcutta, although only occupying forty-eight hours, must from the great heat of the weather, have been the most trying part of the whole trip. The following account of it was sent home:—

“The evening my leave commenced, having purchased an enormous sponge and about half a hundredweight of ice, I went to the railway station in the coolest costume I had, and took my ticket by the night train. During the night the railway carriage was just bearable, but for twelve hours in the day the temperature rose to 112° Fahr. I had a small pocket thermometer with me, which I hung up in the carriage. However, by the aid of my sponge, plenty of ice, and an unlimited supply of cold water, I succeeded in keeping my head several degrees cooler than the rest of my body, and thus set my mind quite at rest with regard to a disagreeable subject called heat-apoplexy. Of course the water quietly trickling down one's neck is a trifling inconvenience for the time being, and it requires some little practice too, at first, to be able to sleep *comfortably* in a corner of the carriage without letting the sponge fall off your head. There were two other passengers, and what with the water, the soot from the engine and the dust from the road, upon our arrival we looked much more like stokers than gentlemen

taking a holiday." At Calcutta it was much cooler than at Agra, owing to "the delightful sea breeze that had set in with the monsoons." After a pleasant fortnight at Calcutta he took passage by the s.s. 'Historian,' a China steamer, stopping at Singapore, where he arrived on June 30th.

Seven days from the date of sailing the 'Historian' put into harbour at Penang, where her three European passengers landed and had a drive round the island, visiting the famous baths and waterfalls. At the end of a long day on shore, the party returned to the ship, not very favourably impressed with the visit. Mr. Vacher observes "there is little to see at Penang—the waterfall is not very gigantic, and the cold spring water baths, although the water is as clear as crystal, are quite spoilt by being kept in such bad order and having such dirty entrances. The beach with its row of pretty bungalows, where the European merchants and bankers live, and the hill scenery in the back-ground have rather a picturesque effect from the sea; but the larger portion of the island, where the natives live, lies low, and is swampy and uninteresting."

At Singapore, Mr. Vacher was fortunate in getting a room facing the sea in a good hotel, and here for ten days he enjoyed the sea air and the bathing. Being in comfortable quarters, he remarks, "made all the difference between my liking or disliking the place," for "with the exception of Commercial Square, where all the European offices and warehouses are, just facing the sea, the town of Singapore is, I think, the dirtiest, filthiest, worst-drained town I have ever seen." The air, pure or impure, found free enough admission into the houses, as the windows, with scarcely an exception, are unglazed; and though he could not but be struck with the flourishing condition of the town there

seemed but little to interest strangers. "It is an enormous warehouse on the high road between Europe and China, and India and China, without commerce of its own, and owing its business to its position." He notes the well-to-do appearance of "the Chjnamen with their long pigtailed and white European hats, being driven about in their one-horse phaetons," and that "the Chinese portion of the town seems altogether in a more prosperous condition than the native (Malay) portion." "The rest of the island," he goes on to say, "is pleasant enough, there are some very fine botanical gardens, and plenty of pretty drives all about."

Mr. Vacher left Singapore by the French mail steamer 'Neva' on July 10th, the passage to Batavia taking about sixty hours. The voyage could not have been a cheerful one—the cabins were small and badly ventilated, and situated under the saloon, and every passenger on board was ill from the rolling of the ship. About half a mile from the shore the 'Neva' lay to, and a little steamer came alongside, made her way up a canal right into the middle of Batavia, and landed all safely at the Customs House. Excellent accommodation was found at the Hotel der Nederlanden, situated some three or four miles outside the business part of the town. Mr. E. K. Laird, of Birkenhead, had also come to Java by the 'Neva,' and in the evening he and Mr. Vacher strolled out together, and found some amusement listening to the band playing at "Waterloo Place," where a column is erected by the Dutch to commemorate "their having won the battle of Waterloo." Mr. Vacher formed a very favourable opinion of the town of Batavia. "It is," he writes, "exquisitely clean and beautifully planned. Canals run right through it in every direction from the sea, and the principal roads are traversed by

tramways. Long straight roads run parallel to the canals, with fine avenues of trees on either side of both. There is a magnificent Club House, and the hotels are all good buildings and well situated. The Hotel der Nederlanden is a particularly attractive handsome edifice, with lofty rooms, marble floors and verandahs."

From the capital, Mr. Vacher went by train to Buitenzorg. Here he spent four days at the Belle Vue Hotel, which seems to have been justly so named, for the window of his room "overlooked miles and miles of bright tropical scenery, bounded only by the mountains on the horizon." His time was occupied in making short excursions in the vicinity, the country round Buitenzorg being remarkably beautiful. The day before leaving, he dined and spent a very pleasant evening at the Governor-General's. The party numbered eighteen, and "conversation was carried on all round the table in at least four different languages—Dutch, French, English and Malay." The Governor's residence has marble floors throughout, and the rooms are lofty and spacious, the gardens surrounding it are extensive, and laid out with great taste and care. Mr. Laird, who left Batavia with Mr. Vacher, and who had since been staying at "the palace," came over to the Belle Vue, and he and Mr. Vacher arranged to go up the country together. They started early on the morning of July 19th, in a small two-wheeled dog-cart drawn by a couple of ponies, which took them to Toegoe (20 miles), from whence they proceeded on horseback over the pass of Megamendong, 4,780 feet high, to Sindanglaja where they arrived at noon. Their companions at the hotel were two or three officers, wounded in the Acheen war, and a doctor in charge of the Sanitarium, who could speak a little English, and went for a stroll with them. After dinner a Malay

"nautch" was extemporized for their entertainment at the request of the doctor. Four women showily apparalled, danced and postured, and as many men played some doleful music to them. It was "a very poor affair," and the audience were soon tired of it and retired.

On the 20th the forenoon was devoted to a ride on ponies to the Waterfall of Tybodas and the Sulphur Springs. The fall is about 150 feet, but there was no great body of water. The springs appear in a cave under the rocks, half a mile from the fall, and seven miles from the hotel. Returning, a visit was made to some botanical gardens being laid out under the superintendence of the doctor. At the hotel was a small swimming bath, fed by a mountain watercourse, and thus always supplied with clear cold running water, a luxury not uncommon at the Java hotels, and which in some way compensated for other deficiencies. After a delightful bathe, the travellers left Sindanglaja. Their conveyance is described as "a box twice as wide as long, with one seat on either side of its interior, at right angles to the axle and facing one another; it is mounted on two wheels, with a small seat outside for the coachman, and drawn by four small ponies." This took them as far as Tjanjoer, the road being smooth and well-metalled all the way. As soon as they arrived, arrangements were made for a cart to be in readiness to proceed to Bandong next morning. On the 21st a start was made soon after seven, and Bandong was reached in about ten hours. The journey of forty-two miles, would not have taken all this time but the travellers were unfortunate in their first change of ponies. The pair originally provided did their work well, but of the relay one proved "a most inveterate jibber and kept stopping and backing every few minutes. The next five miles must have taken us at least three hours;

we were constantly getting in and out of the cart to humour this beast, and really began to fear we should not reach our destination that night." Relief came, however, after the five miles were completed, the unmanageable little horse was changed and matters went smoothly for the rest of the day. The country passed through was very beautiful, and the roads excellent. It is noted that "there are English mile stones all along the road from Buitenzorg to Bandung."

The one excursion it is incumbent on the tourist to take from Bandung is to a pair of twin craters on one of the adjacent mountains. The distance is about fourteen miles. Accordingly by eight o'clock on the morning of the 22nd the travellers set out in the direction indicated. A two-wheeled cart drawn by three ponies took them to Lemback, a little village at the foot of the mountains, where, after some time, they obtained ponies to ride, and thus the ascent was made. The road for the first two or three miles was stiff clay, and every now and then were little steep bits which the ponies had great difficulty in getting up, then the clay gradually disappeared, and fairly firm winding paths led to the top of the ridge, 5,600 feet above the level of the sea. A descent on the other side occupying about ten minutes brought the two craters in sight. There they were side by side, immense basins, some 1,600 feet deep, and hundreds of trees within half-a-mile of them completely bared of foliage, as if scorched up from the roots. These contrasted strangely with many flourishing trees, no further from the craters, which it would seem must have grown up since the last eruption in 1840. Long before reaching the craters, their proximity was suggested by the sulphuretted hydrogen pervading the air. Looking down into the craters from the margin of their basins, one could see the

appeared like two ponds of thick soft mud, with little jets of steam rising slowly through them, the ponds being separated by a bank of cinders. The sides of the basins were very treacherous, yet Mr. Laird succeeded in getting close down to the border of one of the molten lakes. Just at this time it began to rain, and a retreat had to be made to the wreck of a hut hard by, for a little shelter. Then the ponies were remounted and the return journey began, but hardly was the summit turned when the rain came down in torrents, and Mr. Vacher found he could get along faster by walking. When the clay was reached matters did not improve, the rain having made the road much more slippery since the morning. In Mr. Vacher's diary he quotes from De Beauvoir—"It is like sliding down an immense cake of soap at an angle of 45° ." At the foot of the mountain, the travellers were welcomed by a villager who had thoughtfully made them some tea. They then posted back to the hotel. The town of Bandong and the volcano just ascended were the extreme points aimed at in the little journey up country, so a trap was ordered to be in readiness to return to Sindanglaja on the morrow.

July 23rd.—A neat new cart drawn by three ponies was at the door at seven o'clock, and, stopping only once to change, the hotel at Tjanjoer was reached soon after two. After an hour's halt, the travellers secured an "inside car" and pair of ponies, and arrived at the Sindanglaja hotel at six, which was considered good time. The last stage was a little tedious being up-hill nearly all the way, and the travellers had often to get out and walk. The evening was devoted to a long conference with the doctor as to the best way of making the ascent of Pangarango, which it was resolved to commence next day.

24th.—Acting on the doctor's advice, the travellers did

not set out till half past eleven. The ascent was to take about five hours, and they could either sleep in a bungalow at the summit of the mountain, or in another three miles nearer, in which case they would have to rise early and complete the ascent in time to see the sun rise. Particular enquiries were made about these two bungalows, and as it was reported that the one at the mountain-top was not in good repair, but the other was "quite right and very comfortable," it was of course decided to make use of the latter. Whether this information was strictly accurate will soon appear—but Mr. Vacher shall tell his own story. "We started on a couple of ponies, our bedding and chou-chou, provided by the hotel, preceding us on the backs of half-a-dozen coolies. After the first four miles the large sharp stones on the narrow winding steep path became almost too much for the ponies, and we got off and walked, or rather climbed up, for two hours or so. Then alternately riding and walking, we reached a small shed very much out of repair, and this our native guide explained to us was where we should have to spend the night. It was now four o'clock, and it had been raining heavily since one, so that we were both wet through. What were we to do? It was too late to turn back, and we had no alternative but to pass the night as best we could in this miserable shed, on the bare ground without a plank to protect us from the weather, and the thatched roof above us most imperfect. Making sure from all we heard of a good rest-house here, we had come quite unprovided for camping out, and with only one change of thin clothes each. In ten minutes' time our coolies arrived, and we stood beneath the best part of the roof looking about us the while for a place whereon to lay our bedding, anything but reassured at the prospect be-

fore us. Meanwhile our coolies had not been idle, three of them had set to work at once to cut wood, one was making the ponies fast for the night, one was assisting us to pull off our soaking wet boots, and another was quietly sitting down peeling potatoes for dinner. It had now ceased raining—a small fire that promised soon to be a large one was lighted and our mattresses placed alongside of it. Sitting, or rather squatting, as close to the fire as possible, with our small hotel-blankets around us, we watched the men cutting wood and the man peeling potatoes, scarcely yet fully realizing our position. Before it got dark, which it does here without much warning soon after six, our men had secured any quantity of firewood and were piling on good-sized logs, making the place look a little more cheerful. Indeed, as the surrounding darkness began to hedge us in, we could almost fancy our shed had some kind of walls. The worst of it was, that we had not half enough clothing; thus, while we were roasting on one side we were quite chilled on the other. We amused ourselves until dinner was ready by hanging up our wet things over and round the fire, and toasting our only pairs of boots with great care. Dinner was served on an old mat by the side of our mattresses, where seated like tailors we did full justice to our cook's Dutch dishes, washing them down with good English pale ale. After this, feeling altogether more comfortable, we finally arranged our beds for the night, making the most of our two small blankets and a rug belonging to Laird. The thermometer was now about 50° Fahr. outside the shed, and as we lay with our feet close to the fire we experienced every degree of temperature from this to 110°, and might almost have been marked off like a pair of thermometer tubes.

“ 25th — We got up about four o'clock and putting on

what dry clothes we had and our baked boots, made an attempt to start, but found it too dark to see the narrow pathway. By 5.30, when it was a little lighter, we commenced to ascend, and rode and walked alternately until we reached the top. It had been damp and cold all the way, and the clouds were now so thick that it was scarcely possible to see a few yards from us, much less the promised beautiful view stretching right away to the capital. This was disappointing. However there was nothing for us to do but to go down again. As it was raining, we sought shelter in the bungalow we had heard of, but it was only four feet high and barely a tenth as big as the shed we had passed the night in. We then commenced the descent, stopping only at our old quarters for a light breakfast, and reached our hotel, drenched through and through, by 12.45. Mount Pangarango is 10,000 feet high, and it is about 12 miles to the top by the zigzag path we went (I believe the only one). The shed we passed the night in must be about 8,000 feet above sea level and nine miles from the hotel." The afternoon appears to have been devoted to recovering from the fatigue of the ascent and descent, and the disappointment of feeling that the feat had failed of its object. By the way the next morning the mountain peak was seen well displayed against a clear sky and not a cloud near it.

Early on the 26th a start was made from Sindanglaija in an English dog-cart drawn by four ponies, but the travellers had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards when the axle broke, and they had to return and wait till the "inside car" they had used on the journey to Tjanjoer could be got ready. No second mishap occurred; but getting to the top of the pass of Megamendong proved such up-hill work it was as

From the highest point there is a glorious view. A short excursion was made on foot to a lake said to occupy the site of an extinct crater, but which was now in part hidden by luxurious foliage, rich in tropical colour and fresh from the recent rain. Once over the pass, the ponies came along at a good pace and drew up at the Belle Vue Hotel just at noon. Mr. Laird returned to the palace at once, and Mr. Vacher dined there in the evening.

On the morning of the 27th a carriage was sent for Mr. Vacher, and by seven o'clock he "was installed in a very pretty suite of rooms in the right wing of the palace, commanding a beautiful view of the park." The rest of the morning was devoted to writing letters, and a drive out filled in the best of the time between lunch and dinner.

After spending another quiet day under the hospitable roof of Governor Loudon, the travellers rose early on the 29th and caught the seven o'clock a.m. train to Batavia. Here they made a few calls, and engaged their passage by the steamer to leave for Sourabaya on the morrow.

30th.—They were early on board the steamer 'Governor-General Mijer.' The vessel proved much more comfortable than the 'Neva.' "The cabins," writes Mr. Vacher, "are pretty well filled, there must be at least five and twenty passengers on board, all Dutch except an old lady, who is doing the grand tour, and ourselves. The sea is as smooth as a mill-pond, and the weather not too warm to be agreeable. As nearly every one speaks English, more or less, the time passes pleasantly enough."

The steamer arrived at Cheribon early next morning, and after touching at another small port she made Samarang at 8 a.m. on August 1st, lying out in the roadstead for 24 hours. Samarang is approached by a canal, and most of

the passengers went on shore for the day. Weighing anchor, the steamer proceeded at the old slow pace of seven knots an hour, and reached Sourabaya at noon on August 3rd. Here also the passengers had to land in boats by a little river which led to the town. 'The voyage seems to have been a particularly pleasant one, the sea was calm, and yet there was a light breeze which just served to cool the air; the scenery along the coast was pretty and well wooded, and far away beyond the trees rose the chain of mountains which forms such a conspicuous feature of the island.

In the evening the travellers drove out to some interesting public gardens just outside the suburbs, laid out with considerable care and skill, with the additional attraction of a good band. The gardens appeared to be fully appreciated by the townspeople and their children.

Mr. Vacher, being unable to afford time to accompany Mr. Laird on a more extended tour in the interior, took leave of his friend on August 4th, and started by the return steamer next morning. He left Sourabaya on the 5th and arriving at Samarang next day. Here he spent a pleasant two days in seeing the town, and four more in various excursions.

On the 13th he sailed from Samarang on board the 'Bentan,' a small vessel belonging to a Chinese trading company, and arrived at Singapore, from whence he crossed to Johore in the Malay Peninsula, on a visit to the Maharajah, returning just in time to catch one of Messrs. Jardine, Skinner & Co.'s opium clippers from China, thus reaching Calcutta by the same route he came, and getting back to Agra within the stated time of his leave. The passage across was again rather rough. Indeed the only two reminiscences of his holiday he could not recall with pleasure were the two

stormy voyages between Singapore and Calcutta. In all other respects it was full of pleasant memories. "I have no doubt," writes Mr. Vacher, "I should have had a much easier time of it at one of the hill stations in the Himalayas, but a trip of this kind is much more satisfactory afterwards than a lazy three months spent in doing nothing in particular, and going the same rounds every day."

The story of this holiday, from July 10th to August 4th, is much better and more fully told in Mr. E. K. Laird's "Rambles of a Globe Trotter" (Vol. II., pp. 1 to 37), and the reader interested in the narrative is referred to this work.

For some weeks after his return to Agra, Mr. Vacher was unusually busy. Towards the end of October he received instructions to proceed to Delhi, and after returning he had to proceed there a second time. However he was so fortunate as to be back in Agra in time for the great Durbar on Nov. 14th. It would have been a great pity had he missed this, as he had not before had an opportunity of witnessing such a State spectacle. Princes, officials, and a detachment of native troops went to the station to meet the Viceroy (Lord Northbrook). From thence accompanied by his body guard, and an escort of hussars he proceeded in state to the camp, the distance being scarcely less than three miles. The procession was a very imposing one, and as it passed, band after band welcomed the representative of the Sovereign with "God save the Queen." At about ten o'clock a royal salute was fired and the Viceroy's flag was drawn up. The elephant carrying the Viceroy, in a silver howdah, took up his position in front of the reception tent, and the elephants of the Rajahs, Maharajahs, &c., came one by one and salaamed, and passed on. As each elephant salaamed the occupants

of its howdah stood up and saluted. When they had all passed the Viceroy's elephant knelt, and His Excellency descended, and was joined by his daughter and the Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Provinces. The ceremony was brief, but the procession of elephants in their rich trappings, the splendour of the native princes and their retainers, the party-coloured crowd, and the long lines of gay tents combined to produce a spectacle of oriental magnificence sure to make a strong impression on any one seeing it for the first time.

The Durbar was followed by many receptions and entertainments, beginning with the Governor-General's levée and drawing room, and concluding with the Agra ball on Nov. 24th. Then Lord Northbrook took his departure and left the quiet little Station to its normal state.

The last letter received from Mr. Vacher in 1873 announces that he had just got his first promotion, and with it an increase of salary of 1,200 rupees a year.

CHAPTER VI.

RAJPOOTANA STATE RAILWAY. (AGRA).

JOHORE RAILWAY (MALAY PENINSULA).

1874.

There are but few points of interest touched on in Mr. Vacher's home correspondence in the early half of 1874. His first letter refers to a week's leave of absence at Christmas, which he made the most of by going to Calcutta. Though a visit to the capital, where Mr. McIntosh and other friends resided, was always looked forward to and undertaken with pleasure, this particular trip had a definite object. "It was rather a hurried journey," he writes, "thirty-eight hours in an express train at the beginning of a week, and the same number of hours spent in the same way at the end, rather tires one, but it was satisfactory, as I did all I wanted to do properly, *i.e.*, I took out a patent for a self-acting punkah, invested 11,000 rupees, and examined all my investments and accounts." He explains that "the self-acting punkah is an old idea of mine never fully worked out, and as the Government have just offered a reward for the best invention of the kind for soldiers' barracks, I thought I would take the matter up again and see what I could do with it. The first thing was to find out whether any one else had ever patented the idea, and I had

to refer to the books at the Home Office, and go through all the patents taken out since 1854. As it appeared I had not been forestalled I obtained a sort of provisional protection, and have since been making a working model." It may be here mentioned that among Mr. Vacher's papers is a brief note addressed to him in September of this year, the writer of which is "requested by the Right Hon. the Commander-in-Chief to convey to you his thanks for the copy of your Specification for your system of working punkahs by electro magnetism, and to state that his Excellency will be glad to hear that the invention has been successfully applied and worked." The compiler has no further information on this subject.

Two letters sent by the March mails were written when Mr. Vacher was camping out along the line of the Rajpootana Railway, then approaching completion. On April 30th he wrote to say that he was "back again in Agra, among brothers in exile, looking forward to the hot season." "We have all changed our office hours to the early morning, commencing about six and leaving off at eleven or soon after, when we shut ourselves up in our houses, and each puts in practice his own cooling process till the evening, when we have another spell at the office. Next month we are sure to have the hot winds sooner or later, and then not a soul will be seen out of doors who can help it, for as long as these winds last it is hotter out than in doors, night or day. I suppose I am getting used to this sort of life, it comes quite naturally to me now, and it does not seem to knock me up half as much as it does many men, but I do not like it; I feel that as yet the climate has not in the least affected me, and that I am as well now as ever I was, but I do not know how much longer this will last, and if I

could look forward to quitting it, say within twelve years, that is in four years from this, it would be a great thing." This half discontented outburst was very natural in the immediate prospect of a summer in the plains. His reference to his hopes of being able to quit the country after completing twelve years in the tropics is surely prophetic. With an experience of *six* years of the fiery climate, he gathers courage from the thought that in six years he shall be able to come home; with *eight* years' experience he finds comfort in the reflection that in four years he may be able to return for good. It almost seems as if he had a dim presentiment of the danger of protracting his stay in India too long. Indeed, in a letter to his mother dated June 30th, there is a reference to the specific danger which menaced him. He had been praising Agra, "and the nice people there, and the pleasant parties," and he ends by remarking how very agreeable life in India would be but for "the dreadful climate, and the still more dreadful epidemics peculiar to the country."

On July 28th Mr. Vacher sent home a communication of unusual importance. Beginning with the announcement that for once in a way he really had some news to tell, he writes, "About three weeks ago I received a letter from the Straits (the Straits of Malacca) offering me an appointment on a new railway now making, and requesting me to come at once. Mr. Furnivall, our Engineer-in-Chief, was away down the line at the time, so, saying nothing about it to anyone, I waited patiently until he returned, when I at once had a long conversation with him about it, the upshot of which was that he advised me to accept the appointment without delay. I must here tell you that we are having a regular break up of the engineering staff. The line is just upon finished, Furnivall is going into the Secretariat as Under-

Secretary to the Government of India, and I cannot possibly remain with him any longer; Jones is going to Lahore, Smith to the Indus Valley, and so on." He goes on to say, that the offer coming at so opportune a time for getting away, he made up his mind to go and see about it, and with this view had applied to the Government for "six months' leave without pay." This would give him plenty of leisure to make full inquiries, and see how he liked the climate and people, while the Native Government would remunerate him and make good all expenses incurred. The letter proceeds to discuss the chances of the new venture and the various motives that had induced him to regard it hopefully, one significant consideration being, that in the land he was going to the thermometer was 20° lower in the hottest part of the year than at Agra.

The offer referred to came from the Maharajah of Johore, to whom it may be remembered Mr. Vacher paid a visit in August, 1873, on his way back from Java, and with whom he had since held some correspondence. Under His Highness's instructions a wooden railway had already been commenced in Johore, and he desired to have Mr. Vacher's services to continue this, and "to survey and make whatever railways may be required in the territory."

The six months' leave was obtained in due course. The notification bears date August 13th. Mr. Vacher lost no time in availing himself of it, as on the 16th he writes from Calcutta to say that he was to sail on the morrow, and counted on arriving at Singapore by the 28th. From Singapore to Johore was no great distance, and early in September he commenced his explorations in what he delights to call "his new country." Matters progressed so quickly and satisfactorily, that on October 4th, His Highness, by an Instrument under his hand con-

stituted Mr. Vacher Director-General of State Railways to the Government of Johore. This Instrument is in the nature of an Agreement, stating the salary to be paid and the bonus to be given on every ten miles of line completed ; but it appears to have been merely tentative, as the terms specified differ somewhat from those eventually settled, and Mr. Vacher had, of course, not yet definitely decided on remaining.

On October 11th, the immigrant to the Malay Peninsula wrote reporting that "he was comfortably housed and all his things unpacked," and that he was already feeling the benefit of the sea breeze and a temperature of 70° to 75°. He adds, that he had been very kindly received by the Maharajah, and hopes all may continue to go on satisfactorily so that he may not have to go back to India.

Among the first letters received from home after his arrival at Johore was one announcing the death of his old friend, Mr. Allan, from paralysis, an event which there is no doubt Mr. Vacher felt deeply, for there was no place outside his own home where he found a warmer welcome than at Mr. Allan's.

Writing on this subject to his father, Mr. Vacher says, "the very sad news contained in your last letter has taken precedence of all my present troubles and anxieties. I have so often thought of meeting Mr. Allan the first time I went home ; I had so much to tell him about my life in India, especially my early struggles, and how that I had never for one moment forgotten all his great kindness. The pleasure of seeing him again was nearly allied, in my mind, with the often anticipated pleasure of meeting you, my mother and brothers. Now he is no more, my memory recalls more readily than ever so many instances of his sympathy, and that I should not have had an opportunity of seeing him in

his last illness is no slight addition to my grief at losing such a friend."

On Christmas Eve, Mr. Vacher writes from Singapore to say that he was on his way to Calcutta on H.H.'s service, chiefly to purchase machinery. - He hoped to catch the return steamer and be back again in a month, and when at Calcutta he would endeavour to obtain an extension of his leave.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHORE RAILWAY (MALAY PENINSULA).

1875.

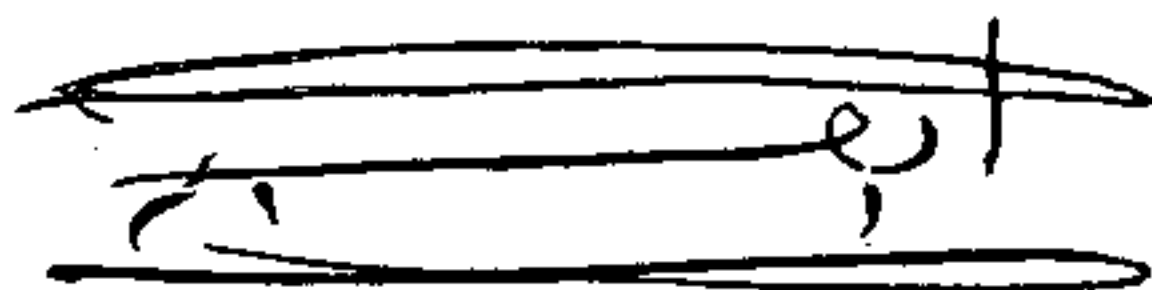
Mr. Vacher's application for a year's leave in extension of the six months' previous leave was successful. It is ~~dated~~ January 28th, and four days later he was appointed Engineer for the construction of the Johore State Railway. The following is a copy of the Deed of appointment executed by His Highness :—

“H. H. Sir Abu Bakar, Maharajah of Johore, K.C.S.I., &c., &c., to Henry Vacher, Esq., Civil Engineer.

Whereas it is our purpose to construct a system of railways in our dominion with the view of further and more rapidly developing its rich resources, and as you have already learnt in our numerous interviews together, we consider you to be a competent and fit person to be intrusted with the direction of this work, and we hereby appoint you to the charge. Your official designation will be Chief Engineer and Director-General of State Railways. Your duties will comprise the designing, laying out, and constructing all the lines of railway we consider it advisable to have, and for so doing, you are vested with the necessary authority for engaging staff, employing labour, and the purchase of requisite material. With reference to the

material to be used, it is understood you will utilize to as great an extent as possible that which the resources of our kingdom provides, importing from foreign kingdoms machinery, and rolling stock, and other material of like nature. Your remuneration for the onerous duties which devolve upon you, will be graduated on a scale increasing with the magnitude of the work, at present it will be sufficient to mention that it will be at the rate of 400 dollars (four hundred dollars currency) per month, and a bonus of 1,500 dollars (fifteen hundred dollars currency) when each 10 miles is completed. A suitable dwelling will always be at your disposal free of charge, and travelling and other expenses incurred in attending to your duties will be allowed commensurate with the dignity of the position you hold as one of the principal officers of our dominion. Should the railways after construction attain that success in developing the resources of our dominion which we anticipate, when this is assured to us, we will re-model your remuneration upon a more imperial scale. We give you this appointment, having a perfect trust in your honesty and good faith to us, should these fail this appointment will be determined.

Given under our hand and seal this twenty-fifth day of the twentieth year of our reign, on the first day of February, Anno Domini, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five.



MAHARAJAH OF JOHORE.

Witness,

WM. HOLE,

Private Secretary."

The extension of leave given Mr. Vacher was, of course, very welcome, allowing him, as he puts it, a whole year to make up his mind whether he would ultimately retain his new office, and being also an official recognition of his employment in the Malay Peninsula. The other business which took him to Calcutta terminated as satisfactorily, and the first mail from Johore, in February, brought word that he was back again and hard at work, and looking forward to sending home "a regular long letter," all about the country as soon as he was sufficiently familiar with his subject.

The promised long letter was sent on April 2nd. After an opening paragraph devoted to personal news, is some account of the Maharajah. He is described as "a most enlightened native prince, anxious to improve the moral tone of his people, naturally a lazy and indolent race, to develop the resources of his territory, and to promote to the utmost of his power everything in the way of progress and civilization." Soon after his accession he visited England, where he was received by Mr. Gladstone, and introduced to the Queen, with whom he had the honour of dining, &c. "I think," the letter runs on, "this visit home must have done him an immense amount of good and impressed him favourably with English people. Upon his return he appointed an Englishman (Mr. Hole), as his Private Secretary, soon after another Englishman (Mr. Boulton), in charge of his Marine Department, and now he has made me his C.E."

"The territory of Johore is about twenty thousand square miles in extent, or nearly two thirds the size of Ireland. The country is supposed to be very rich in minerals, tin, lead, iron, &c., although at present nothing but tin has actually

been brought to the surface. Gambier* and pepper grow to perfection and well repay the planters, and H. H. hopes that tobacco, tea, and coffee will also thrive well in the higher tracts of ground, but the experiment has not yet been tried. Before the present prince's reign, very little indeed was known about this large tract of land representing the whole of the southern portion of the Malayan Peninsula, and now the dense Johore forests cover more than two thirds of the province. A few roads have been made just round about, and near the town of Johore (the capital), and one or two somewhat longer to one of the largest plantations. The longest road we have at present is seven miles in extent, and connects the plantations of the east side of the town with those on the west. All other intercourse between the inhabitants, and such traffic as exists, is carried on by means of little Malay boats drawing a very few inches of water. These 'prows' keep close in shore all along the coast, and go up the different rivers, carrying rice and bringing down the gambier and pepper. And yet with only these few roads and little boats, the peaceful reign of the Maharajah, and his acknowledged policy to promote free trade and open his country, have had such an effect in increasing the revenue, and the number of Chinese settlers, that the actual value of the exports from here already exceeds that from Singapore. So you may judge what the trade revenue and importance of Johore will be, if the present Maharajah lives, in the next seven or eight years, now that sufficient funds are in hand for large and expensive improvements. Within the last year H. H. has purchased immense steam saw mills, and made arrangements on a very large scale for cutting timber in the forests and floating it in large rafts, a thousand logs at

* Query *Nauclea Gambir* (Nat. Order *Cinchonaceae*), an astringent.

a time, down the rivers and round the sea coast to the mills. Then there are four small steamers belonging to the Government; the fourth, built in Singapore (the engines being sent out from England), was launched about six weeks ago, and is the largest ever constructed in this part of the world. She carries two magnificent steel guns, and is beautifully fitted up.

Now I come to what is really the most important improvement that H. H. has decided upon, *i.e.* to make railways right into the heart of the country through the dense forests; thus accomplishing two important objects at the same time, cutting down and bringing out the timber for the mills and opening up his territory. The roads I have described, such as they are, have not been a very great success owing to the absence of any kind of stone here to metal them with, and during the rainy season they become almost impassable from the soft clayey nature of the soil. To import broken stone from the nearest quarry (in an island near Singapore) would be very costly even to metal one short road in the town; to think of making grand trunk roads properly, with a durable stone surface, is quite out of the question. Thus the idea struck the Maharajah of opening up his country with wooden railways, similar to those constructed with considerable success in some parts of Canada. The sleepers, or wooden logs that the rails rest upon, are placed very close together, and so form a sufficiently rigid surface over the soft soil to carry the weight of a train. The very trees that are cleared away to make a road through the forests for the railway will themselves form the line. The Maharajah has also determined to carry out several important engineering works for the improvement of the town, such as drainage, water supply, &c., &c.

But the scheme at present that I am to carry out is the wooden railway, and very interesting work it will be, surveying for and laying down a line through the virgin forest. Every two or three days H. H. comes over to see how I am progressing with the work, and takes the most lively interest in all the details. About 18 miles of the survey, reaching from the town to the foot of a small mountain which the line is to skirt, is finished, and I may now be said to have fairly commenced actual work, that is, making the embankments and cuttings and clearing the jungle. I have also laid a portion of the line itself, to see how it will come, and to enable me to estimate the probable cost. When I tell you that I am quite alone here without any assistant engineer, or in fact any one who has ever worked on a railway before in any capacity, it will give you an idea how much I have to do actually with my own hands.

“I must tell you that I have the most charming little house to live in. It overlooks the sea, and the breeze early in the morning gives me the most pleasant reminiscence of England that I have had since I left home. It is at the southern extremity of Johore, or in other words the last dwelling house in Asia. The view from my bedroom window is one of the finest I have ever seen; on one side the sea reaches for miles and miles, on the other are the grand forest trees. The sea is unusually beautiful here in the tropics, the most luxuriant vegetation extending all along the coast right down to the water, on the main land and on the numerous little islands surrounding the whole of the southern portion of this part of the continent. The other day there was a waterspout, certainly within three hundred yards of my house. It commenced just at the water's edge, the sea rising in a column some six feet apparently in diameter and

meeting a large overhanging cloud, the cloud moving at a great rate, and the column of water following it until it rejoined the sea, upon the cloud passing over an island and thus breaking the mysterious connection. The noise it made was beyond description. The sea appeared to be boiling, and the cloud descending in one great stream of rain. Of course the water was really ascending, but it did not seem like it.

“Notwithstanding an occasional waterspout by way of company, even if I could reckon on such a rare phenomenon now and again, it is just a little solitary here, although when you have plenty to do you do not notice it much. I am always up at daybreak and generally in bed again soon after nine at night, and the days pass only too quickly.”

The above extracts include all that is needful to quote of this letter, but they give a very imperfect idea of what a cheerful, chatty letter it is. It conveys the impression that the writer was in robust health and spirits, and that, absorbed as he was in his projected line, home was never far from his thoughts. Not the least interesting portion of the letter to those who received it was a hint that if all went well the Maharajah, in two years' time, might require his Engineer to proceed to England to buy stock for the railway. The last two pages were taken up with affectionate inquiries about those at home, and directions for the distribution of the contents of a large box of Indian shawls, slippers, dressing gowns, &c., which had been dispatched from Calcutta. Finally there was a most particular request that the writer should have a full account sent him of the birthday party in honour of his youngest brother, who came of age on the day the letter was written.

The first important event that stirred the quiet life at

Johore after Mr. Vacher settled there, was the farewell visit to the Maharajah of Sir Andrew Clarke, Governor of the Straits Settlements. Advantage was taken of the occasion to open the State Railway. Mr. Vacher had made such good progress, that by the first week in May the rails were laid for a distance of about a mile, and early in March he had successfully landed the locomotive he purchased in Calcutta.

Sir Andrew and Lady Clarke remained for nearly a week. On May 20th a banquet, to which about seventy ladies and gentlemen were invited to meet the late Governor, was given "in the large marble-floored hall of the palace." Few of H. H.'s guests were Europeans, many being Chinese and Arab merchants from Singapore, and a large proportion Princes and Officers of State of Johore, in oriental garb, so that the spectacle must have been brilliant and imposing.

The Maharajah proposed the health of the Queen and the Royal Family of Great Britain which was received enthusiastically, the band playing the National Anthem. Then followed the speeches of the evening—H. H.'s farewell to Sir Andrew Clarke, delivered in Malay, and Sir Andrew Clarke's reply. A passage in the latter, as containing an expression of opinion on a topic of lasting interest by one of the most popular of our Straits Settlements Governors, is well worth reprinting from the columns of a Singapore newspaper.

"The recent policy towards the Native States, for inaugurating which I have received so much commendation, is merely the natural antidote to over 80 years of neglect and disregard, and when we witness what has been done in this land of Johore during the reign of our entertainer, the present Maharajah, we cannot fail to derive great hopes for the future

as he has done, to abandon exclusiveness, and to welcome the introduction of knowledge and industry. There is no thought, in the policy that I have been able to foreshadow, of annexation, and to the princes and chiefs now around me I convey this assurance, that all that we wish to see is the good government and consequent peace and prosperity of the Native States under their native rulers."

As the opening of the State Railway was appointed to take place on the day after the banquet, many of the H. H.'s friends from Singapore postponed their return in order to witness the ceremony. The terminus is about 500 yards from the palace, and at eleven o'clock, when Mr. Vacher had completed all his preparations, the Maharajah, accompanied by Sir Andrew and Lady Clarke and other guests, drove up. They were received with all honours, the band playing "God Save the Queen." The locomotive was waiting with steam up, festooned with wreaths of ferns and flowers, ready to receive its name of 'Lady Clarke.' The Maharajah and his most distinguished guests got into the driving box, a bottle of champagne was broken over the "little stranger," and away it sped bearing the auspicious name—Lady Clarke. Then another trip was made, and a third, so as to give many an opportunity of testing the capacities of the new iron horse.

In September, 1875, the new Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir William Jervois, paid his first visit to Johore. On the 9th of this month, Mr. Vacher writes— "His Excellency is expected on the 20th, and will probably remain about a week. His Highness has invited all the neighbouring Rajahs and Chiefs to meet him, so that there will be great festivities here during his stay. The new 'Dewan,' or Hall of Audience, that has been in course of construction for the last five years, and is only just com-

pleted, is to be opened with great ceremony during the Governor's visit." Referring to the railway in the same letter, he writes—"In reply to your inquiries where the line is to go to, &c., it is intended to connect the high land of Gûnong Pûlai with the town of Johore, and to open up the country on either side of the proposed route for the cultivation of gambier, pepper, fruit, &c. Gûnong Pûlai is a mountain about 2,500 feet high, and the land around it would be very valuable, from its elevation, for growing tea and other delicate plants that will not grow at sea level. I have got about twelve miles through the forest towards this mountain completely surveyed, and now the jungle is so dense that the work becomes very slow indeed; the top of G. P. is, however, most distinctly visible through the theodolite.

On the 30th, Mr. Vacher dispatched a letter reporting that the new Governor had come and gone, and that Johore had settled down to its every day life. H. E. and party, on landing at the Istana pier, were met by the Maharajah's brothers, and driven through the town to the Dewan, where the Maharajah received them. The roads and wharves were decked out with flags and banners, and the Johore townsfolk were in holiday dress. The Maharajah escorted H. E. to the Dewan, at the threshold of which were presented, in silver cups, eggs, cakes and oil. Then the Governor and his staff proceeded to the upper dais. The Mahomedans and Chinese followed taking up their position, according to grade, on the lower dais and in the body of the building, the Mahomedans on the one side, the Chinese on the other. When all were in, the Crier called for silence, and the Maharajah, who now occupied the throne, addressed H. E. and other guests and his subjects, in Malay. H. E. replied at some length, concluding his speech in the following words:—

“It is a great satisfaction to know that in this Hall which has just been opened, your Highness will, with the Councillors by whom you are aided, carry on the Government of Johore on those enlightened principles which have already characterized your rule, and in accordance with views which have been highly appreciated by the British Government; good laws, good government and impartial justice, are essential to the welfare of a State, and it is due to your Highness's appreciation of these facts, that, under your rule, the prosperity of Johore has been so greatly increased. Long may this prosperity continue to increase, and long may your Highness live to enjoy the fruits of your labours.”

The Head Priest then came forward to the dais, and the Governor declared the Dewan opened. Then followed the religious part of the ceremony, the Head Priest reading portions of the Koran, and the Mahomedans present responding. As soon as this service was completed, those on the upper dais descended, and the audience were dismissed. In the evening the Maharajah entertained a large party at dinner. Next day the Governor and party were shown the railway, taking a trip as far as the line was laid, and they afterwards proceeded to inspect the arsenal and saw mills. On the third day there was a boat race, which was witnessed from on board the ‘Pantie.’ In the evening, after dinner, the Maharajah took His Excellency to the Dewan, to hold a levée of Chinese towkays and influential residents of Johore, and a procession of several thousand Chinese marched round the grounds of the Istana, and passing through the portico of the house paid their respects to H. H. On the fourth day of the festivities, the Maharajah's guests were taken by water to the pepper plantations, where carriages awaited them, and a drive of six miles through a well-cultivated

country brought them back to the palace. On the fifth day H. E. took leave of his host, well pleased with his visit to Johore.

About this time affairs at the Straits Settlements created much interest and some apprehension at home. On the death of the Sultan of Perak in May, 1871, a dispute arose as to the succession, and almost simultaneously a formidable contest between two clans of Chinese broke out in Larut, the Northern district of this province. The Malays, distracted by their succession quarrel, could not reduce the Chinese to order, and the results were so disastrous, that Sir A. Clarke, soon after he succeeded Sir H. Ord at Singapore, had got the Malay Chiefs of Perak to determine in his presence at Pangkor which of the rival claimants to the Sultanate they would obey, and also to receive a British Resident to advise them on matters of government and finance, the unfortunate Mr. Birch being the Resident appointed. The arrangement not proving altogether satisfactory, Sir W. Jervois was induced to accept a surrender of sovereignty from the Sultan, whose right to reign had been ratified by the approval of the Perak Chiefs, thus virtually taking over the country, and Mr. Birch proceeded to give notice of the change. The issue is well known; some of the Government proclamations were torn down, Mr. Birch was attacked and murdered, and a small force was repelled in an attack on a stockade.

On November 3rd, news arrived at Penang of the murder of Mr. Birch, and prompt measures were taken to avenge it. In a week's time 400 men were at Perak, supported by a British man-of-war and two gunboats.

With all this reassuring intelligence it was impossible

to feel that there was grave cause for alarm. The suggestion that Mr. Birch's murder was due to merely personal or private motives was hardly consistent with subsequent events, for the completion of the treacherous deed gave the signal for a rising, and it was at first reported that all the native Rajahs were accomplices in the outrage. Then it was just possible that Johore being, like Perak, one of the four* independent states of the Peninsula, might make common cause against the British.

On November 10th the news telegraphed from Penang was that Maharajah Lela (the head of the village, Passir Sala, where Mr. Birch was murdered) had ordered Perak and Salangore to arm, that Johore and Quedah were friendly, but that a religious war was expected. And long after this date, though there was reason to hope that the outbreak would be confined to the district where it began, the possibility of its spreading to contiguous territory could not be overlooked.

While the safety of the whole Malay Peninsula was thus threatened the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay, on his visit to our Indian Empire, and the Maharajah of Johore, who had been kindly received by H.R.H. in England, decided on going to India to greet his friend and future ally. H.H. left Johore before the middle of December, and landed in Calcutta on the 22nd.

* Besides the islands Penang and Singapore, the British retain two provinces on the mainland of the Peninsula:—Wellesley, opposite Penang; and Malacca, 240 miles to the south, at the narrowest part of the Straits. The former is held subject to a tribute to the Rajah of Quedah, himself a vassal of the Siamese Kingdom. South of Wellesley Province, and surrounding Malacca, are the independent States of Perak, Salangore, Pahang and Johore.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHORE RAILWAY (MALAY PENINSULA).

1876.

The Maharajah of Johore was received at Calcutta with "his usual salute of seventeen guns on landing," and was "escorted by a Company of the Viceroy's body guard" to the residence provided for him, just opposite Sir Salar Jung's. The Prince of Wales recognized H. H. and welcomed him in a most agreeable manner. All this, together with an account of receptions, balls and illuminations, during the Prince's stay in the Capital, was duly communicated to Mr. Vacher. The Maharajah was presented with the gold Commemoration Order, a sword, rifle and gold ring; and as a special mark of favour, H. H. was invited to dine with the Prince of Wales on New Year's day. He sat on the Viceroy's left, and was the only Native Prince thus honoured. Of the entertainment on January 1st the Special Correspondent of *The Times* telegraphed:—

"There was a dinner at Government House, after which the Prince, accompanied by the Viceroy, the Maharajah of Johore, Miss Baring, Miss Foulkes and the members of the suites in uniform visited the English Theatre. The Rajah

provided for them. The house was only half full, the price for large boxes being £100, and for small ones £50, pit stalls being £7."

The Prince of Wales left Calcutta on the 3rd, and a fortnight later the Maharajah returned to the Malay Peninsula. Meanwhile the news from Perak had been uncertain and unsatisfactory. Sultan Ismail's party remained unsubdued, and Maharajah Lela was still at large. The last January mail appears to have left the Straits just before the arrival of H. H., and Mr. Vacher in writing home merely says, "judging from one or two telegrams received, the Maharajah appears to be enjoying his trip." Of his work he reports that he was still progressing with it, and found it not less interesting as he advanced, *e.g.*—"Some six hours after writing to you last, I was wading through a mangrove swamp up to my waist in water, with half a dozen picked natives and a couple of good rifles, working our way through the forest."

On February 26th, Mr. Vacher writes: "The Maharajah returned from India just a month ago. His journey seems to have been a successful one inasmuch as the Prince received him most kindly, Lord Northbrook also treating him hospitably, and in fact I believe every one received him very courteously; but he was anxious to get back to his own country, and did not seem to me to have returned in the best of spirits. I went to Singapore to meet him on the arrival of the steamer from India, but he has been so much among his own people since, that I have not seen much of him. The Perak expedition and Lord Carnarvon's future policy with regard to these Malay States is all the talk out here just now, but nobody seems to know what the Home Government are going to do, and only a few what has actually been done. The whole affair seems to have put the Maha-

rajah out a great deal, indeed sometimes he appears to me quite a changed man. You know the Government here, for some reason or other, declined H.H.'s loyally offered assistance, and I cannot but think this has been upon his mind since, to the prejudice of 'white men' in general.

"The Indian Government have most liberally extended my leave again for another year, and have promised me a further extension if necessary, on condition of my submitting a report on my experimental line, which of course I shall only have too great pleasure in doing. In the meantime everything is going on all right as far as I am concerned, and I hope things may continue to do so, for I should be very sorry if anything prevented me from finishing this little railway, now that I have broken the neck of the work, and it is so far a success."

The letter then goes on to tell of a chance encounter with an old friend:—"I have just met an old fellow pupil at Penn's; he was passing through Singapore on his way from Australia, where he has been married and settled for the last seven years. He heard there was a man of my name making a railway at Johore, and wrote to ask if I were *the* Vacher. As soon as I received his letter I posted off to Singapore to welcome him. I looked upon him as a sort of specimen friend of the many I left behind me when coming to the East, and wondered as I made my journey what he would be like, and whether we should know each other again. Having reached the hotel I was shown up to his room, and on sending in my card I heard a bass voice order the servant to show me in. I did not know the man or his voice in the least, and he thought too that I was not *the* Vacher after all. For the first few minutes it was very ridiculous as we

lect, &c., &c." The clinching proof came from my friend, who reminded me of a certain heavy weight he had one day thrown across the office at me, in dire anger at some chaff from me. I recollected the incident perfectly, and my jumping out of the way just in time to avoid the missile, which made a harmless dent upon the edge of my drawing board. After this of course there could be no longer any doubt as to my identity, and I was introduced to my old chum's wife and children, and, as the homeward steamer did not leave for a day or so, I persuaded them to come to Johore, where I had the pleasure of introducing them to the Maharajah, and giving them a dinner at the palace. They were delighted with Johore and everything connected with it, especially (they were pleased to say) with our little railway. We had quite an affectionate parting, and I have promised to visit my guests when they return to Australia. If all my friends are as really glad to see me, upon my return home, as this old fellow pupil evidently was, I shan't care much whether they recognise me at first sight or not."

The rather gloomy aspect of affairs at the Peninsula, as represented in the above letter, is not again referred to till May 2nd, when Mr. Vacher writes:—"You will be glad to hear that the horizon is clearing up a bit in Johore. H.H. has just been created a Knight Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George, in consideration of the various services he has rendered the Government of the Straits Settlements from time to time. I do not suppose Her Majesty knew what a good turn this would do the 'Fire-carriage White Man' (the name my workpeople give me here), and her one or two humble subjects in this far off land, but I am sure I am much obliged to her and her advisers all the same. This is the highest English Order ever awarded to native

Chiefs, and the Maharajah knows it. There is to be a most elaborate ceremony gone through when the Order arrives from the Colonial Office. Now, too, that the new Governor has had time to think of something else besides the disturbances, H. E. has exhibited considerable interest in our little railway. He was over here with Lady Jervois and family the other day, on a visit to the Maharajah, and he asked me to show him over the line one afternoon, when we had a lengthy discussion about gradients, &c. After that he came over to my office once or twice, and examined the plan and section with a good deal of care. Later on he sent for me, and we had a long chat about the many difficulties, practical and financial, to be overcome before the progress of the railway could really be said to be on a secure footing. I can assure you there is a great deal of trouble attached to the carrying out of this little project, and that there are obstacles apart from the ordinary technical ones."

From the draft of a letter Mr. Vacher appears to have addressed to Sir Andrew Clarke about this date, it would seem that the difficulties referred to were mainly pecuniary, and arose from the increasing lukewarmness of H. H. in the scheme. Again, writing home on June 8th, Mr. Vacher says:—"In answer to your query, I only wish I could tell you when the railway is likely to be finished. *Imprimis*, it depends upon the speed and regularity with which the necessary funds for carrying on the works are supplied. This again depends upon so many other schemes which may or may not be carried out according to the secrets of H. H.'s innermost soul. At present I am going on but slowly as the sinews of war are not very plentiful. At the same time it is only right to state that the earthwork on the first few miles is unusually heavy. For instance, I am now at a cutting

through a ridge of hills on a 1 in 50 gradient, the centre of which will be 70 feet deep when finished, I can assure you the Governor was astonished at the quantity of work when he went up the line with me the other day."

A considerable proportion of the letter just quoted from is occupied with some account of the writer's friend, Mr. Whampoa, a Chinese gentleman and Member of the Government of the Straits Settlements' Council, who had been made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George a month previously. "I sent you," says the letter, "a fortnight or so ago a newspaper containing an account of the investiture of my friend, Mr. Whampoa, with the C. M. G. Order. It will give you a good idea of how much he is liked and esteemed by everybody. Mr. Whampoa has a very nice house and grounds at Singapore, the house is crowded with curiosities from all parts of Asia, and presents received from distinguished people, the Chinese curiosities being unusually rare and valuable, the collection of a lifetime, and the grounds are laid out entirely in Chinese style. Gentlemen, who pass through Singapore, make a point of calling upon "Old Whampoa," and as he is very hospitable, he generally asks them to dinner; and thus he has had the honour of entertaining our Duke of Edinburgh, the Grand Duke Alexis, and many other distinguished guests. Naval men are his especial favourites, and he issues a sort of general invitation to all officers of every man-of-war of whatever nationality, passing the China Sea, to come and dine with him. In the old days, I have heard him say, he used to meet the fathers of the present naval generation in his coach and four, and drive them down himself. 'Then I was a young man too, you know, Mr. Vacher.' The Maharajah introduced Mr. Whampoa to me the very day I

arrived here, and he has been my constant friend ever since, most obliging and kind in every conceivable way. I have often dined with him, and met some of the nicest people here at his house, and any number of naval men from all parts of Europe. Mr. Whampoa, too, I must tell you, takes the greatest interest in our railway. The locomotive I imported for H. H. was the first he had ever seen, and he was as delighted as a child to ride on it. He perhaps sees, in a more distinct manner than we can, the immense difference between this and the old means of locomotion.*

In July Mr. Vacher writes:—"The railway work is progressing all right, but slowly as usual. I got some dynamite here last month with the intention of blowing up a portion of the heavy cutting I was telling you about, but it was of no use whatever, the ground being so soft. A very tall tree on the hill side at the top of this cutting was struck by lightning a short time since, while my men, some Javanese, were trimming a part of the slope not two hundreds yards off. They were terribly frightened, and thought, so at least they said, that some of the electricity had got inside them and made them ill. A good many Chinamen have visited the tree since to carry away portions of the wood, either as a charm, or to be used among themselves medicinally, probably the latter."

Johore being without a medical practitioner, Mr. Vacher had, soon after settling there, obtained a few simple drugs and a copy of "Moore's Manual of Medicine for India," so as to be able to render help to his work-people when sick. His services were, however, not always welcomed even by the docile Chinamen. "Sometimes," he writes, "I have

* Mr. Whampoa died early in April, 1880. An obituary notice appeared in *The Times* of May 22nd.

the greatest difficulty in getting them to take my medicines when they have or fancy they have a cure of their own, and their cures are always absurd. For instance, only the other day I found one of my Chinese carpenters sticking dabs of sealing-wax on his back as a cure for rheumatism or something of the kind from which he was suffering. And when I asked him what he was doing, he evidently thought himself particularly clever, and replied, 'No China medicine, English Europe medicine' Poor Chinese who do not belong to any sick club, and cannot afford to pay even a few cents for quack drugs from their own doctors, often come to me, sometimes as I am walking along the road, and ask for *obât*, looking frightfully ill, with white tongue and yellow eyes, and I think these fellows are often better doctored than their richer neighbours."

"Of course there are no records of births or deaths here, nor any returns of the kind whatever; and some hundreds of Chinese die in all sorts of ways in the interior without any inquiry being made. Some fall sick and lie down and die who might no doubt have been saved with proper professional advice, or even with simple medicines taken in time; others again are destroyed by tigers and wild beasts, pretty numerous in the dense forests here, and not so very few I fear are yearly murdered by their own class either for secret offences against the rules of their societies or in open quarrels."

Johore, or at all events the southern part of it, being mainly colonized by Chinese, Mr. Vacher was fortunate in being on friendly terms with them. "I must say I have taken a great fancy to them," he writes, "for their hard-working, industrious habits, and like them much better than any of the other races here, Malays, Javanese or Klings. I

think too my Chinamen are not unfriendly disposed towards me, and I would willingly trust myself among them quite alone for months (if necessary) in the interior. Mr. Whampo has assisted me very much both in getting some good head men, and in telling me all about their habits and ways, and I have no doubt speaking well of me to them in the first instance, and for all this I am under a great obligation to him. Now I have pretty well established myself among them, and "Toon Wacher, crater appec poonia orang" (the Fire-carriage Man,) is known not altogether unfavourably to several hundreds of the working class of Chinamen in this part of the Malay Peninsula."

Of the correspondence from Johore there now remains but two letters requiring notice. The accounts running through both of these of the State Official known as the Mayor, of his disagreement with the Government and final downfall are interesting, as affording a glimpse of a phase of social life in the province.

Writing to his father on August 1st, Mr. Vacher says:—"There has been considerable excitement here since my last communication to you from two significant events, both immediately concerning our Maharajah, the capture of the most important rebel chief *abroad*, and the dismissal of our chief Chinaman, the Mayor, *at home*. To take the former first; tidings having been brought to the Maharajah of the whereabouts of Maharajah Lela (supposed to be the instigator of the murder of the late Mr. Birch) and Pankak Indut (the murderer himself,) H. H. put his new gunboat the 'Pantie' in commission, and sent her round in charge of his brother, who managed to induce the two rebels to leave

three days been made over to the British Government. H. H. has also captured Ngah Jabbor, ex-Sultan Ismail, and Rajah Moodah, the latter two some time ago, so that the Maharajah has himself caught and surrendered to H. M.'s Government the Malays who were "wanted" since the Perak war. I suppose H. H. is entitled to the sum total of the reward offered by the English Government for these men's capture, amounting to 9,000 dollars. Of course he will not accept the money; although *entre nous* such a sum in hard cash is not to be despised, and would for instance come in very conveniently for the railway, a sort of ready money windfall, in addition to my regular (?) allotments."

"Now for the second piece of news. The Mayor (pronounced Mio) is head over all the Chinese in Johore, some 30,000 or more, but subject of course to the Maharajah and the laws of the country. He not only has to get Chinamen to come and settle here, by holding forth various inducements to them, but when they are here he becomes responsible to the Maharajah for their good behaviour. In return he is amply repaid all his expenses, and something more, by the monopoly of various duties especially allowed him by H. H.; the duty on gambling and pork being the two principal sources of the Mayor's official revenue. On the former he gets ten per cent. on all sums lost or won, *i.e.* the moment any amount, large or small, changes hands, the duty is at once deducted, although the same sum may re-change hands the next minute. Then the duty on pork is simply a dollar a head on every pig, little or big, that is killed in Johore, dead pigs not being allowed to be imported. These two important perquisites yielding, as they do, large sums from the Chinese population, do not in the least affect the Malays, as they are strictly forbidden by

their religion to gamble or to eat pork. You will at once perceive the wisdom of our Government. The Mayor, who first brings all the Chinese to the country, and when they are here governs them, and keeps them in order entirely at his own expense, is allowed to keep a portion of what he can squeeze out of them for himself, in full payment of the official salary appertaining to so important an appointment. I say 'a portion', as the opium and other duties, derived also only from the Chinese, go into the Imperial Treasury. Meanwhile these Chinese colonists are doing all the work in the country, cultivating the soil and opening up the territory in every way, making plantations, building houses, &c., &c. At one time I had some half-dozen Malay workmen on the railway, but I found them so incorrigibly lazy I was obliged to get rid of even these few; I have now only one, a sort of curiosity enabling me to say that I employ Malay labour. Of course this is exclusive of my excellent assistant, Prince Slaman, the Maharajah's son, who works very hard at riding up and down on the locomotive, and turning on the whistle, whenever steam is got up for a day or so to carry out materials.

"But I must return to the Mayor, poor fellow—you will have forgotten all about his dismissal, in this random way of writing I have got into. He held the appointment for about five years, and being a very careful, shrewd individual, managed not only to gain great influence over the Chinese during the time, but to amass a pretty considerable fortune as well. The greater portion of his wealth consisting of houses built on freehold grants of land given him from time to time by the Maharajah, he now owns whole streets of houses; in fact, the greater portion of the town of Johore, which you will recollect is

only of very recent date, belongs to the man just dismissed. He had not given in to H. H.'s wishes in various little matters of late, as he used to do. At last, during the Governor's visit last September, he demurred at certain payments of duty, levied on the extra Chinese who came to the town for the rejoicings, going to H. H.'s treasury, and left Johore in a huff, and went off to China. This naturally annoyed the Maharajah, who was on the eve of going to India to meet the Prince of Wales, and did not like the idea of the Mayor and himself being both absent from the country at the same time. A couple of months or so ago the Mayor returned from China, still in the sulks, and things have got no better since. The other day, at a large meeting at the Dewan, H. H. suggested to the Mayor that he should send in his resignation, and this he did immediately, thinking, I suppose, that it would be impossible for the Government to do without him. H. H. accepted the resignation formally in the presence of all the head men assembled, and the Mayor, still braving it out, went to Singapore. A few days afterwards the Mayor called on H. H. and requested to be allowed to withdraw his resignation, but he was not permitted to do so. And this is the present state of affairs. No new Mayor has yet been appointed, and the old one has caved in, and is doing his best to get back. H. H. is looking very worried about it—more so than I have ever seen him about any other affair. Deputations of influential Chinamen, both from Singapore and Johore, continue to wait upon him at all hours of the day and night, either supporting the claims of some new aspirant for the post, or begging that the Ex-Mayor may be reinstated. In the meantime all the Chinese here seem to

Singapore and in such close proximity to the head-quarters of the all-powerful British Government, there might be an ugly row between the rival factions."

The next letter is dated September 8th. It contains an account of the investiture of H.H. with the Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George, and of the 'ex-Mayor's final humble appeal to be restored to his office and emoluments. "The last event in the Straits Settlements," says Mr. Vacher, "was the presentation of the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George to the Maharajah, the ceremony we have all been looking forward to here so long. All the head Malays and Europeans from Johore assembled at the Governor's house, Mount Victoria, in Singapore, on the 23rd ult. at 12 o'clock. A procession of carriages was then formed to follow the Maharajah's carriage to the Town Hall, where the Governor had preceded us. All things considered, we got along pretty well and did not keep H. E. waiting more than half an hour. My carriage got jammed at a very early stage of the progress, and eventually arrived at the Town Hall disjoined from the rest, but I was in good time, and saw and heard everything to perfection. The Town Hall was literally crammed full, Europeans, Malays, Arabs, Klings and Chinese, all jostling each other, no seats being reserved. The Governor's speech was delivered in English and translated into Malay, the Maharajah's speech was in Malay and translated into English. After the ceremony the ladies came round H. H. to shake hands and congratulate him, and to examine the Collar and Star of the Order. Then we all went to Mr. Tan Seng Poh's house to a magnificent tiffin to which he had invited us in honour of the occasion, and here with little speechifying the proceedings terminated most pleasantly.

“The poor ex-Mayor has gone altogether to the wall. The last I heard of him was, that he had made a final appeal to H. H. to reinstate him, falling on his face and prostrating himself in the most abject manner, in an old dirty torn coat, unwashed, unshaved, and with his pigtail unplaited, but H. H. moved away and would not have anything to say to him. The ex-Mayor’s flag has been hauled down, the gambling sheds have been removed, and the gambling duty is now to be H. H.’s perquisite. Pigs are slaughtered free. At present I believe it is intended to do away with the office of Mayor altogether.

“The railway is progressing much the same as usual, that is, making very slow progress for want of funds. I wish I could get hold of a little of the money spent in some of these extravagant entertainments or some of the gambling duty, now that the Treasury has it, or even the duty on pigs.

“We have now a Post Office established here, so please send all letters in future direct.”

This is the closing sentence of the last letter received from Johore. In less than a month after it was despatched, work on the line was stopped. Mr. Vacher tells the news in a letter, dated Singapore, Oct. 13th. “The railway,” he says, “has at last come to a complete standstill, for want of funds. The Maharajah has written me (a kind enough letter in its way) saying that he has finally decided to stop it altogether for the present.”

“I have written to Sir Andrew Clarke, explaining everything, and telling him that I shall return to India at once. I have also called upon the Governor here, and told him the state of affairs. Every one here now knows all about it, and I think they all fully understand how the land lies. The Governor, especially, has spoken very kindly, quite

sympathising with me in my disappointment, and saying that I may yet live to see the fruits of my labour, and trains running in the Malay Peninsula.

“ I am leaving every one at Johore on the best of terms, from H. H. and his head men to all the poor coolies who had been with me on the works.”

The following very literal translation (found amongst Mr. Vacher's papers) of the Maharajah's letter to him stopping the works forms an appropriate conclusion to this chapter.

“ I have to inform Vacher about discontinuing the work of my Railway. It is decided to put a stop to it from this month, on account of my having no money ready to meet the expenses of it as heretofore, which has been more than my estimation upon that work.

“ Within the number of miles of road that has been completed by Vacher I am perfectly satisfied, as the work of it is much superior from the work of others that had done it before.

“ Now Vacher is no longer in my service, but there is no change in my heart as to my esteem of him, and I hope Vacher has the same of me.

With prosperity,

I am,

Yours truly,

(Signed) ABU BAKAR.”

• CHAPTER IX.

RETURN TO INDIA.

• IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE AT DELHI.

1876-77.

In the letter last quoted from, under date Singapore, October 13th, Mr. Vacher states that he was to leave for Calcutta by the s.s. 'Rajpootana' on the morrow. "I am not going to make myself miserable," he writes, "although my little scheme for opening up Johore with railways, and thus making a name for myself, has turned out a failure." And indeed he seems to have borne this disappointment at the sudden collapse of a project on which he had laboured unremittingly for upwards of two years with commendable equanimity. On his last evening at Singapore he dined at the Governor's, and in due course embarked, bidding farewell to the Straits Settlements, and commencing what proved a most perilous voyage. Mr. Vacher's next message home was a very brief note despatched immediately on landing. In his following letter of November 17th he gives some account of his experience of the terrible cyclone in the Bay of Bengal, which was so destructive to life and property at Chittagong, and on the banks of the River Megna and the groups of islands at its mouth. "Upon my arrival," he says, "at Calcutta a fortnight ago in the s.s. 'Bushur,' I wrote at once,

only a few minutes before the mail left, to inform you of my safety, as the 'Bushur' (which took on the 'Rajpootana' passengers) was one of the steamers reported as lost. You must have read all about the cyclone in the Bay of Bengal on the 31st ult. in the English papers, and you will doubtless have formed some idea of what a fearful calamity it has been. Well, our brave little ship, the 'Bushur,' was in the thick of it all, and I was one of the five passengers expecting to go down every minute almost for twenty-four hours, that is from midnight on the 30th to midnight on the 31st [October], when the cyclone left us, and we resumed our course. The waves running mountains high formed the grandest sight I have ever seen, and the violent motion of the ship (of course I have never felt anything like it before) communicated a sensation of awe quite indescribable. Every man on board was working for his life. The captain, a brave fellow, set a splendid example to his men; from the first sign of danger he never left his post at the wheel, and, thank God, we pulled through and reached Calcutta safely."

"I have been waiting," the letter goes on, "to see some of the Government people (who are on their way from Simla), in order to fix my movements. Now, however, I have arranged to go up country to-morrow as far as Delhi in order to meet Sir Andrew Clarke and have a personal interview with him before reporting my return to duty officially, as I am in hopes of getting some special appointment on the State Railways. As I shall not be able to see him before the 5th prox., I shall have plenty of time to break the journey at different stages and to take the thousand miles very easily."

It may be interesting here to turn to the supplement to the *Gazette of India* of November 25th, 1876, containing

the Minute of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Richard Temple, on the cyclone and storm-wave in the districts of Backergunge and Noecolly. The Minute is dated November 21st. The following extracts give some particulars of the inundation on the east and west coasts of the great river Megna and the thickly-inhabited islands known as the groups of Sundeeep, Hattea, and Daklin Shahbazpore.

“There was a severe cyclone in the Bay of Bengal on the night of the 31st of October. But it was not the wind which proved so destructive, though that was bad enough; it was the storm-wave, sweeping along to a height of from 10 feet to 20 feet, according to different localities; in some places, where it met with any resistance, it mounted even higher than that.

“In the evening the weather was a little windy and hazy, and had been somewhat hot; but the people, a million or thereabouts of souls, retired to rest apprehending nothing. But before eleven o'clock the wind suddenly freshened, and about midnight there arose a cry of ‘the water is on us,’ and a great wave burst over the country several feet high; it was followed by another wave, and again by a third, all three rushing rapidly southwards, the air and wind being chilly cold. The people were thus caught up before they had time even to climb to their roofs, and were lifted to the surface of the water, together with the beams and thatches of their cottages. But the homesteads are surrounded by trees—palms, bamboos, and a large thorny species called ‘madâr.’ The people were then borne by the water on to the tops and branches of these trees; those who were thus stopped were saved, those who were not must have been swept away and lost. Doubtless there must have been variation in detail in this struggle for life with death;

but there is an extraordinary sameness in the general manner in which people were saved or lost."

An estimate of the resulting mortality accompanies the Minute. Referring to this, Sir R. Temple remarks:—

"Enclosed is an estimate of the probable number of lives lost (all or nearly all by drowning), prepared by Mr. Beverley and myself from our own data, compared with local reports, oral and written, and based on the returns of the last Census. It will be seen that we apprehended that in an area of some 3,000 square miles, out of 1,062,000 persons suddenly thrown into more or less of danger, 215,000 must have perished."

On November 23rd Mr. Vacher was back again at Agra, having staid a couple of days at Allahabad, *en route*. "I was a little nervous in the train at first," he writes, "the effect, no doubt, of the tossing about I got in the cyclone, but it passed off after a time. Those of my old friends who are still at Agra were glad enough to see me; but the station is very much changed, even in so short a time as two years, and it seems strange to be living at the old Club and seeing so many new faces. I have arranged to stay here until the 3rd or 4th of next month, when I leave for Delhi. I shall thus have ten days' holiday at least, before returning to duty. Last night I dined with my old friend Benson and his sister, and this evening I am the guest of the Colonel and officers of the 59th Regiment; then there are some garden parties coming off, and a ball on the 1st, and I have no doubt I may count on another dinner or two, so I dare say the time will pass pleasantly, although I do not know every man, woman, child, horse and dog in the place, as I used to."

Sir A. Clarke received Mr. Vacher very kindly.

arrival at Delhi, and at once appointed him on special duty at the Imperial Assemblage Works, then just commencing. This appears to have kept him very busy, and the only note sent home during December, 1876, is a hurried one, merely announcing his appointment.

However, a copy of *Indian Public Opinion* for December 20th was duly received, and this contained a Delhi letter from "our own correspondent" which Mr. Vacher vouched for as exactly describing what was being done. The subjoined extract from this newspaper letter gives a fair idea of the extent and nature of the Assemblage Works, and shows how hard pressed Mr. Vacher and his colleague were to get them completed in time.

"*Delhi, 16 December.* I have just returned from an inspection of the Imperial dais and amphitheatre, whence on the first day of the new year our most gracious sovereign will be proclaimed Empress of Hindostan. It is situated to the north-east of Delhi on the vast plain that lies between the Bhagput and Alipore roads, and is about five miles from the Cashmere gate of the city. The dais (which at present is far from completion) occupies about the centre of an immense circle, some 200 yards in diameter. Half of the circumference of this circle, the half facing the dais, is formed by a raised masonry terrace sloping gently towards the dais. This will be occupied by the native princes and chiefs. Tall, slender, gilt poles all along its length support a light iron framework, over which is spread a white canvas awning, which will afford protection from the midday sun. This awning is set off by a deep blue scalloped border, the ridge being relieved in the same way, and silver cords and tassels loop it up here and there. Towering above the tallest

bamboo, I could discern the flagstaff on which the royal standard will be unfurled on the memorable day. Armies of coolies are at work, and the engineers in charge, Mr. Kirby and Mr. Vacher, are unvarying in their efforts to push on the preparations. It seems quite impossible, judging from the present appearance of the place, that everything should be ready by the 1st January, but I suppose they have no such word as 'impossible' in their dictionary; and, as Mr. Vacher observed to me, "It's no use conjecturing about it, because everything *must* be ready in time." On either side of the dais, completing as it were the circumference of the great circle, is a massive raised masonry platform, which also slopes inwards towards the dais. These also will have a canopy overhead. Broad flights of steps lead up to them from the outside approaches. These platforms are intended for all the host of British officials who will be present, Governors, Lieutenant-Governors, Members of Council and so on. The whole of the space within the ring thus described is beautifully turfed, with the exception of two small spots which have been made *pucka* and which will be occupied by bands. Outside, to a distance of at least 150 yards all round the amphitheatre, the ground has been metalled. Tons and tons of broken bricks have been brought up for this purpose, and gangs of coolies and bhisties are employed all day and every day in beating them down. Mr. Kirby and Mr. Vacher live on the spot, and a small village has sprung into existence where formerly there was a bare *maidan*; and most of the work-people live in it, for the place is so far from Delhi, that it is impossible for them to go to their homes every evening, or at all even to collect them for work betimes in the morning."

After the dais and amphitheatre had served their purpose and the brief week of splendour was past, they had to be dismantled and cleared away, so that Mr. Vacher was detained at Delhi when the native princes, chiefs, officials and visitors who crowded in to be present at the proclamation had all departed. Writing on January 19th, he says,—“Delhi is looking very miserable and deserted now all the enormous gathering has dispersed. The red roads and small paths innumerable belonging to each camp, now leading nowhere; the little deserted gardens tended with such care during their short existence, now torn up and trampled over; above all, the hundreds of mud fireplaces with their quaint-looking chimneys still standing, and marking the exact place where each tent was pitched, like monuments of the departed. During the proclamation week our mess here consisted of 120 or 130 members, including some twenty ladies, now we number exactly four, all waiting for orders. I am probably going to Calcutta or not far off, and in another week or so, we shall all be pretty well distributed.”

As a fitting termination to this account it may be well to insert here a paragraph from a letter written seven months later, when Mr. Vacher was camping out at Behloondee on the Dhond and Munmar Railway Works:—

“Yesterday I received a letter from our Foreign Secretary, with the well-known big red seal on the cover, which set me wondering what the F. O. could possibly want with me to cause the Secretary to address me direct. Was there some wonderful secret about a Rajah's intrigues on which I was in some way to be called to give evidence? For, of course, like nine men out of ten, I played with the letter unopened for some minutes, trying to guess its possible contents, and, of course it turned out to be on the only

subject I did not for the moment think of. It was to the effect that the Secretary had been directed by H. E. the Viceroy to forward me one of the Silver Commemoration Medals in recognition of the services rendered by me on the occasion of the Imperial Assemblage. The medal, which the letter states will be sent to me from Calcutta, has a broad crimson silk ribbon attached to it, and is to be worn round the neck like an Order, on special occasions of levées and balls given by Government on Her Majesty's birthday, and the anniversary of the proclamation, when H. E. the Viceroy, the Lieutenant-Governors and a few others high in Government service, will wear their Gold Commemoration Medals in the same manner."

The Medal reached Mr. Vacher in due course, and a sketch of it is appended.



CHAPTER-X.

GREAT INDIAN PENINSULA RAILWAY (DHOND AND MUNMAR RAILWAY, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY.)

1877.

In February 1877, Mr. Vacher entered upon the most interesting and arduous portion of his career. But the additional labour and greatly increased responsibility seem to have been welcome, while they certainly afforded him better opportunities for manifesting his industry and strong self-reliance. He was appointed to the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, First Division (Dhond and Munmar Railway), and he at once proceeded from Delhi to take up his appointment, breaking the journey, by a short stay, at Calcutta only.

On March 4th he writes from Camp Dhond, the place he was posted to, saying that he was "all right and just commencing work, having joined about a week since." "The Dhond and Munmar Railway," he continues, "is about to be constructed by Government to give employment to a great many of the people in the famine districts, and these people are already flocking in in great numbers. On my arrival here, after a long and continuous journey of some eighteen hundred miles by rail, I was at once surrounded by hundreds of these poor natives asking for work. I hardly

knew which way to turn at first, and am by no means at home amongst them yet ; but I have at least made a start. I have upwards of two thousand men, women and children, and three or four hundred babies and children in arms, actually on my work and in my immediate charge. I telegraph weekly direct to Government the exact numbers under me. It is expected there will be some twenty thousand on my division in about six weeks. It is very hard work looking after so many unskilled labourers, as it is ; what will it be when there are ten times as many ? I have been hard at work all to-day (Sunday), since 6 a.m. till the evening, and feel very tired and sleepy. I hope things will get a little ship-shape before long ; at present I am terribly bothered with the numerous Government Orders which come daily by post, and I have no proper office or staff."

Three weeks later Mr. Vacher appears to have got his affairs into better order, and writes cheerfully on the subject. It is not a long letter, but the tone is healthy and shows him to have been in good spirits and contented. "I am still hard enough worked looking after these famine labourers, and doing my best to carry out the numerous orders regarding the work, pay, and sanitary arrangements of those sent here to have their names registered and be under my charge ; but I have now the satisfaction of knowing that everything is on a proper business-like footing. I have established a regular office in a tent next my own, letters are answered up to date, accounts are squared, returns all sent in, and my poor starving coolies are quietly settled down to their daily task and portion of corn, so that I am, comparatively speaking, a happy man again.

"I have been out on horseback all the morning, and

have just come in for a few hours during the heat of the day to breakfast and write these few lines. I am off again in half-an-hour and shall not be in till dark. It is pretty warm (100° Fahr.) in my tent, but there is a good breeze and I am not feeling the heat much. Altogether, my experience of this part of India is rather favourable. I am, thank God, in first-rate health, and feel quite up to my work, heavy as it is. We have made a fair start and everything promises well so far; we trust to there being no epidemic, and the weather continuing fine."

It was not till towards the end of April that Mr. Vacher found time to send home what he himself would have called a "long yarn." It gives a graphic description of some of the scenes on the famine works, and an account of the everyday life, cares and anxieties of an executive officer. From this letter the following quotations have been selected.

"The several thousand poor starving families I am looking after have been carefully collected by Government from all the neighbouring villages, and camped along the proposed line of railway, sanctioned expressly to find employment for them until their own fields are again brought under cultivation. We have hospitals for the sick, and little huts for the weak and starving, all along the encampments, and I ride out and inspect them daily as part of my professional duties. It is painful enough to see full-grown men and women reduced to mere skeletons by starvation, and yet more painful to see children thus reduced; but the poor babies are the saddest sight; when they have been long subject to privation they look like little old men, or more, perhaps, like monkeys, for they are scarcely human in appearance. One sees them sitting on their haunches, their shrivelled up diminutive limbs having true baby fingers and

toes, with such little nails, but in no other way resembling what one is accustomed to associate with the name of baby. I have, of course, among so many, a few most dreadful specimens of this description, and the kindest wish I have for them is that they may die, and die quickly, they cannot live long. There is one little child seven or eight months old, who has been on the works from the commencement, and nothing that I can give the poor thing or its mother seems to make the slightest improvement in its condition. There it is, a little brown bag of loose bones, with a large ill-proportioned head and big wise-looking eyes, and yet the mother is as fond of that child, to all appearance, as if it were the finest baby for its age ever born. With these living pictures before us of the effects of starving, you may be sure we are wonderfully careful of all the children born on the works. Directly we hear of a birth, the mother and infant are moved to one of the special huts, where they have a bedstead and a blanket all to themselves, and the woman has a daily ration of milk, rice and sugar, luxuries altogether new to her, both as regards board and lodging. The usual arrangement at this interesting period, in good harvest times, when the woman is assisting her husband to gather in the crops, is to oil the youngster all over, except the head which is covered with mud, and put it in the sun for warmth, the mother immediately resuming her former occupation, with an occasional glance of motherly pride at her new-born sleeping quietly and contentedly. The mud protects its youthful brain from apoplexy, and the coarse country oil preserves its delicate skin from the attacks of fleas and innumerable small stinging insects. I had a fine specimen of twin babies among my collection, but they have

conclude that the luxurious life and rich diet, provided by our paternal Government disagreed with the small pair, and that the mother had sufficient self-denial to leave us in consequence.

“ Next in importance to the babies come the children—little bits of humanity of various shades of brown, with more or less flesh on their small ribs, running about the works much in the same condition with regard to clothing as the infants just alluded to, only without the mud on their heads. My own impression is that whatever articles of clothing they may originally have been provided with by their thoughtful parents, have since been taken from them by their mothers to form pads for their own heads and protect their hair from the wear and tear of the baskets in which they carry the earth excavated by the men. The grown-up people, not being overburdened with clothes themselves, could ill spare even a small portion for this purpose. In other respects the children are not different from the children one sees in ordinary times. They play, and quarrel, and fight much as usual among themselves, and seem to have suffered far less from the effects of the famine than either babies or grown-up people. Now, there is a very strict order (among the thousand-and-one issued by Government) that these juvenile crowds should on no account be allowed on the work itself with the coolies, their mothers and fathers; but it is next to impossible to keep them off. Even those who cannot walk, crawl on to the work after their parents, and, after separating them all in the morning, in a couple of hours they are all mixed up again, adults and children, and the babies crawling on the embankment like so many caterpillars. The only wonder is that some of these mites do not get buried in the banks whilst the earth is

being thrown up. You have no idea what a scene of confusion it makes, and how untractable the children are. We pick out a lot of the old women and make nurses of them; but they only go to sleep, and then off the youngsters trot at once, away to their parents in the distance. The proportion of children on the works is very large too, being about 30 per cent., or almost one to every two coolies.

“After the children come the men and women, and the old women (quite a class by themselves) and the generally aged and decrepit. The former, the actual labourers, the only portion of the multitude who return anything at all to Government for all the money, trouble and anxiety expended on keeping them and their families alive, are not, I am sorry to say, a very manageable lot, nor do they impress you with the idea that they are in the smallest degree grateful to us for all that we are doing for them. They seem to think, for the most part, that they are doing us a favour in coming to the relief works, and thus keeping themselves from starvation. According to their view, if we really desired to help them, we should do so without expecting anything from them in the way of work in return, and this, of course, is what our wise Government set their face against, for, apart from the waste of public money of keeping all these millions in pure charity, it would demoralize and pauperize them irremediably. These grown-up coolies are certainly more difficult to deal with than their offspring. A proportion of them will *not* do the small amount of work required of them, and then if you cut down the pay accordingly, they complain, truly enough, that they hav’nt sufficient to eat. One day I see some of them sitting down within a few hundred yards of where the other coolies are working, idling their time away for a day or so, unable to make

up their minds to commence; the next, they are complaining that they are starving, and are not paid like those who have been at work all the time. The women are, I think, a trifle worse than the men in this respect; they are decidedly more obstinate, and they are such terrible chatterboxes; what little energy they possess they expend entirely in talking and arguing the rights of their case. And the old old women of the gangs, who are not even asked to work, but all fed for nothing, I think they have more grievances than all the others put together. I cannot stop anywhere in my rounds, to speak to anyone, but a crowd of these garrulous old ladies spring up as it were out of the ground and surround me and my horse, all talking at once of their many hardships, and the shameful way in which they are neglected by Government in not being provided with new clothes and better fare. My poor dumb old mare sets an example to them, which they might follow, I often think, with advantage.

“Now having gone carefully through the rank and file, and described each class of the famine wallahs individually, I come to the officers appointed by Government to inspect and report upon the numerous famine works in this district, the Southern Division. First, there is Sir Richard Temple, Bart., K.C.S.I. (the famine delegate, as the newspapers call him) who travels about with a large staff, and telegraphs the day before he comes to have all the coolies, men, women and children, drawn up in files ready for inspection. He comes and walks down the files, with all of us following in the rear, generally about a dozen, according to rank and position.

“Sir Richard was pleased with the general condition of the people, and was most kind to me at parting. His

my works with a visit privately, and I was asked to meet him at dinner, but unfortunately I was too ill that particular day to leave my bed. I am all right now; I had been a little too much in the sun. Next comes the Civil Commissioner, Mr. Robertson. He is a star of lesser magnitude, and has time to visit us more frequently, following in Sir R. Temple's steps and going more into details. Then come the Magistrates, Messrs. Jacomb and Norman, and four assistant Magistrates. Lastly, there are the Sanitary Commissioner, the Deputy Sanitary Commissioner, and the Deputy Surgeon-General. All these officials come, turn and turn about, in their various capacities, to inspect my coolies, and I have to do the civil, and go over the works and explain everything to them. And this is quite apart from my engineering duties, respecting which I am responsible to another staff with another set of questions altogether. It is very difficult to please so many, but I think I have been unusually lucky, for every one has reported well on my works, from Sir R. Temple downwards. But I am by no means out of the wood yet, and I may still come to grief before this famine is over, as many a better man has ere now. It is very anxious work and wants tact and management, Government being ever ready to swoop down upon you for the slightest slip or for omitting to carry out any of their various orders.

"The whole famine relief operations, gigantic as they are, are being carried out very quietly, and people outside the Government know hardly anything of what is going on; and little news of any kind about the works seems to find its way into the papers. We all think the famine may be much worse yet, and the most trying times (during the rains) are to come.

"I am now living, and have been ever since. I came here, in a small tent twelve feet square, pitched near the end of the line under the only tree to be seen for miles, and all the birds in the place live here with me. It is a large banyan tree, and there must be some hundreds of birds residing in it. What they can possibly find to live on I don't know, but there they are, they fly away early every morning and return to roost at night, making an awful noise on each occasion. I have just received orders to build three mud huts here to house myself and my staff during the rains, for of course I could not live in a tent then, and my clerks and assistants must have a substantial roof over their heads too. More mud huts will be erected along the line for my foremen; and then we have the enormous undertaking of hutting all the coolies, or such of them as cannot be stowed away in the adjacent villages. I pity the poor women and children living in these temporary huts, for of course we cannot do much for them in this way during all the heavy rains; and I am afraid the mortality will be very large in their present weakened state."

The above passages include all that is of general interest in this pleasant letter of information, which those who received it were cautioned not to criticise, as it was "the result of two hurried sittings with two long days' work preceding them." There was no criticism attempted, but as the letter went the round of the home circle, all felt that it gave them a good idea of the work going on in the famine district, and made them quite familiar with Camp Dhond, its occupants and visitors.

On June 30th Mr. Vacher sends word that the rain had commenced. What he says on the subject shows how anxiously the coming of the periodical rains was expected,

and how welcome rain was in this parched land where the famine, and the sickness and sorrow it brought, were all traced back to the long drought.

"Quite a new phase," he writes, "has come over the famine relief operations since I last wrote to you. The monsoon (the periodical change of direction in the wind from north-east to south-west is known here by the N.E. and S.W. monsoons, and the latter should bring the regular rains) has set in and with it RAIN. I cannot give the word sufficient prominence to convey anything like an adequate idea of the way in which it has been mentioned both by Europeans and natives for the last two months—the former with alarm, the latter in despair, lest it should not come. It is impossible for any one to say what would have been the result of two years' drought in succession. All I can vouch for is that the past famine (for it is virtually over now) with all its distressing circumstances, would come to be considered as a mere trifle in comparison with the results of a second and following year of drought. The effects of rain are surely among the most wonderful of Nature's ordinary phenomena. Only a short time ago the whole of our line, 150 miles in length, was situated in a vast desert, with the exception of a few small spots of cultivated ground around some of the wells that are not dried up, each looking like an oasis, and making the drought still more apparent by the contrast. There was not a blade of grass, or corn, or edible herb of any description, fit for man or beast, to be seen. Now Nature's beautiful green has crowned the ugly black cotton soil again, and tiny little blades of grass, barely an inch long (as I write) have cropped up everywhere on the whole length of the works, and as far as we can see to the right and left, riding alongside the banks and cutting on

our daily journeys. Everybody is in good humour, and we are chaffing each other about our mud huts."

Unfortunately the exultation called forth by the prospect of abundant rain in 1877 was premature. The hopes of a speedy termination to the famine encouraged during June were doomed to disappointment. Month after month, came and went, and still the drought continued, till even the good effects of the brief June rains were all marred. On August 2nd, Mr. Vacher writes, "The rains have not come after all, and we are terribly afraid of another famine in these parts in consequence. The few showers that had fallen, when I wrote in June have been the beginning and the end of the rain that the S. W. monsoons have yet brought us in this part of India. The young crops that the natives planted so carefully six weeks ago will die if it does not rain very soon; they are already suffering from the drought. Very strict orders have been issued forbidding leave of every kind to all officers on famine duty, and we are all at our various posts, wondering what will happen, and what arrangements Government will make if the rain should hold off for another year. The very uncertainty of affairs is most trying in our present situation. I really don't think I could go through another whole year of famine duty, in the midst of all these poor miserable starving wretches so difficult to deal with, but you may depend upon it I shall try, if there is the necessity for it.

On the 29th of the same month, Mr. Vacher writes to announce his having changed his quarters to Camp Behloondee, twenty miles further up the line, to push on with the remainder of the earthwork in his division, the first portion being almost completed. Referring to the continuance of the drought and famine and the outlook in respect of his work he adds:—

“No rain, young crops all dying or dead—grain selling at just double the price it was on my arrival at Dhond six months ago—orders issued by the Viceroy to push on with our line with the utmost speed, and to get it open for grain traffic at any cost by January, if possible. A slight shower lasting about three hours, the only one we have had for two months, fell yesterday. This is the sum of the important news here up to date.”

“At Christmas time, of course, there is never any rain here, and the rivers crossing our line are all dry, so that the rails can be laid across the beds of all the streams. No bridges thus will be built for the time being, and rough temporary sheds will take the place of stations, &c. Emergent indents for all the permanent way materials required from England have been telegraphed for, as also the necessary rolling stock. Thus everything is in train for a four or five months’ tremendous hard grind, the great difficulty with us being to get the quantity and quality of work required from unskilled and unwilling hands.”

With one exception, the remainder of Mr. Vacher’s letters in this year all tell the same story of incessant hard work. The following brief extracts from a note, dated Camp Behloondee, November 17th, may serve to show how busy he was :—

“I am in the saddle now all day, and every day almost, from morning to night, hurrying on the work, as the engine must come through next month, and Government will take no excuse if progress is stopped when the permanent way materials are once made over to us. Two of my horses have been laid up for the last month with swollen legs from their hard work, and my servants have almost all been sick in

"I have a large credit on the Treasury, and almost all the money I spend has to be paid away in cash, mostly in small sums, and the only certain safeguard against fraud is, I find, to pay every rupee with my own hand and initial every receipt, however small, at the time. I can only hope and trust there is nothing wrong going on in all this hurry, but the accounts are answerable for no small share of the anxiety caused by this press of work.

"Three or four miles of the ground, where the engine, leaving its proper road, will run to the right or left and pass over the beds of the rivers, is not yet even surveyed, although the rails will have to be laid, and banks and cuttings made and ballasted, ere the locomotive can cross; and yet I can only just find time to peg out this now and again at odd hours, I have so much to do with work actually in progress all day long."

The exception just alluded to is a long letter written by Mr. Vacher to his eldest brother, in August, and dated from Camp Dhond. It affords a good example of his more familiar style, when writing to any one of about his own age, with whom he was very intimate. Notwithstanding all his strong common sense and persevering industry, he was rather fond of forming more or less impracticable projects and plans for the future; and when he chanced to be in a castle-building humour he evidently found pleasure in committing to paper what was passing through his mind. It would scarcely be fair to avoid mentioning this tendency, for it was certainly a well-marked feature in his character, and some praise is due to him for sticking so closely to work in spite of it.

Several letters and portions of letters in the same vein are preserved, but the interest attaching to them being

so purely personal, it has not been thought necessary to reproduce more than the following extracts :—

“I think you had better secure me a room or two in that house of yours in Fitzroy Street, for I am getting very weary of all this hard grinding work out here in the sun. Although I have not been, as you know, altogether unsuccessful in my Indian career so far, yet sometimes I feel that I would willingly throw it all up to go and live at home again in quiet seclusion, in preference to continuing to try and gain another, and another, and yet another rung of the ladder in Government Service here in the East. *Cui bono?* I am not married and not likely to be, and I could live a very comfortable retired life, with my simple requirements, on the small private income I have ; and I do not think such a life would be wasted either. I should take the greatest interest in all the scientific inventions and discoveries of the day. I should like to be well up in European politics and questions of the time, and to live quietly at one of the Indian Clubs, where I could meet the men that I have known out here, and whose general views of things would run much in a groove with my own. But mine would be a *young*, not an *old* Indian's retired life.”

“You and I, old boy, would always be the very best of friends. Didn't you lend (?) me half-sovereigns to buy old clocks and steam engines at school? Didn't you come all the way from London to Greenwich at your own expense every week, to teach a thick-headed young fellow the rudiments of mathematics? And where should I be now without the rudimentary knowledge of the insides of those same clocks and steam engines, or of the value of $(a+b)^2$. The clockwork and models have long since perished, but I still have the old Calcutta's Almanac of D. J. L. & Co. Call it what you like, but it is the only one of its kind in the world.”

with 'A. Vacher' and '*Vashti the Queen*' written on the fly-leaf, here in the jungle in my mud hut, although I regret to say that I have long ago lost almost every other kind of household god that I possessed, in the shape of books, when I left England. Goodness knows how and when they all went, but they have simply disappeared in my numerous travels, gone no one knows where. We'll have a look over the old Algebra together, some of these days, I hope yet."

"We all lead such an independent sort of life here, really only under one common master; and as long as we do what we are ordered to do, Government interferes very little with us, and I am sure we do not interfere much with each other. Every one goes his own way and chooses his own amusements, yet all as a rule are, I think, pretty intimately acquainted and very good friends. The country is so large, and the few Europeans comparatively speaking that are in it, so scattered, that we are all obliged to make the most of each other on short acquaintance, when ordered about from one end of India to the other, sometimes at an hour or two's notice. Of course we are really anything but independent, but this sort of knocking about and camp-life makes one feel so. There is an amount of elbow-room, mentally as well as bodily, in the place and the life difficult to describe. It unsettles one more or less for any other kind of life, and it has produced a sort of feeling in me, which, combined with my late Johore experience, would make me think nothing of changing my whole preconceived ideas of life in the most violent manner to-morrow. And so one day I think of throwing up India, going home, and getting, if possible, to college for a year or two (this is an old and favourite idea); another day, of going to Australia and becoming a settler; another time, of devoting the greater part of my

life to travelling slowly round the world and stopping for a year or so at all the interesting places; &c., &c., with variations. Do not be surprised to hear that I have gone off like a rocket, some of these days, to the most out-of-the-way country, on the most extraordinary of errands, and I am conceited enough to think that wherever it may be, or whatever I go in for, I shall not make altogether a *faux pas*. Although I admit there is perhaps more variety in our profession than in the majority of professions, or in the daily routine of most people who have to earn their own livelihood, the monotony of trudging along in the old groove makes one impatient. It is the fixedness of the programme, the constant thought that I shall be doing the same sort of thing in the same way so many years hence, that is at variance with my notions of life—when there are so many things to learn and there is so much of the world to see. Life seems all too short for me to do half what I should like to do. Every month now I think that I have devoted as much of my life as I can spare to work in India, and it is high time I was either off home again or to a new country."

"I should like very much to see father and all of you, and the old country again, more than I can tell you, and I must try and scheme to have a peep at you somehow soon, whether able to come home for good or not."

CHAPTER XI.

GREAT INDIAN PENINSULA RAILWAY.

(PEEPULGAUM, BEHLOONDEE, DHOND.)

1878.

The period to which this chapter refers is from the beginning of the year 1878 to May 4th. During the whole time, Mr. Vacher was still engaged on the Dhond and Munmar Railway. A few passages from some of his letters home will best describe the incidents of his life, and represent his expectations, thoughts and longings.

On January 31st, he writes to his father from Camp Peepulgaum, a station further along the line than Behloondee.—“ I think I told you that all anxiety regarding the thirty miles of railway entrusted to me was over, as all the earthwork in the banks and cuttings was completed, and there was nothing more to do but to lay down the rails. So I thought at the time I wrote, but just the last few feet in several of the cuttings turned out to be rock of the hardest description known in these parts, and we have had to work at it night and day ever since, blasting it out by degrees immediately in front of the daily trains. Perhaps this has been the most anxious time we have had, fearing that each piece of rock in its turn would stop the progress of the rail laying. Fortunately the rails did not arrive in

India quite as rapidly, ship after ship, as they were expected, and we have just been able to keep ahead of them."

"To-morrow the last piece of rock in the last cutting will be blasted out, and on the following day the engine, with its train-load of permanent way material will have entered my neighbour's district. Notwithstanding all the hurry, I am glad to say there has been only one serious accident during the blasting, and that is not likely to end fatally. A lot of powder blew up and burnt a couple of men and a boy, more or less severely, but they are all doing well now, and it is just a week since the accident occurred. The boy, quite a child, not more than six or seven years old, was burnt the worst, and I had him in the verandah of my tent for a couple of days or so, until he was able to be removed to hospital. He used to keep me awake at night, groaning, but I had not the heart to remove him until the pain had subsided a bit. Poor little fellow! He bore the pain very pluckily, although it must have been terrible, for I should say he lost a third of his little black skin while in my tent, leaving him in places as fair as any English child."

"Except for this unfortunate accident, everything has gone on well during this month; and I have succeeded in getting rid of a large number of native workmen, and closing their accounts without any disturbance of the peace."

"I leave my Camp here the day after to-morrow, going back to Behloondee by train; and probably in another month I shall be at Dhond again (it is six months since I lived there), as my permanent head-quarters."

"The cold season is not so pleasant here in the Deccan as it is in the North Western provinces, but the hot season is decidedly less trying. As I have been here a year within a fortnight, I am in a position to judge. It has

been by far the hardest year's work since I came to the country; and the conclusion of the year finds me as well and strong as I was at the commencement, although it is nearly the end of my twelfth year in the tropics."

The next letter quoted from is dated March 3rd, and was written on the eve of leaving Behloondee for Dhond, Mr. Vacher having already made over charge of the Behloondee sub-division to his assistant. In answer to inquiries as to when those at home might look forward to seeing him, he writes:—"Need I say how earnestly my wish coincides with yours, but to the practical view of the question it is difficult to find a response. My great desire is to leave India for good whilst my health and strength remain unimpaired by the climate, and I am still capable of hard work and have sufficient energy to push my way among others of my own profession and age. If I could get enough to do just to make a start, and keep the wheels going, I should like to come home now. But as you may imagine this is all *in nubibus* at present. And furlough I am afraid is, for some time to come at least, quite out of the question, my two years' absence in Johore not having counted in the number of years I am expected to serve in this country before being entitled to leave, other than sick leave. Still I cannot regret the time thus spent in Johore, even on this account, for I am sure the more temperate climate and the ever fresh and constant breeze, together with the complete change of scenery, contributed to my present sound state of health; and perhaps I should not have pulled through this last trying year so successfully, if I had not passed the two previous years at the Straits. Summing this up means that there is little or no chance of my being able to get home

for the next two or three years, unless I leave Government service altogether.

“To return to present events, I suppose I shall be stationed here all the time, chiefly employed in bridging the Bhima, a very large river crossing our line within a mile of Dhond. For although our railway will be open for traffic, probably right through, in another six months, we still have another two or three years’ work on the large bridges before they are completed. We are now quarrying the stone and collecting materials, and shall commence the foundations immediately after the rains. It is to be hoped it *will* rain this year.

“I am now living in my tent again. When I get back to Dhond it will be pitched under the same old banyan tree I used to write from when the famine was raging last year.”

Mr. Vacher’s next letter is dated “Dhond, April 7th,” and is a long gossip like all his letters to his mother, but it contains many interesting passages. The child who was so terribly burnt during the blasting operations, died, despite all the care bestowed on him. “The poor little chap,” Mr. Vacher writes, “lingered for a long while, and I was in hopes he would eventually pull through, but he got thinner and thinner, and at last died, I think, from sheer exhaustion caused by the healing of his wounds.”

Speaking of his correspondence with some of his relatives being in arrears, he writes—“The best part of the day goes to the work, and the remainder, during the hot season, is not worth much:—a few hours about the temperature of a comfortable warm bath in the middle of the day, and a few more in the evening, in which every insect that was ever created takes the opportunity to collect all his family together and pay you a friendly visit. It is no use attempting to

burn the midnight oil here at this time of year, for myriads of insects would at once become masters of the occasion. I do not think many people here write at night, and few do anything of the kind that is not compulsory in the hot hours of the day. Most home letters are, I imagine, written either the first thing in the morning, or during early office hours, so when one has to be out of doors, looking up lazy native workpeople the first thing every morning, and plenty of work to do during the day, keeping the said natives' complicated accounts straight, these two golden opportunities for writing to one's English friends are lost."

On the preparations he was making for a long stay at Dhond, he writes—"I have been living in my little hill tent, 12 feet by 12 feet, ever since I came here; but it has been lately 'quite pleasantly warm and a little more,' as some American expressed himself, and I am hurrying on the workpeople who are making me a new house."

"At the beginning of last month it was only 98° Fahr. during the six hot hours of the day, but lately it has been pretty steadily 104° and 105°, and at this temperature the sun seems to come right through a canvas roof as if it were not there, and the only cool place is under the table. By innumerable threats, and a good deal of bad Hindoostanee (which completely upsets the natives here, as they do not understand a word of it), I have at last succeeded in getting the roof of the house finished; and this, under the circumstances just narrated, I am sure you will agree with me is a great event. Now they are working away at the doors, and as soon as they are hung I shall move in. I cannot wait for the windows and other little et ceteras, mere matters of detail in fact, when the principal want (something substantial

my thatched roof when I am once installed under it. Although the heat is so excessive during the day, it is much cooler at night living in a tent. The walls and roof of a house retain the heat, whereas one's tent gets cool again as soon as the sun goes down."

Then he refers briefly to the formal opening of the line, which he expected would take place in about a week. "Nothing is yet settled," he says, "but it is probable the occasion will be honoured by the presence of some big people, as the line is the first State Railway in Bombay. The first fifty miles, *i.e.*, from Dhond to Ahmednuggur, was duly given over for ordinary traffic on the 15th last, and daily trains carrying passengers and goods have been running ever since."

The letter finishes with a reply to a suggestion in the last note from home that perhaps he might contrive to get a few months' leave for a holiday. He writes that "it is utterly impracticable just now. The utmost leave to which I am at present entitled, by the Government rules, is five weeks. In another thirty months I shall be able to claim two years. I hope, with God's blessing, we may all hold out till that time."

On April 14th the entire line from Dhond to Munmar was completed, and on the 17th, at Ahmednuggur, H. E. the Governor, drove in the last key of the railway, thus formally finishing the first important work that the State Railway Department of the Presidency has constructed without availing itself of the agency of a guaranteed company.

At the breakfast in honour of the occasion Sir R. Temple proposed the health of the engineers employed in the construction of the line. "These gentlemen," said His

Excellency, "have really deserved well of Bombay. We may wish them God speed in all their future undertakings, and we hope that they will look back upon this undertaking as a remarkable instance of how, under the ways of Providence, good is produced out of evil."

On May 4th Mr. Vacher writes to his father from Dhond. "I sent you by last mail a newspaper containing an account of the ceremony of opening our railway for through traffic. Everything went off very well, and we wound up the eventful day with a big dinner at the Chief Engineer's house. The following day we had another dinner for all the European foremen, engine-drivers, guards, &c., and their families and friends, rather a large affair, followed by a dance to which we all went. I led off the first square dance with our head foreman's wife, *vis-à-vis* to Mrs. Izat and foreman No. 2 (the head man not being able to perform properly). We all had great fun and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly.

"You will be glad to hear that I got into my new house about the middle of last month, and found it a great relief as it was getting unbearably hot. As regards the work, we are finishing off and trimming banks and cuttings to make everything snug for the rains."

In this letter mention is made of an expected visit from Mr. McIntosh who was to leave for England in a few weeks. "He has promised," says Mr. Vacher, "to look me up at Bombay, and I have no doubt he will pay you a visit at home also. Never forget to thank him when you see him—the first and still the best friend I have had the good fortune to possess out here." And, as if the very thought of home reminded him of his troubles and revived some of his discontented thoughts, he adds:—"Sometimes, for weeks

together, I feel so tired, so weary of the natives and the climate, and the worry, and above all the want of change, that the desire to leave the country for good and all comes upon me very strongly. However, I hope ~~my~~ health continuing, to see this line through, and then the two years' furlough will be due me, that is another two and a half years at least, say three years. I left England (I have just recalled the date to memory) this day, 12 years ago, towards the end of my 22nd year, so that if I live I shall return home towards the close of my 37th year. How well I recollect your coming down to Southampton to see me off. I leave you to infer the present wish that accompanies the past remembrance."

CHAPTER XII.

TRANSFER TO AHMEDABAD.

DEATH.

The home-coming so frequently referred to by Mr. Vacher in his correspondence, and which he must have pictured to himself times innumerable was never to be realized. The thought of it had supported him in disappointment, in depressing surroundings, in weariness and loneliness, in times of worry and exhaustion, mental and physical; and to hasten it he had been often tempted, in his own words, "to throw up everything." Still he held on, his devotion to work knowing no abatement till the life-work was done.

A short and hurried letter from him, received by his family on the 17th June, briefly notified his sudden transfer to the Western Rajpootana Railway, and that he was already on his way to Ahmedabad to join his appointment. It was his last letter home. Long before it reached England the hand that had penned it was "at rest." Though death was so near there is no shadow of it visible over these few lines. The sender was still full of young life, still abounding in hope, still looking forward with confidence, still believing that this change like so many preceding ones, would be all for the best.

This letter, in deference to the wishes of him to whom it was addressed, is reproduced in *fac-simile*

(*Copy.*)

“Poona, 26th May, 1878.

“My dear Father,

Just a line to tell you that, the pressure of work being over here, I have been suddenly transferred, by telegram, to the Western Rajpootana State Railway, Ahmedabad. I left Dhond yesterday afternoon, am staying the Sunday here, and go on by the 5 a.m. train to-morrow. My route will be *vid* Bombay and Surat—a mere trip this time, just round the corner, something under 500 miles.

“Government, you see, do not know anything about the little house I have just finished and furnished, although you at home do, and I suppose it is good practice to be ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. The great Sir Garnet says in his “Soldier's Pocket Book” that a man who is not ready to move for the sake of his kit had better go home to his mother. This makes 4,000 miles of travelling, since my return to India, on Her Majesty's Service.

“I will write you again on my arrival at Ahmedabad.

“In haste—this is only *one* out of nine letters I have to write, wishing friends good bye, this afternoon.

Believe me,

Yours affectionately,

HENRY.”

Mr. Vacher appears to have left Poona on the 27th as projected, and, breaking the journey at Bombay, reached his destination, safe and well, on the 29th. What followed will be gathered from a letter from Mr. Parker, the Superin-

Poon: 20th May 78.

My dear Father

Just a line to tell you
that, the pressure of work being
on here, I have been suddenly
transferred - by telegram - to the
Western Rly. Station at
Ahmedabad. I left Dhond

yesterday afternoon, am staying
the Sunday here, & go on ^{by the} 5 AM
train tomorrow. My route will

be via Bombay & Surat - -

more trip this time, just round

the corner, something under 500 miles

Government you see do not know

anything about the little house I

have just finished & furnished - altho'

you at home do - & I suppose it

is good practice to be ready to

go anywhere at a moment's notice.

The great Sir Gurner says in his

"Soldier's pocket book" that a man

who is not ready to move for the

I am of his but had better go home
to his mother. This makes

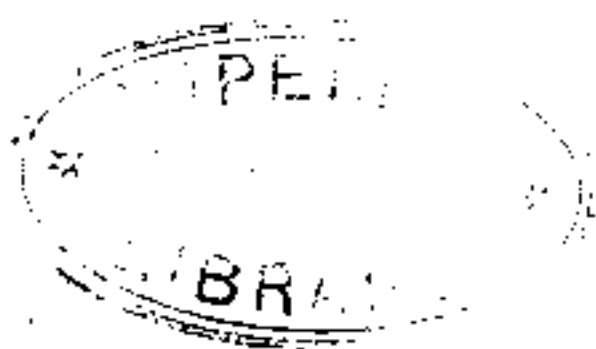
4000 miles of travelling, since my
return to India, on St. M. S. S. S.

I will write you again on
my arrival at Ahmedabad.

In haste - This is only one
out of nine letters, I have to write
to wishing friends good bye, this afternoon -

Believe me
Yours affectionately

Henry.



tending Engineer at Ahmedabad, to Mr. Vacher's father, which conveyed the sad news of Henry's death. This letter tells its story so simply and tenderly it is printed without abridgment.

“ Western Rajpootana State Railway,

“ Superintending Engineer's Office,

“ Ahmedabad, 12th June, 1878.

“ My dear Sir, ”

It is with deep regret that I have to announce to you the death of Mr. H. Vacher on the 4th inst., at Ahmedabad, from Cholera. He had been transferred to this line from the Dhond Munmar Railway, and arrived here on the 29th May in good health, and put up at the Travellers' Bungalow just opposite my house. On the night of the 3rd inst. he was taken ill with severe vomiting; and I, was aroused at 11 p.m. by a message from the Acting Civil Surgeon, who was also living at the Travellers' Bungalow, asking for chlorodyne. I had none, but went over to see what was wrong, I found Mr. Vacher much excited and nervous; he complained of having suffered severely from the heat during the day, and, as orders regarding his employment had not reached me, he asked permission to go to Bombay, till his destination was finally settled. Some chlorodyne having arrived from the Civil Hospital, a dose was administered to him and he became quieter, and about 1 a.m. finding him disposed to sleep I went back to my bed, having promised to see him down to the railway station and arrange for his getting to Bombay. At 6 a.m. I went over, and was informed by the Civil Surgeon that nothing serious appeared to be wrong with him. The doctor sent for some medicine from the hospital, and, leaving directions with me as to its being administered, went

his rounds. I remained with Mr. Vacher and gave him the medicine as directed, also some fowl broth, but which he did not retain. An hour after the doctor had left us he asked his servant to rub his feet, and after a little while got up from his bed, complaining of cramp in his feet. I knew then that an attack of cholera was impending, if not actually begun, and giving him another dose of medicine I went for the Senior Surgeon, whose house was not far off, but he was not at home. I therefore sent a note asking him to come over as soon as he could, and, about an hour after, Dr. Wyllie, the Deputy Surgeon-General, with Dr. Nariman, the Civil Surgeon, came in. They consulted together, and Dr. Wyllie, after staying some time to see the remedies administered, went home, saying that there appeared no extraordinary symptoms of danger, but that, of course, the results of the disease were always uncertain. Dr. Nariman and myself, with a native hospital assistant, remained with the patient, giving him such relief as we could. Up to 3 p.m. his case appeared hopeful; he had taken small quantities of nourishment and stimulants, and kept them on his stomach, but was excited and nervous, and complained of difficulty of breathing. It was difficult to persuade him to lie down and reserve his strength, and Dr. Nariman gave him a composing draught, which soothed him down somewhat. About 3 p.m. he became unconscious, but his limbs were warm and his pulse going as well as could be expected. The cramps seemed to have become very much less, and Dr. Nariman, though aware that this unconsciousness was an unfavourable symptom, still had hopes that he might recover. At 4 p.m., however, his pulse suddenly failed and he sank rapidly till 5.15 p.m., when he died, still unconscious.

“ We buried him next morning, in the Civil Cemetery at

Ahmedabad. I made over his property to the District Judge, to be disposed of under the orders of the Administrator-General. I retained his watch, a locket and a box of papers, till I should receive instructions from the Judge or from his friends, as to their disposal. These should be applied for, through the Administrator-General, by any of his family desiring to receive them.

"The enclosed letter from you* I read, with a view to ascertain to whom I should communicate the news of his death. I do not make out from it what relationship existed between you, but from bearing the same name I judge that I am right in addressing you as one interested in his fate.

"Assuring you of my sincere sympathy in your loss,
I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours truly,

W. H. PARKER.

Supg. Engineer W. R. (S.) Railway."

The sudden cutting off of Henry Vacher in the strength and promise of his early manhood, was a terrible blow to those whose hearts had followed him in his travels, shared his troubles, and rejoiced at his successes. But in the dark time of their sorrow it was a source of relief to them to know that he whom they mourned received so much kind attention from those who were entire strangers to him, and in particular they will ever feel how impossible it is adequately to express their gratitude to Mr. Parker for his watchful care and service of love.

Three weeks after this sad intelligence reached England, a very kind sympathizing letter was received from Mr. McIntosh.

* This was a letter from his father, which had been forwarded from Dhond.

It is addressed to Mr. Vacher, senior, from Simla, where the writer had just seen the Gazette notice of Henry Vacher's transfer to the Rajpootana Railway, with an asterisk which referred to the words "Since deceased". Mr. McIntosh could scarcely believe this, and at once applied for confirmation to Sir A. Clarke's Private Secretary, who remitted full particulars.

"You have lost for a time a dear son," writes Mr. McIntosh, "one who was prized by everyone who had the fortune to know him, and a dear friend to me. It will be some consolation to you to feel that he died in the execution of his duty, a man who led a God-fearing and morally blameless life, one who could have nothing but some small omission to trouble him in his last moments—a man who was valued by the very head of his department for his abilities as an Engineer, and esteemed as a friend."

The Official Director of State Railways, reporting on the subject of Mr. Vacher's death to the Secretary to the Government of India, Public Works Department, writes as follows:—

"4th July, 1878.

"In reply to your telegram, dated the 21st ultimo, I have the honour to supply the following particulars regarding the death of Mr. H. Vacher, &c.

"Mr. Vacher had done good service on the Dhond and Munmar Railway, and had been transferred to the central system, on the progress of the Dhond and Munmar Railway being such as to justify a reduction of establishment staff. The state of the work on the Western Rajpootana State Railway rendered it necessary somewhat to increase establishments, and as that Railway offered the best chance of

giving Mr. Vacher a Divisional charge I posted him to it, and directed him to proceed to Ahmedabad, the point at which Engineers were required.

“Mr. Vacher’s death causes me sincere regret, for not only was he a hardworking, zealous and intelligent officer, but a valued personal friend of my own.”

The portion of the report omitted gives a detailed account of Mr. Vacher’s illness and death, and especially refers to the kindness of the Superintending Engineer, Mr. Parker, who, it states, “was with Mr. Vacher almost from the time of his attack until his death, and appears to have been exceedingly kind and to have done all that possibly could be done for him.”

In the Civil Cemetery at Ahmedabad lie the mortal remains of Henry Vacher. The inscription on the memorial slab that marks his grave runs thus:—

HERE RESTS IN CHRIST,
WAITING THE RESURRECTION,
HENRY VACHER,

CIVIL ENGINEER, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT,

BORN IN LONDON, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 1844;

DIED AT AHMEDABAD, 4TH JUNE, 1878.

The accompanying sketch is by Sydney Vacher, the deceased's youngest brother, and was drawn from a photograph which Mr. Parker kindly procured and sent home.

The sketch of the medal facing page 82 is by the same hand.

