

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
A HAPPY LIFE

BEING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

MARIANNE NORTH

EDITED BY HER SISTER

MRS. JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL II

New York
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AND LONDON
1894

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W. J.

under fallen trees and over them. The road would probably have been impassable for weeks, but for the happy chance of the Lieutenant-Governor being expected hourly, so every one was working day and night. I saw Mr Lear's subject, "The Plains of Bengal," even the very trees he had put into the foreground,—the pandanus and bamboo, which grew very large there. They were loaded with creepers and parasites, like everything else. Brazil could not beat the luxuriance of the vegetation there, with the *cissus discolor* in great beauty, ipomoeas, a large white *thunbergia*, begonias, and ferns.

I had breakfast at the very dampest dwelling I ever saw; inside and out, all was dripping. When I mentioned an egg, the man rushed out at a small chicken, and as I had no time to have him cooked, I still tried to get eggs. At last I was taken into the storeroom and offered a choice of jams and pickles. I found a pot of potted ham, very spicy, which did well to fill the gap; and they gave me good tea and toast even in that damp hole. Then we went floundering through the mud and over the broken bridges again, reaching Koursim just in time for dinner. The next day took me over the most glorious road, among forests and mountains, to Darjeeling, the finest hill place in the whole world; and I brought my usual luck with me, for Kinchinjanga uncovered himself regularly every day for three hours after sunrise during the first week of my stay, and I did not let the time be wasted, but worked very hard. I had never seen so complete a mountain, with its two supporters, one on each side. It formed the most graceful snow curves, and no painting could give an idea of its size. The best way seemed to me to be to attempt no middle distance, but merely foreground and blue mistiness of mountain over mountain. The foregrounds were most lovely: ferns, rattans, and trees festooned and covered with creepers, also picturesque villages and huts.

The people, too, were unlike any I had seen before,—natives

of Butan and Thibet, who come every year to make money, during the season. They are rather like Chinese, with flat faces, long eyes, and long hair. They are intensely good-humoured, laughing and singing, very industrious and strong. They invest all their money in ornaments; and those also were most fascinating,—inlaid with great lumps of turquoise, coral, and amber, and a bright scarlet bead made of rhinoceros horn, which felt soft like india-rubber. The devout among those people go about twirling little silver praying-wheels in their hands, or they paint the prayers on flags and let the wind "do it" over their huts. They have also bells and metal thunderbolts, and shells, in their worship; musical instruments made of human thigh-bones, and half skulls with human skin stretched over them for drums. In spite of such barbarisms, those Buddhists seemed a gentle, harmless race, fond of pets and of their children. They wore rich colours, pretty striped scarves, and long pig-tails, with long loose sleeves, often red.

The flowers about Darjeeling seemed endless. I found new ones every day. The *Thunbergia coccinea* was perhaps the most striking; it twined itself up to the tops of the oaks, and hung down in long tresses of brilliant colour, the oak itself having leaves like the sweet chestnut, and great acorns as big as apricots almost hidden in their cups. There was another lovely creeper peculiar to Darjeeling,—the sweet-scented cluster ipomœa, of a pure pink or lilac colour. The wild hydrangea with its tricolour blooms was also much more beautiful than the tame one. I worked so hard and walked so much that, after a dinner or two with Sir Ashley Eden and other grandees, I refused any more invitations. I could not keep awake in the evening.

How I longed to spend a spring in Darjeeling, and to see all the wonderful rhododendrons and magnolias in flower! They were such great old trees there, and of so many different varieties. One hairy magnolia was then in flower, and the

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greens seemed greener, and the colour of the nearly ripe rice was quite dazzling. We passed over a rich plain a little before five, and soon after arrived at the ferry of Garoet, to find it broken and impassable, the boats half-full of water, and the yellow river rushing like a mill-race. A motley crowd were waiting till it was mended, and I had a long conversation about it (in our respective tongues) with a Chinese merchant, who was travelling with a train of coolies, with piles of Lancashire prints hung to their bamboos. But my man said it was of no use waiting, and we turned back and begged hospitality of the "Assistant," as he called him, of Trogan, a young Dutchman with a pretty delicate wife and four babies. They were both too nervous to talk anything but Malay at first, but in time they found some words of French.

I was on my way to the house of Herr Hölle, who lived on the hills behind Garoet, and I had a letter to the native Prince or Regent there to send me on. I was taken the next morning to see the hot springs at the foot of the Goentoer volcano, whose lava-stream looked fearfully fresh and new. The hot water rushed out of a tangle of the richest hot-house vegetation I ever saw. A succession of tanks below the spring were divided by green banks covered with bananas, grasses, and huge caladium leaves, dark volcanic stones making delightful backgrounds to those green masses, while little bamboo-houses on stilts were reflected in the water. There were people in red sarongs bathing and fishing in the warm water, their fishing being done with hand-baskets like sieves. We had some of these brought for us to look at, and they were full of strange little green shrimps, beetles, and other nasty things, all of which they dried and ate with their everlasting rice.

The children had some strange pets in the house. One of them was a "fretful porcupine" which ran about loose, and delighted especially in hiding under my bed! She liked to have her nose tickled, and to nestle close to my feet. She was on the best of terms with the dogs, but rustled up all her

No door or window was ever locked day or night. The people passed through the garden from cottage to cottage, and never stole a flower. Herr Hölle said he liked to see them moving about, and to know they were not afraid of him. They often came great distances too to beg him to doctor them or give them advice when in difficulties, and to work in his tea plantations, which covered miles of hillside. The winding paths were bordered with cedars, sheds being built at intervals to shelter the pickers from the rain. No scene could be more picturesque than those hills crowded with gaily-dressed people amongst the tea-bushes, the plain of golden rice and palm-groves below, with grand mountains beyond, two of them always smoking.

Eleven years before, all this small paradise was a swamp, the home of tigers and rhinoceros; now, the dear creatures were not to be seen. I went up to the edge of the impenetrable forest, where some said they were still hiding. Near it cinchona and coffee took the place of tea, while the ferns and wild bananas were growing on every scrap of uncultivated ground. I did plenty of painting, but my chief delight was in hearing my host talk, and seeing him among his people. One evening he took me to see the children shaking the trees to collect cockchafer, which they roasted and ate with their rice. They had a bit of burning wood on the ground, the insects flew to it, and were caught by the eager little creatures. So picturesque they looked in the firelight, the whole under the brightest moon I ever saw. The Government constantly sent Herr Hölle to mediate and arrange difficulties with natives all over the island. He knew all their peculiarities, proverbs, and idioms, and could always manage them. His great friend was the Mufti of Garoet: orthodox old ladies used to say he was a Muhammadan himself. He knew the Koran by heart, could convince the people by their own arguments from it, and met them half-way in most things; he allowed no pork on his table, no dogs in his house.