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HILLS AND DALES OF SOUTH CHINA.

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BORN at the foot of a 2000 feet hill in Aberdeenshire, from which a view of the whole county could be had, it was my habit often to climb to the top and revel in the sense of elevation and expansion that came to me. It is now my lot to "preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick" at the foot of higher hills. Ten miles from my home here is a plateau called "Thai Yong," or "The Great Plain," 2000 feet high, where the temperature in summer is ten degrees below what it is in the plain. Every summer, usually in August, I repair to the plateau for a month to escape the heat and recruit for next year's labour. It is a great boon to the women and children, some of whom stay there during the three hottest months with great relief. Hills rise round the plateau 1000 feet higher, being therefore about 3000 feet above sea-level. To the tops of these hills we make excursions as weather permits, and vary the exercise by exploring the valleys and visiting the waterfalls.

There is a hillock near my station about 400 feet high, but the view from it is so good that every one who climbs it is surprised at it. Even a Chinese graduate on going up one day said, "Ah! this opens my heart!" The Chinese are not insensible to the beauties of nature, and they quite understand our climbing a mountain, and enter into

the spirit of it like ourselves. Twenty years ago they would have suspected us of searching for "treasure," that is gold, silver, or other minerals. They long believed that we could see ten feet deep into the ground, but that we could not see into the water. On one of my longest journeys, out of the usual track, I met a man who seemed very intelligent and well informed and who hung about me for a whole evening, till I began to hope I was going to have a convert. He certainly had something on his mind. At last he got it out. In a confidential whisper he asked me "Is it true that you foreign people can see into the heart of a stone?"

In China I have climbed perhaps five 2000 feet hills and three or four 3000 feet ones. The highest in this neighbourhood within easy reach may be about 3500 or 3700 feet, and other two not very far away about 5000 feet. To reach these higher hills one would have to stay a night somewhere near the hill to be climbed. In the good or cool season the missionary is intent on his work, and in the hot season, when he tries to get a month's rest, the weather is very unsuitable. Consequently I have never yet been able to try the highest mountains. What strikes one on first seeing South China hills is that hill and plain are more distinct than in the home country. The scenery is rolling, undulating, smoothed, geologists tell us, by glaciers. Ploughed fields stretch up the slopes. In South China the chief cultivation is rice, which grows in water, and hence the fields are level. On the hill side they rise in terraces and there are also small and irregular patches. There is no "twal acre park" in all the land, and no broad-backed hill like Mount Battock anywhere to be seen. From the level plain the hill rises abruptly, and the angle of slope, except where rocks or cliffs intervene, is very uniform. Clearly enough all this is the result of the action of water. In a land where summer rains are frequent and heavy, denudation proceeds rapidly. The present mountains are mere remnants of originally larger masses, and the plains are laid down by the detritus washed down into the valleys and arms of the

sea forming deltas at the mouths of the rivers, and these grow at a great rate. Since I came here hundreds of acres near Swatow have been claimed from the sea. The mountain tops here may be single sharp peaks like our own Mount Keen, or projecting rocks like Clochnaben, or a group of hillocks, or a long serrated ridge. From the tops the ridges and gullies carved out by the rains stretch away down with infinite variety of contour to merge in the plains. These ridges, "shoulders" or "crests" as the Chinese call them, are sometimes long, sharp, and steep on both sides. A mile or two from our Thai-yong house is a ridge called the "Horse mane." A road, which means in this country a narrow foot-path, leads along the crest. My first experience of it was during a thick fog. The "mane" was so narrow, and the slopes on either side so steep that it recalled an experience of Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress." I was afraid to sit in my chair, and when I got out I was fain to crawl on my hands and knees. The eeriness was the more impressive from the loud noise of a waterfall which seemed from the sound (I could not see it) to be a hundred feet or more near by perpendicularly beneath me.

It is curious that in South China they have no proper names for the rivers. Every one is just "the river" or "the burn." But they have names for most of the hills, usually significant (though sometimes the original meaning is lost) and very often fanciful. A few samples will suffice: the Cock's comb, the Black rock top, the White stone cliff. The Bank-head peak north of our village takes its name from the market at its foot. The Hen's nest is a dome with a rocky top looking just like its name. The Hawk's beak is formed by two perpendicular rocks (*aiguilles* as the French would call them) and a gap between, the resemblance to the beak being very striking. We have the Hook-crested top looking down on us here, and another of the same name ten miles farther inland. Sometimes the shape of the range determines the name. The Phoenix, north of Chas-chow-foo, 5000 feet high, might be named from its resemblance to the crest of the

fabulous bird. In the Lion range one sees not only the head and mouth, but the hind quarter, rump, and with a little imagination the tail. The mouth is a hole under a rock where one told me that tables could be set for an immense dinner party. Apropos of names, those of our villages being interpreted sound very familiar. Bigburn, Littleburn, Hillfoot, Bridgend, Bankhead, Midfield, Southhill, Uppertown, Nethertown, Roundhillock, might be Scottish; while Cotton lake, Orange garden, Banana garden sound tropical; and Boilingburn, Hotspring-side, and such like are named from thermal springs.

Around Thai-yong are four peaks about 3,000 feet high, any of which can be climbed in one day, the nearest ones in half a day. They are only 1,000 feet above the plateau, which, I have already said, is 2,000 feet high. This summer I began by attempting The Saddle (2,400), one of the tops at the east side of the plateau. To get to the foot of it required two miles' walk and the crossing of several ridges, and not being in training I was too exhausted, and had to leave the rest of the party to finish the ascent without me. They returned highly pleased with the view. Later I climbed other three hills. The highest was the Pet-san-chong, north of our house in Thai-yong, 3,000 feet above sea-level. The name has redundant elements in it. Pet, north; san, hill; chong, a mountain mass: as if one were to say in English, The North Hill Mountain. On the south side, the side towards us, it is very steep, with projecting cliffs. From its top a ridge runs eastwards, gradually sinking a few hundred feet, and then running on to the Black Rock top. On the west it sinks abruptly to a pass about 200 feet down, beyond which it rises again to join other peaks nearly as high. Owing to the steepness of the south side we did not make a frontal attack, but went past the foot, about two miles from our house, and took the path leading over the pass already mentioned. At least half of this path was formed by flights of steps built of rough unhewn stones. But for the steps the road would during the rains be turned into a watercourse. Nearer the pass the road became more

level, crossing two or three minor passes. Some of the party turned off here and began to scale the steep slope, while I with the rest still kept the road. Before we reached the top of the pass a Chinaman came up behind us, and entered into conversation with us. He asked us, "Why do you put yourselves to the trouble of climbing? It is more comfortable to stay at home. It is different with me who have to climb in order to do my work." I said, "That is just it. We are book-reading people, accustomed to study, and we need to rest our brains and stretch our legs. When you want a change you go to bed, but we turn out for fresh air and exercise." He seemed pleased and satisfied with this explanation, and expressed his solicitude lest we might be hungry before we got back, and offered us some sweet potatoes that he had in his basket. We thanked him heartily for his kindness, but said that we had taken the precaution to have some lunch with us. He was on his way over the pass to the next valley, so he parted from us with a polite advice to "take our walk easy." From the pass we turned off to the right, and began the last spurt for the top. The climb was stiff, but not very long. When we reached the top we found the rest of the party already in possession. The top is a group of rounded hillocks, nearly of the same height. The weather was fortunately favourable for a good view. There was also sufficient cloud to give variety to the scene by casting shadows on the landscape—multitudinous peaks, and ranges behind ranges extending inland as far as the eye could see. North, south, and east the chief features in the panorama were the plains, rivers, and villages, and the eye could define dimly in the haze the bay and town of Swatow fifty miles off. On the upper parts of the hill there grew little but grass and ferns. There is no heather, nor anything like it in the East. Further down grew numerous species of bushes, and earlier in the season, say in April, azaleas, roses, and honey-suckle would be in bloom.

At the back of the hill was pointed out to us a gorge to which some had recently paid a visit. We heard

descriptions of a deep gorge between perpendicular rocks, and water to cross on the shoulders of Chinese immersed in it for stepping stones, and a cave, and other accessories of a glorious picnic! We resolved to try that gorge some day soon, but when all our preparations were ready, the Chinaman whom we expected to act as guide insisted that the last visit was made when the trees were cut, but that now the trees were grown up again, and the gorge and cave were inaccessible. We thought it safe to believe three-fourths of that, and perhaps allow one-fourth for his aversion to being made a stepping stone! At anyrate that excursion was given up, and a visit to one of the falls was substituted.

Coming down from the Pet-san-chong we took quite another and nearer road. A slight track in the grass led us for a little behind the hill and then back over a pass to the east, and down a ravine in the direction of home. In this ravine we came on a herd of water-buffaloes in the charge of one or two boys. These beasts are very chary of foreigners. The Chinese say it is the smell of soap on our clothes that excites them. I happened to be well ahead of the party, and came upon three buffaloes by the side of a muddy water hole. They wallow in such holes like pigs; and if deprived of this bath of theirs for any length of time they will not thrive. I sat down to await the rest of the party about thirty yards from the buffaloes. They cautiously approached to look at me, stretching out their necks and snuffing. I did not think there was much danger; they are sometimes bold enough to attack, but much oftener they are easily frightened, and put to flight. I took off my sun hat and bowed to them. This made them still more curious, but less at ease. One turned right round as if to run away, then turned round several times like a "braxy sheep," the very embodiment of irresolution, and at last faced me again with outstretched neck to wait developments. When the rest of the party arrived the three of their own accord retreated. The day was now pretty hot, and it was refreshing to come on cool, clear water, here and there, with pots like those in a Scottish burn.

On this climb I did not notice game of any kind. We know, however, that there are pheasants and partridges, just like those at home. There is a sort of hare, and a sort of badger, and the wild boar is occasionally found. But these are not abundant, and in order to find them one would require a guide who knew their haunts. There is also an animal called "foo-lee," whose name is used for "fox" in the Chinese Bible, but which seems to me nearer a wild cat. There is also our own fox, not quite so red, but with the bushy tail all right, only they call it the mountain dog. There is a "tod-hole" in a wooded hollow not more than a quarter of a mile from our house in Wu-king-fu, and we see the "tod" now and then when we walk out in the evenings.

The tiger used occasionally to visit the district. Now it seems he has come to stay, and frequents a rocky range about ten miles to the N.E. of this. A few years ago some children were killed, and some lads badly torn were brought to the hospital for cure. Last year a man was killed. The tiger was in a field of sugar cane, and a number of people surrounded it to see what curious beast it was that the children had seen entering it, so they were only half-conscious of their danger. The tiger jumped out, made for the nearest man, and, mortally wounding him in the head, ran off. They carried the man alive, but unconscious, to our hospital, but we could do nothing for him; the canine teeth of the brute had gone through the skull deep into the brain. Just this week I hear there are tigers now within five miles of us. One story is that three were seen in the early morning playing with each other like dogs. After nightfall they are heard growling. A month ago I had it from a Swatow man that he was in search of game one Sunday (!) recently on the hills a good way above Chao-chow-foo. A little dog came running to him and crouched at his feet as if for protection. Looking around to see what might be the cause he saw a tiger. He had nothing but small shot in his gun, and began to think his last hour had come, but the beast to his great relief turned and disappeared.

As the streams from the Thai-yong plateau descend to the plain they are broken at various places by waterfalls. These are visited perhaps oftener than the mountain tops. A party of us, four gentleman and three ladies, visited one this summer. To save the strength of the ladies for the return climb (the fall was low down) we had two or three chairs for use on the comparatively level part of the route. After following the Thai-yong stream for a mile we passed out by a side gap into another valley in which farther down is the fall we had in view. I noticed the curious fact that a cutting of about twenty feet at the gap would divert the one stream into the valley of the other. From the gap we followed a zigzag path crossing the spurs of the hill among clumps of fir, pine, and other trees, growing in a tangle of bushes, ferns, and creepers of all kinds. In an hour we came to a pass from which we saw, about a thousand feet down, the place we were bound for. A little farther on we left our chairs, as it was too steep to sit. The road down followed mostly the crest of one of the spurs, a good part of it being by steps cut in the orange-coloured clay. We reached the river above the fall at a point where several patches of rice were planted, and where there was a rude hut for the use of the cultivators, there being no village nearer than a mile or more. We were interested to note that the owners of the hut were Roman Catholic Christians, for their church calendar, the sign of their profession, was pasted on the door. The river would be about forty feet wide, but full of large boulders, which in the low condition of the water were half dry and so close together that without much trouble we could cross by jumping from the one to the other. We all got over without mishap, and following a path leading down the bank past the top of the fall we reached a spot from which, on looking back, we had a clear front view of the whole fall. It was at once obvious why the European who first visited it called it the "Trident" fall. The water fell in three streams almost clear to the bottom, only just grazing the face of the rock at two horizontal ledges—tripartite also in its plunge—before it reached the

deep pool at the foot. In spite the fall would be single, and the impetus of the larger volume of water would make it clear the rock and reach the pool at one plunge, but we were not fortunate enough to see it in that condition. That indeed would have been inconvenient for our early return home, for unless we had been on the other side of the river our return would have been barred for hours. On more than one occasion parties have had such an experience in these hills, and, once warned, all are careful to look at the barometer and the clouds before starting on an excursion.

The company now spent some time in view of the fall, some taking refreshments. I estimated the breadth of the top of the fall to be about seventy feet, and the height to be about the same. The bank was so steep and so obstructed by trees, bushes and tall grass, that no one attempted to go down to the foot of the fall. Below the pool the water descended in a series only of rapids. On either side the hills rose with steep slopes. About a mile or more down on the south slope was a considerable village, very picturesque, surrounded by fields or gardens between clumps of trees, and with a 2,000 feet hill rising as a background behind it. Returning to the top of the fall we crossed the river by jumping from rock to rock, and got very near the brink of the precipice, but not near enough to look over and see the foot. The rock was a close-grained metamorphosed sandstone, pretty hard, but softer than the Aberdeen "heathenstone" or whinstone. It contained embedded in it many pebbles, fragments of an earlier world, forming a sort of conglomerate, with the matrix large in proportion to the pebbles—the pudding large, the plums few. The strata lay horizontally athwart the stream, forming a series of ridges. In approaching the fall the water would cut through one ridge, then run a little to the right or left along the grain of the rock, and then cut through another ridge, making several such turns before going over. At this side, close to the precipice, was a high rock with recesses below, a "Shelter Stone," where several people could sit safe from the sun and rain, a fine

place for a picnic, although were the rain to fall long or heavily the flood would rise, and bring the picnic to a sudden end. Owing to the frequent and heavy summer rains the progress of denudation here is far more rapid than in Scotland. Instead of one good spate in the year we are sure to have several. Every typhoon on the coast brings us three days' rain (and such rain!), and local thunderstorms come any day with little warning.

Places very like the Linn of Dee are found. About three miles from our station—at Wu-king-fu—is the gorge called the Dragon's Neck, larger and more impressive than the Linn of Dee. It is a cut in the rocks at least two hundred yards long, narrow at its beginning and wider as it opens out into the plain. About twenty yards or more from the cut on each side and twenty feet above it is a great collection of loose boulders of all sizes. Nearer it is bare rock whose ledges are swept clean by the floods, with here and there a pot-hole, or a segment of an old hole, parts of which have been worn away. In this rock the Linn is cut, about ten feet wide at its narrowest part, and too deep for the bottom to be clearly seen, the Chinese half believing that it has no bottom. Here again we have a parallel to popular notions in our own country. The narrow part of the Neck looks tempting to jump. In Scotland some story would have linked with the name of such a place, such as Caird Young's Leap at Potarch, and the Soldier's Leap at Killiecrankie. The Chinese had their chance to get up some such story, for at this very hill it is said that the forces of the Sung Dynasty took their last stand before yielding to the Yuen about the year A.D. 1280. The Dragon's Neck is one of the curiosities we show to visitors. There are on the banks above three recent graves, the monuments of a tragedy that befell not many years ago. Three daughters-in-law in a Chinese household thought themselves so oppressed under the mother-in-law, who rules the household in China, that they concluded life was not worth living, and so committed suicide in the deep water of the Dragon's

Neck. The misguided three were buried on the bank just opposite where each of them was found.

We have no "caves," except holes under shelter stones. We have none of the kind that abounds in limestone countries, but in one of our valleys the river runs under ground for about three hundred yards. I fancy that at first it threaded its way among the boulders, and that the rock was softer than usual, and so a small channel was worn leaving the boulders dry, and then other stones rolled down from the hills, and then in turn became covered with earth and vegetation.

Not far from the Dragon's Neck is another curiosity, a hot spring; its temperature however is not very high—about 140° F. There is a long chain of such springs running from S.W. to N.E. about ten miles apart. In this neighbourhood they lie at the foot of a long range of hills, no doubt along a fault in the strata. Some of them are nearly boiling. The name of the village of Thong Hang, about eighteen miles N.E. of us, means "Boiling burn." The water from the spring is collected into a pond, and the whole village makes use of the hot water under certain regulations. At a certain hour the women will be there washing clothes, at another none but the men bathing.

I often wonder if ever the Chinese will utilise the water power of the streams descending from these plateaus. All summer the flood would be enough almost without any dam. But if the millwheels or turbines were to run through the winter big dams would have to be constructed. But even European engineers have only recently begun to think of this use of waterfalls. I have not the slightest intention of promoting a company, nor have I spoken to the Chinese about it, but the idea very often occurs to me.