

KASHMIR.

By A. M. B.

HOW often one hears the exclamation "Kashmir" oh! how I should love to see the place, but it is so expensive to get there. Now I hope to show my readers that it is quite within the possibilities of most working girls to have the pleasure of seeing Srinagar or Kashmir, if one's ambitions do not fly too high, quite reasonably, and to have a good time as well.

As nurses attached to a hospital a railway concession is always available. My advice would be to go in a party of three or four. This means that all expenses would be shared. On reaching Rawalpindi station you will at once be pestered by motor car men offering to take you up to Murree or Srinagar. Rawalpindi is your destination by rail. From here you must take motor for your climb up the hills, or rather at the foot of them. If you arrive during the season, which generally is April 15th until May, you will find the motor car men rather independent and usually demanding Rs. 135 or more for the use of the whole motor to Srinagar. In the off season or when work is slack you can secure a motor for even Rs. 35 a trip. There is the mail motor in which you can secure a seat quite cheaply, but this is not always quite comfortable as you may not have congenial companions. One's luggage can follow in the motor luggage van usually for a few rupees, and is deposited at your address, which makes it so easy. Tipping here like elsewhere is expected.

In my opinion the best time to arrive in Srinagar is after May 20th. The weather then seems to settle down, but it is very difficult to say which is the best month, as each has its beauties.

Now the trip up the hill. It is best to start from Rawalpindi about 9 a.m. and take two days on your journey. There are very comfortable dāk bungalows on the way, which supply all one needs at a reasonable cost. The dāk bungalows much patronised are Domelle and Ghurri. Near each dāk bungalow there is a small Post and Telegraph office, so a business person is easily accommodated. One can do the trip up in a day, but in doing so, one would lose the beautiful scenery to a certain extent and arrive tired and not at one's destination. I should certainly say "Two days" up would be more enjoyable. Can you imagine a 12 hours' definite sitting down. One becomes stiff and irritable at the end of it.

The scenery up is just perfect. The river Jhelum like a huge snake accompanies one right into Srinagar. As one begins to climb up, one notices the wonderful greenness around. The hills are thickly forest clad. The time I went up the near hills still had their tops of snow, and yet creeping up their side were to be seen the pale purple iris and other flowers. The pomegranate trees with their red blossoms were much in evidence, and every now and then one came across a small waterfall. Near these beautiful patches of water the maiden hair and the fern grew in profusion. The scenery changed much, the beautiful varying tints thrown out by nature and written so much of by man

must be seen to be realised. As one nears Srinagar one sees the fields of yellow mustard flower interspersed by the wild red poppy. Oh! glorious nature to mix these two bright colours and yet obtain perfection. Calmly ploughing his field near at hand is to be seen the dirty Kashmirian. They wear a peculiar round cap (like the Persians). I mean the labouring class. I have more than once during my stay asked the children to remove this cap and I have not found one of their heads free from the skin disease known as "Favours." Into Srinagar itself one runs through avenues of poplar trees. These sentinels towering indeed high. If one has made arrangements at a boarding house, and there are many, or at the hotel or in a house-boat, the motor drops one at one's door, and then one cries "Home." When I was up at Kashmir Miss Newman, a retired hospital sister, who resides at "Ingle Nook," Hospital Road, Srinagar, was telling me she would be pleased to have some paying guests during the season. "Ingle Nook," like its owner, is the dearest and sweetest and an ideal little home to spend one's holiday in. "Ingle Nook" has the daintiest little mistress, the prettiest little garden and is central, being near the church, golf links, shops, etc. To anyone desiring a comfortable little holiday, I would advise them to apply to Miss Newman. Her charges will be very moderate indeed, and she will be very happy to hear from hospital sisters who would like to come to Srinagar. House-boats are fairly expensive, and during the season the boats simply crowd on either banks of the river, making privacy rather difficult. Srinagar has its beautiful gardens—the Shalim bagh, the Nissim bagh, the Nishat bagh, etc. The last mentioned is a garden of seven terraces until one reaches the foot of the hill. The day I visited it fountains were playing; the gardens were a mass of various coloured roses, foliage of many varieties—borders of beautiful pansies of so many varieties. The grass was a carpet of beautiful daisies and the pretty birds. The last terrace contained the much painted chenar tree. This tree is indeed grand, huge, and throwing out a beautiful shade inviting the visitor to sit beneath it. When one looked around, one thought this looks like a part of the garden of Paradise! It was nature at her best. Only a road between and one could hire a "shikara" (a small boat rowed by men) and go for a spin on the Dhal Lake. This lake—the lake of romances, which every visitor to Kashmir considers her bounden duty to visit—was well worth a visit. If one is there when the lotus blooms, this lake is then without a doubt a heaven. Surrounding it on one side is the hills and the eternal snows. Yet the scenery is peaceful. Good tongas can be hired for 12 annas first hour and 8 annas second hour, etc., so one can see quite a lot at a cheap rate. There are the water works, fisheries, Fort, old palace, etc., which is well worth a visit and most people do a lot of walking. My article has become a long one, so I must close it. Anyone who can manage it I say "have a glimpse at Srinagar." No artist's picture can paint the wonderful colourings and various tints which nature throws around one. Fruit can be had for a mere song. Cherries, peaches, apples, walnuts, etc., are just perfect and everyone who goes there can spend much or little just as she can afford it, but there are many cheap and good boarding houses. If time to spare, I should say go for a short stay in Gulmarg, 25 miles by motor from Srinagar, and a fashionable place during the season.