

This sit at ease in
their railway
carriages.



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This range of mountains, varying in height from two to six thousand feet, rises like a great wall for two to three hundred miles at a distance of about thirty miles from the present coast of Western India, throwing out detached mountains like Matheran and Mawuli into the strip of land called the Konkan, which lies between the line of mountains and the sea. Beyond the Ghats the land slopes gradually away to the eastern coast of India, so that the springs of the Bhima, Krishna, and Godavari, which flow eastward to the distant sea of Bengal, may be found within fifty or sixty miles of the west coast of India.

Travelers going up the Ghats during a break in the monsoon have beautiful views displayed before their eyes as they sit at ease in their railway carriages. The mountains are then clad in luxuriant verdure, and great waterfalls thunder down the rocky beds of the torrents. But a railway train is at best a lazy and unsatisfactory point of view from which to admire the beauties of nature. It goes remorselessly along its iron road, neither delaying before scenes of surpassing beauty, nor going out of its predetermined course to meet the wishes of the most enthusiastic lover of scenery. How often do railway Travelers passing through beautiful landscapes long to escape from their moving prison, and to strike off on foot to explore the hills and valleys through which they are passing! To see the mountains of Western India properly, we should leave the train at the top of the ascent of the Ghats, and spend a week or two in expeditions to the principal mountains in the surrounding country. Either Igatpuri or Khandala will be found a convenient starting point for such expeditions. From Igatpuri a visit may be paid to Kulsibai, the highest point in the Deccan; and there are many

smaller mountains in the neighborhood to suit the capacities of less ambitious mountaineers.

Khandala is particularly rich in the variety of its mountain-walks. At least five mountains within a moderate distance of this place, besides commanding magnificent prospects, have on their summits hill forts, amid the ruins of which the pedestrian may spend the heat of the day moralising over the decay of the Maratha Empire. Among the crumbling walls he will find water-cisterns, granaries, store-rooms, dismantled cannon, stone cannon balls, and many other relics, by the help of which he can imagine the picture that these hilltops presented more than a hundred years ago, when they were manned by strong Maratha garrisons. Nor are religious associations wanting.

Among the ruins of the forts are to be found temples and tombs, and in the rocky sides of the hills the richly carved Buddhist caves of Karla and Bhaja still afford a resting-place to the wanderer, where, under the deep shade of the massive rock, he can admire the sculptures of ancient India. All the hill forts in the neighbourhood of Khandala afford splendid views, and so does the woody plateau of Sakarpathar. But perhaps the finest view of all is obtained from the Duke's Nose whose cloven summit is such a striking object as one looks up the Bhore Ghat from the plain below. This commanding height can be reached from Khandala by a good walker in an hour and a half. Standing upon it, you are on the very verge of the Ghats, and look upon the plain of the Konkan with its streams and villages, seen dimly through a haze of blue mist, three thousand feet below.

As you look down upon the level plains studded with many hills and mountains, you cannot help thinking that these mountains must once have been sea-girt islands, and that you are standing on what was long ago in prehistoric times a promontory jutting forward from the ancient sea coast of Western India. When you first reach the top, the sea breeze, fresh from the Arabian sea, is extremely delightful after the exertion of your steep climb: but, heated as you are with the labour of the ascent, you cannot safely expose yourself long to so cold a wind, and, starting on your return journey after a short rest, you get back to Khandala with such an appetite for breakfast as only mountain breezes can give. A few days spent on such expeditions will, in many cases, do more for the health than can be effected by all the drugs in the world.